



NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

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CHANGING RURAL SCENARIOS AND RESEARCH AGENDAS IN LATIN AMERICA IN THE NEW CENTURY

Norman Long and Bryan Roberts

ABSTRACT

The chapter identifies key components of the new patterns of farming and rural livelihoods emerging in Latin America in the twenty-first century. By the beginning of the millennium, most rural areas of Latin America had become integrated into global agricultural commodity networks that curtail the opportunities for small-scale, family-based farming and result in two predominant types of production, the corporate large-scale enterprise suited to oils seeds and their derivatives, cattle or vegetables for processing and the smaller commercially oriented farm producing market garden products, fruits and wine. Both types of farms often form part of commodity networks organized by domestic intermediaries, large-scale supermarket chains, such as Wal-Mart and Carrefour, and foreign food marketers. In addition to the multiplication of external commercial linkages, high levels of urbanization have increasingly blurred the distinction between the rural and the urban. Off-farm work, including international labor migration, is now an important source of rural livelihoods. This context means that research needs to address the multiple interfaces that

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now connect the different types of rural inhabitants with a wide range of external actors.

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we aim to identify the key components of the new patterns of farming and rural livelihoods emerging in Latin America in the twenty-first century. We do this conceptually as well as empirically through a review of trends in agricultural production and illustrative case studies. Current rural transformations in Latin America, more strikingly than in the past, blur the distinction between urban and rural, undermine subsistence farming systems and are marked by the absence of major rural development programs, whether initiated by governments or emerging from coalitions of small-scale producers and entrepreneurs. The rural population is now a small minority of the total population of the Latin American region. Agriculture is heavily embedded in national and international commercial circuits and depends on an increasingly high level of technological inputs, including biotechnology. In contrast to earlier periods when agrarian reform, rural social movements and the revitalization of small-scale farming dominated national agendas, today the integrated development of rural areas has become in most countries a secondary political and economic concern.

The preoccupation with planned development was central to the idea of a sociology of rural development, which is rooted in the era of interventionist policies (spanning the mid-1950s until the early 1980s). In this era, national states, supported by international donors, attempted to stimulate economic growth, improve welfare and alleviate poverty through the implementation of planned development. In the countryside, this came to signify a number of intervention measures: the transfer of modern technologies, the introduction of new hybrid crop varieties, community development and cooperatives, land reform and resettlement programmes, and various small-scale agricultural and non-agricultural income-generating projects.

Along with this almost unstoppable march of planned interventions came the demand from donors and implementing agencies for sociologists and anthropologists to provide background data and analysis, to undertake the evaluation of projects in order to establish how far policy goals were achieved and 'target groups' reached, and to advise on issues of local participation. This put rural sociology/anthropology and social development issues squarely on the applied policy map. Examples are the interesting early and continuing 'farmer-researcher' based research carried out at the International

Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Cali, Colombia (Ashby, 1996) and the International Potato Center (CIP), in Lima, Peru (Rhoades, 1984).

This situation changed, however, following the oil price and national economic crises of the early 1980s, when structural adjustment measures were introduced to promote better management of national economies and to install tighter fiscal and administrative control and accountability by the state. The same policy criteria were, of course, applied at local level to rural development projects, which increasingly looked to the gurus of economics, administrative studies and sound management practice for help and legitimation, rather than to the 'softer' social sciences. Economic efficiency – carefully orchestrated to meet shifting market demand – and improved administrative practice would, it was assumed, generate improved economic returns and 'good governance'; and multiparty democracy and decentralization policies would result in more effective grass-roots participation.

By the 1990s, some new elements had been added to this unfolding neoliberal policy agenda in an attempt to give it a more caring 'human face.' These concerned environmental problems and 'sustainable' livelihoods, issues of human rights and citizenship (including claims on the basis of gender, ethnicity and migrant status) and the central role of 'social capital' in binding together civic groups and networks of trust. The official rationale for such policy additions was that of avoiding or compensating for the excesses and social exclusivity of 'free' market outcomes, and thus of protecting the poor – both rural and urban.

Yet, despite such concessions to social development, the philosophy and economics of neoliberalism has continued to occupy center-stage. Its principles not only penetrate national policies and global concerns but also play a role in shaping the perceptions and strategies of local actors – rural and urban in regard to livelihoods and the organization of economic life (Slater, 2004). Agriculture has become part of a global system of production covering a wider range of foodstuffs than ever before in which less-developed countries are increasingly embedded.

Interwoven with these changes were additional constraints on rural life brought by urbanization and globalization. We begin then with an overview of the main demographic and economic trends affecting rural Latin America at the century's end. We emphasize the diversity of the region and the differences between countries in their involvement in the global agricultural economy. Although urbanization and globalization are radically changing the nature of agriculture and of rural life, they are not doing so in a homogeneous direction. Also, political maneuvering and organization affect outcomes, as do the adaptive strategies of local actors in the face of the

opportunities and constraints associated with globalization. We develop these points more fully in subsequent sections.

THE CHANGING CONTEXT AT THE CENTURY'S END

In a previous publication, we reviewed the evolution of the agrarian structures of Latin America from 1930 to 1990 (Long & Roberts, 1994). We emphasized the partial nature of the agrarian transformations amidst a capitalist development in agriculture that affected almost all countries of the region. Plantation production, medium-scale commercial production and peasant semi-subsistence agriculture co-existed in most countries. Only in a few countries or sub-regions, such as Argentina, Uruguay and South-Central Brazil, was production for national consumption or export profitable enough to lead to a thoroughgoing commercialization of agriculture. Elsewhere, peasant households provided temporary labor for the plantations and commercial farms, foodstuffs for the growing cities and served as pioneers in opening up new regions for settlement. In many instances, such as in the south of Mexico and the Amazonian region of Brazil, these new areas were subsequently colonized, often first by small-scale producers who cleared the land, and then by cattle ranchers or plantation agriculturalists.

The context within which these developments occurred was the rapid urbanization of the Latin American region. Because of high birth rates, this initially did little to alleviate population pressure on land in most countries. It did, however, transform the nature of rural livelihood strategies, creating new opportunities as well as new challenges. The creation of a substantial urban market for foodstuffs enabled even small peasant producers to sell, at times, directly in the urban marketplace. The dependence on monetary income in rural areas increased as improved communications and the interrelationships established through rural–urban migration brought industrialized foodstuffs and other industrial products into the village. This made off-farm work, often implying long-distance and even international migration, an increasingly important part of the rural economy. Additionally, state policies in many Latin American countries had an ‘urban bias’ that favoured urban residents through food subsidies at the expense of rural producers (Lipton, 1977; Grindle, 1986).

The changes in this context at the century's end are largely associated with the adoption in most Latin American countries of neo-liberal economic policies, though these policies have varied in intensity and scope from country to country. The generalized and relatively rapid adoption of these

new policies in the 1990s was based on external indebtedness and the consequent dependence of countries on the policy remedies of the multilateral agencies, particularly the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (see [Gwynne & Kay, 1999](#)). Several implications of the new economic and political context are important for the discussion that follows.

Tariffs protected large- and small-scale enterprises from competition during the period of Import Substituting Industrialization (ISI), whereas free trade has brought considerable competition from foreign imports in both manufacturing and agriculture. The resultant emphasis on increasing productivity to meet competitive pressures has tended to displace labor and to make it more insecure in both manufacturing and agricultural enterprises. It has also led to an emphasis on new crops in agriculture that are more competitive on the world market.

Whereas the state during ISI was both economically and politically nationalist, had a national development discourse and often implemented national development plans, particularly for rural areas, current ideology leaves development to market forces, with the state exercising a regulatory role. The state during ISI was highly centralized both in administration and in the provision of key services, such as education, health and social security. However, the dominant contemporary tendency is that of administrative decentralization to provincial and local municipal governments, which are also charged with the administration of health and educational services.

With increasing democratization throughout Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s, local people have acquired more say in local governments, which now have larger revenues and expenditures than in the past, although this gain in resources is often counterbalanced by the withdrawal of central government financial support for local services and infrastructure. As [Schuurman \(1997\)](#) documents, decentralization discourses are rampant and receive positive support from all quarters – international finance agents, governments, the political left, NGOs and people's organizations as well as planners and applied social scientists. The issue remains, however, as to how far such policies effectively empower local groups and strengthen local forms of governance.

These economic and political changes have contradictory implications for rural areas in Latin America. The income opportunities in agriculture are now likely to be more concentrated than in the past, making it more difficult for subsistence-oriented farmers to generate cash incomes. On the other hand, small-scale farmers have more room for political maneuver to the extent that they can influence local government and the allocation of its resources.

A further set of variations arises as a result of demographic changes (Potter & Tuiran, 2005). There is a drop in human fertility throughout Latin America that narrows the previous differences between high fertility countries such as Mexico and Brazil and low fertility countries, such as Argentina and Uruguay. By 2000, Latin America had become a highly urbanized continent with some 75% of its population living in urban places (UNPD, 2004). Though United Nations estimates are based on a minimal definition of urban (2,500+ population or the administrative center of a district), Latin American urbanization has been concentrated in large cities (100,000 and over) and continues to be so in the contemporary period. High levels of urbanization have been accompanied by a general decrease in the level of population growth, although the Central American countries of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, and Haiti, remain at a level of 2% growth per annum, and Paraguay and Venezuela in South America retain rates of over 2% per annum. By 2000, most countries are more than 60% urban with Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay and Venezuela above 80% (UNPD, 2004).

The decline in the proportion of the rural population has been accompanied by a decline in the proportion of the agricultural labor force. Though this decline has been constant throughout the period 1970–2000, it is only in the last years that the absolute numbers of those working in agriculture have in fact declined (Table 1). Excluding Mexico, Central America retains a higher proportion working in agriculture than does South America; but there are major differences between those countries that industrialized early or rapidly and those that possess a weak industrial base.

The countries of the Southern cone fit the category of early or fast industrializing countries, as also does Brazil and Venezuela, and have an agricultural labor force that constitutes less than 20% of the total labor force. The countries with a weak industrial based, mainly those of Central America – excluding Costa Rica, Mexico and Panama (whose development was based on its commercial role vis-à-vis the Canal), but including Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay and Peru – still have agricultural labor forces in excess of 30% of the total labor force. The countries that retain a large labor force in agriculture are also, it should be noted, those countries that have substantial indigenous populations: Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Paraguay and Peru. We will return to this point later when we examine the new ruralities in Latin America.

These demographic changes have the following consequences (Portes & Roberts, 2005). Reduction in fertility, though more marked in urban areas, combined with decreasing proportion of the rural population, results in much less rural–urban migration than in the ISI period, and consequently in

Table 1. Evolution of the Agricultural Labor Force in Latin America, 1970–2000 Selected Countries (000s).

Country	1970		1980		1990		2000	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Venezuela	829	26.0	751	14.6	874	12.0	805	8.1
Argentina	1,495	16.0	1,384	12.9	1,482	12.1	1,464	9.8
Uruguay	207	18.6	192	16.6	193	14.2	190	12.6
Chile	715	24.1	800	20.9	938	18.8	980	15.8
Brazil	16,066	47.2	17,480	36.7	15,232	23.3	13,211	16.7
Nicaragua	350	51.1	393	39.6	392	28.6	396	20.0
Costa Rica	243	42.9	290	35.2	307	26.1	324	20.2
Panama	211	41.6	197	28.9	245	26.2	251	20.3
Colombia	3,080	45.1	3,776	40.5	3,696	26.6	3,719	20.4
Mexico	6,541	43.8	7,995	36.3	8,531	27.8	8,551	21.4
Ecuador	997	51.5	1,013	39.8	1,201	33.3	1,249	25.9
El Salvador	673	56.8	697	43.6	709	36.4	775	29.1
Peru	1,915	48.3	2,183	40.3	2,654	35.7	2,965	30.4
Honduras	580	67.4	684	57.2	693	41.4	769	31.7
Paraguay	409	49.8	514	44.8	595	38.9	706	34.3
Bolivia	872	55.1	1,064	52.8	1,249	46.9	1,497	44.2
Guatemala	1,106	61.1	1,257	53.8	1,569	52.4	1,916	46.1
Total ^a	36,289	42.1	40,670	34.3	40,560	25.2	39,768	19.5
% Rural	10,6399.2	42.3	11,3679.7	35.2	11,2316.8	28.7	11,2835.4	24.4

Source: FAOSTAT Population data, February 2004.

^aThe percentages are the percentage of the total labor force that works in agriculture.

much lower overall rates of urbanization. The predominant forms of migration become urban-to-urban migration and international migration. Urban growth ceases to be concentrated in one or two major primate cities. There is a growth of intermediate cities and a more dispersed pattern of urbanization. However, new forms of urban agglomeration emerge. These are mega urban regions, such as the basin of Mexico City or the state of Sao Paulo metropolitan constellation. These agglomerations contain a central metropolis, which is the location of the headquarters of large firms and specialized services, several more specialized industrial cities, and a peri-urban hinterland of villages and small towns, which mix agriculture (often market gardening) with crafts, services and outsourced production for foreign and national enterprises.

Urban labor markets appear less able to absorb migrants than in the past. Levels of unemployment and underemployment are higher in the late 1990s

in Latin America than they were in the 1970s (Portes & Roberts, 2005). The urban population is likely to be residentially less stable than in the past, moving from city to town, to work abroad or back to rural areas. Urbanization is less hierarchically ordered than in the past, but the countryside is extensively urbanized, even in vast relatively unexploited rural areas, such as the Amazon (Browder & Godfrey, 1997). Most of the rural population now lives in fairly close proximity to towns and transportation. The overall consequence of these demographic changes is that the rural–urban divide becomes even more blurred than in the past, making it necessary to reconceptualize the nature of rural space in Latin America. Yet, the extent of this blurring differs considerably by country and region within country, depending on the extent of urbanization and the nature of the urban system.

What changes, then, have occurred in agricultural and livestock production in these years and how do these create new challenges and opportunities for the rural population? The following analysis is based on data on agricultural production and import/export trade taken from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) statistical database (Faostat, 2004). Though trends vary by country, some central tendencies are apparent. Areas under permanent crops and pastures have increased throughout the region, especially in countries which have expanded their agricultural frontiers, particularly Brazil. Areas under irrigation have also increased throughout the region, most markedly in Mexico, Brazil and Chile. Agricultural output has increased substantially and so has agricultural productivity. The FAO estimate of the per capita production index (baseline 99–01) for food products shows an increase from 79.3 in 1970 to 103.5 in 2002.

At the same time, agriculture contributes a relatively small share to national GDPs, even in those countries that have developed a substantial commercial agriculture such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. In Argentina, agriculture contributed 4.9% of value added to the GDP in 2000, down from 5.3% in 1990. In Brazil, agriculture contributed 7.7% of value added in 2000, up from 7.0% in 1990, and in Mexico, agriculture's contribution was 4.5% in 2000, down from 5.5% in 1990. In all three cases, however, agriculture's absolute contribution at constant prices increased between the two years.

The political weight of landowners may thus be less than in the past, particularly amongst those landowners involved in traditional cash-crop production. Those involved in the new export crops, as we will see, have strong links to global financial and distribution interests and continue to be key political actors at national and sub-national levels.

There has been a significant shift in the types of agricultural exports and thus in the contribution of different agricultural products to GDP. In 1970,

the two major exports by value were coffee and tea (38.9%) and meats and hides (15.5%), followed by fruit and vegetables, textile fibers and cereals, each of which accounted for just over 10% of export value (Chart 1). By 2000, the two major exports by value were oilseeds and their derivatives (31.6%) and fruit and vegetables (26.8%). The categories of coffee/tea and of meats/hides barely contributed 10% each of export value. Within the category of fruits and vegetables, there is a substantial increase in market garden crops for the urban consumer, such as asparagus, avocados, tomatoes, chilies and peppers, cucumbers, grapes and onions. Non-agricultural products, such as fish products and wood pulp for paper have also increased their contribution to the region's exports. Fish products are significant exports in Chile, Peru, Mexico and Ecuador, while wood pulp for paper is important in Brazil and Chile.

The countries of Latin America differ considerably in terms of the crops and livestock that they export. The major exporters by value are Argentina

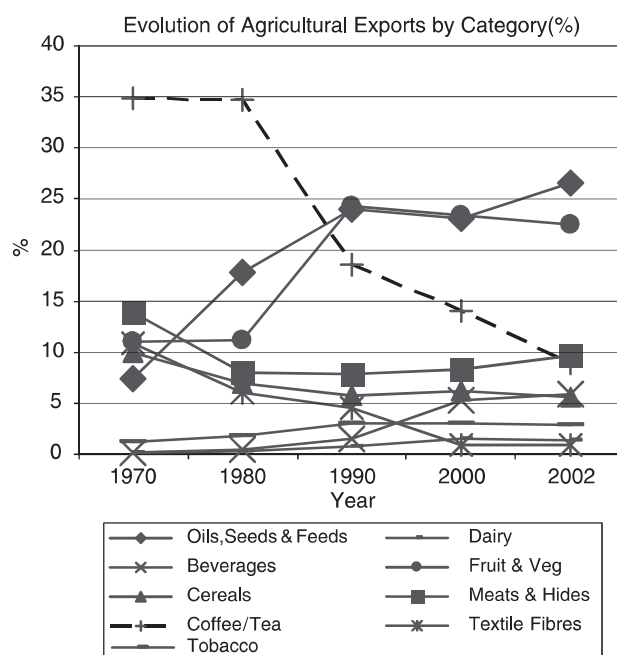


Chart 1.

and Brazil (21.7% and 32.9% of the region's total export value respectively in 2002), both of which have shifted their exports away from their traditional ones, which were meat and cereals in the Argentinean case and coffee in the Brazilian case. In both countries, oil seed and their derivatives, which include vegetable oils and feedstuffs, are now the major exports (54.6% and 36.7% respectively of each country's total exports by value in 2002) with meat increasingly important in Brazil. Chile, in contrast, is an example of a country that has dramatically increased its contribution to the region's exports moving from less than 1% of the region's exports by value in 1970 to 6.8% in 2002, but without substantially changing the profile of its agricultural exports. As in 1970, Chile continues to specialize in the export of wine, fruits and vegetables, taking advantage of tariff reductions to increase its sales to northern markets. In addition, fish products and pulp for paper are important contributors to Chile's exports.

Mexico presents yet another pattern. Overall, Mexico is one of five Latin American countries that import more agricultural products by value than they export (El Salvador, Panama, Peru and Venezuela are the others). Mexico's deficit is accounted for mainly by imports of meat and meat products (17.9% of imports by value), by cereals (15.8%) and by oil seeds and their derivatives (15.8%). Mexico maintains a favorable import-export balance in fruit and vegetables, particularly in crops such as tomatoes, chilies/peppers and other salad crops, most of which are exported to the U.S. Distilled alcoholic beverages and beer have been other export success stories. Peru shows similar tendencies, importing cereals and oilseeds and their derivatives, but increasing their exports of non-traditional vegetables, especially asparagus. Like Chile, Peruvian fisheries make a substantial contribution to exports. In general, then, imports of agricultural products increase in relation to exports in most Latin American countries between 1970 and 2000.

The incidence of these trends differs between Latin American countries, and so too does their impact. However, they point in similar directions. The new forms of internal and external demand for agricultural products foster two very different production systems in agriculture. One is the corporate, large-scale enterprise suited to large-scale agricultural production such as oil seeds and their derivatives, cattle or vegetables for processing. This type is capital rather than labor intensive. The other is small, commercially oriented farms producing market garden products, fruits and wine. This type has a relatively high degree of labor input, technological sophistication and quality control. Both types of farms often form part of commodity networks organized by domestic intermediaries, large-scale supermarket chains, such as Wal-Mart and Carrefour, and foreign food marketers.

The two types of production systems can, and in the case of soybean production in Brazil, do cater for the same crop. Which system predominates often depends on political influence and organization rather than simply on economic viability. These production systems differ in their demand for temporary and full-time labor, including gender and skill composition. They also differ in their local linkages in terms of service provision, transport, manufacturing and processing industries. The linkage issue was first raised by Hirschman (1977) in his analysis of backward and forward linkages and remains as relevant today for understanding the opportunities opened up and the constraints generated at the local level by the new production systems. The nature and extent of linkages are sources of difference in rural livelihoods and affect the room for maneuver that different rural actors have in the face of increasing agricultural globalization.

In researching these issues we should be careful not to operate with a simple model that sees large-scale, often foreign, enterprises as closing off local opportunities, while the smaller commercial production systems are seen as more favorable to local development. In an earlier study, in the Peruvian Andes, of the impact of a mining enclave on its surrounding region, we showed the multiple ways in which the presence of this large-scale foreign enterprise stimulated the rise of smaller-scale local enterprises in agriculture, trade and manufacturing (Long & Roberts, 1984).

The foregoing overview of the macro economic, demographic and political trends suggests that the emerging rural sector in Latin America is far from uniform. It is also sufficiently different from the past in terms of the nature of agricultural production and rural livelihoods to require a rethinking of the analytical concepts needed for researching rural questions. Rural spaces are now much less territorially bounded than in the past, more differentiated, and more closely and diversely linked with external actors, both national and international. The next section offers a preliminary attempt to set out an appropriate conceptual and methodological agenda.

THE RISE OF NEW RURALITIES: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Our starting point is the globalization of agriculture, but we emphasize both the diversity and uneven nature of this process (cf. Buttel, 1994). From this perspective, the impact of globalization on agriculture takes place through a series of heterogeneous commodity networks based on different types of

food production and associated patterns of distribution and consumption. We prefer the term 'commodity network' rather than 'commodity chain' since our focus is on the multiple sets of actors involved, the differences in their interests and values and the processes of competition and negotiation present in their interaction. The actors in these networks are less circumscribed by territorial boundaries – local, provincial or national – than they were in the past. Moreover, our use of the term, the 'new ruralities,' is intended to underscore the diversity of rural identities and livelihoods that now exists in the countryside, even within the same geographical space. In respect to these changes, there are four distinct components that we single out as priorities for research.

The first component concerns the ill-defined nature of rural space, which nowadays, can no longer be considered coterminous with agricultural space. This situation contrasts with that of the 1970s and 1980s when researchers identified the central problems for analysis as the 'agrarian question,' namely the debate about the significance of proletarianization versus peasantization of the countryside. This was a major preoccupation of agrarian social science, particularly in Latin America, during the 1970s and 1980s (see Kautsky, 1899; de Janvry, 1981; Harriss, 1982; Goodman & Redclift, 1981; and many articles in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*). In the contemporary countryside, agricultural production can no longer be privileged over other income-earning/livelihood activities and we should go beyond agricultural production and resource issues to look more broadly at the utilization of countryside resources. This means a concern for landscape and environmental dimensions, for recreation and leisure time pursuits, and for the management of forest and water resources, and similar amenities.

A second component of the new ruralities is the new limits on the extent to which outside authorities or powerful groups can impose or dictate the transformation of the countryside. The number of significant actors involved in the countryside has grown, making it more difficult for any one interest to predominate. The different actors involved – peasant smallholders, indigenous people, commercial farmers, transnational companies, agricultural bureaucrats, credit banks, various agrarian organizations, property developers, and city folk moving into the countryside to enjoy a more rural lifestyle – all struggle to advance their own particular interests and to have a say in what happens to rural resources in the short and longer term.

The organizational forms that result are complex and varied, since each 'solution' represents a specific configuration of interlocking actors' 'projects' generated by the encounters, negotiations and accommodations that take place between them, even though some may never in fact meet face-to-face

(Long & van der Ploeg, 1994; Long, 2001, pp. 49–72). The influence of actors who are remote from the action–situation is especially pertinent in an age where information technology penetrates more and more into everyday life. Many commercial farmers in poor countries now communicate through walkie-talkies with their farm overseers or foremen in the fields, and possess mobile phones and computers that can directly access foreign commodity markets for up-to-date information on prices and product turnover.

And wage-earning migrants living abroad constitute an important source of information, and their remittances subsidize incomes and livelihood activities in their places of origin. An interesting example is the regular flow of highly skilled shepherds from the remoter areas of highland Peru to work on the sheep ranches of the mid-west of the U.S. They speak no English and often little Spanish, yet their expertise is highly valued since it helps to maintain high levels of reproduction and offspring survival among the sheep. Unlike many international agricultural migrant workers, these workers are legal, have three-year contracts and earn a regular dollar wage, part of which they remit or save to invest in small-scale business and farming ventures on returning home (Altamirano, 1991).

The limits on externally imposed transformations are reinforced by the third component of the new ruralities. This is the importance of value contestation and construction, both socio-cultural and economic, in the operation of new global commodity networks. Here, research should focus especially on the dynamics of these processes at the level of local producers as well as on the transformation of values as commodities pass into the arenas of processing, marketing, retailing and consumption (see Long & Villarreal, 1998; Stanford, 2002 on avocados). For example, the organization of marketing and retailing is not simply a matter of adding value to the commodity. Rather it constitutes a series of interlocking arenas of struggle, as we will illustrate in the Jalisco milk case, in which various parties may contest notions of ‘quality,’ ‘convenience’ and ‘price.’

Undertaking a commodity flow analysis – in terms of both practice and discourse – gives attention to the ways in which people organize themselves around commodities and ascribe values to them (cf. Appadurai’s (1986) notion of ‘the social life of things’). These contestations and negotiations usually entail the mobilization of arguments about what constitutes consumer preference, the availability and advantages of particular technologies, and issues relating to the material presentation of the commodity to its relevant audiences (i.e., in relation to the supermarkets, small retailers, ‘alternative’ food shop owners, and an array of different consumer interests). Language representations and the clashes that they invoke can also segment markets.

This is illustrated in respect to consumption preferences by the often-heated debates that arise concerning food quality and extend to embrace issues of a 'healthy' diet, nutritional 'needs' and 'environmental pollution.'

Hence, as social constructs, commodities contribute to the development of both markets and consumer life styles in contemporary society. A commodity approach, therefore, should give attention to how new alliances are built between producers, distributors, retailers and consumers. These commodity networks can improve the bargaining powers of producer and consumer organizations vis-à-vis corporate global interests as well as those of the often 'disempowered' low- and middle-income nation states.

Emphasizing value contestation and construction also draws attention to the continuing and innovative resistance to absorption into global commodity networks. This occurs when producers, consumers and agricultural workers identify critical interests, both cultural and economic, as being threatened or marginalized by outside markets and institutions. Such interests are often based on existing life styles or local forms of knowledge that are seen as vital to a community's identity and survival. This opens up a related line of enquiry, namely, the exploration of the processes by which people and their 'objects of desire' generate certain cultural identifications that segment markets, create specialized demands for production and even reduce the commoditization of the countryside.

Immigrant populations often generate these specialized demands. An example is the extensive market created for corn husks grown by small-scale farmers in Mexico, packaged by Mexican plants and then transported across the border for the making of *tamales* in California (Long & Villarreal, 1998). We also find cases where farmers opt out of global commodity markets since they judge that the benefits of meeting one's own consumption requirements outweigh any gains made through commoditization. One such case is that of farmers in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca in Mexico who prefer to consume and exchange locally their native varieties of maize even though the costs of production are above market prices (Appendini et al., 2003). In yet other situations producers and consumers may commit themselves to the idea of finding an alternative way through the formation of non-monetary exchange systems, such as the *trueque* movement in Argentina, which at its highest point in 2002 had an estimated 2.5 million members (Primavera, Covas, & De Sanzo, nd.; Gonzalez Bombal & Luzzi, 2002). On the other hand, local organizing practices and networks may contribute innovatively to the production of high-quality commodities destined for less exploitative external markets, such as, for example, those associated with the principles of 'fair trade' (see Whatmore & Thorne, 1997; Fisher, 1997). One further general

observation is that if intervening parties, such as multinational firms, the state or retail organizations, fail to take seriously the ways in which people mobilize and use resources through existing social networks and cultural commitments, then they run the risk of being rejected by, or distanced from, the life experiences and priorities of local producers. Hence, the importance of studying how external market demands are internalized or modified by local populations (Pottier, Bicker, & Sillitoe, 2003).

The fourth component of the new ruralities follows from the previous one. This relates to the fact that 'nature,' more than in the past, has come to mean quite different things to different actors. It can no longer, therefore, be considered the taken-for-granted backdrop to agriculture and rural life. Recent research has documented the extent that local actors (e.g. peasants and traders) and outsiders (e.g. agricultural extensionists, pollution officers, conservationists and research scientists) differ in their assessments and priorities, and in the way they represent 'nature-man' relations and the 'environment.' And some researchers now call for the abandonment of the commonplace distinction between the nature/man or nature/culture divide in favor of the composite notion of 'social nature' (Braun & Castree, 1998; also see Ingold, 1986; Croll & Parkin, 1992; Ellen & Katsuyoshi, 1996).

Underlying these discussions is the more pragmatic question of what measures to use in the management of so-called natural resources. Here, the focus is on how the state attempts to control people and territory as against how people *in situ* go about utilizing and conserving resources and biodiversity. Indigenous social movements, as we will see, have quite different conceptions of their rights and relationships to territory than do national governments, particularly when it comes to water, forest and subsoil resources. In the current international context, governments are frequently faced with the choice of implementing what are called 'centralized' or 'decentralized' modes of resource control – the latter usually implying some community involvement in natural resource management or the creation of relatively autonomous national parks that cater for ecological tourism. It remains an open question as to whether such decentralized modes of control are, as Schuurman (1997) is inclined to conclude, a part of neoliberal discourse that contributes to the 'hollowing out of the state' and to the furtherance of global forms of capitalist exploitation. Or is it a way of increasing empowerment among local people in the management of their own resources?

Nowadays environmental policies are hedged round with a host of regulatory prescriptions of a global kind (for example, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on Bio-Diversity (CBD), and subject to pressures from powerful conservationist

lobbies. As many studies have shown, the protection and conservation of wildlife through the setting up of national parks or protected areas does not necessarily ensure the continued preservation of natural resources and endangered species. These environmental and biodiversity conservation issues – coupled as they are with a booming eco-tourism – are critically important for the future livelihoods of many rural inhabitants.

These components of the new ruralities raise a central methodological issue. This concerns the need to bridge the evident disjuncture between the sociology of rural development and ecological/environmental anthropology. Whereas the sociology of rural development has generally focused on issues of production, consumption and commodity values in the context of globalization, ecological anthropology has principally concerned itself with the conceptual issue of how to relate social-to-natural phenomena and has explored the epistemological understandings and cultural meanings associated with social and environmental relationships. Clearly, there is a need to synthesize these contrasting perspectives so as to achieve greater insight into questions of diversity and change in the countryside.

As a preliminary exploration of these new ruralities and the research challenges they pose, we now present three illustrative case studies to highlight the changes in rural landscapes and the options available to rural inhabitants.

RECONFIGURING RURAL SPACE: THREE CASE STUDIES

The three cases analyzed below are illustrative of what we see as key issues facing policy makers, researchers and the many other actors involved in the new ruralities of Latin America. The cases highlight the conceptual issues outlined in the previous section, namely the importance of value construction and contestation in the operation of new global commodity networks, the limited extent to which transformations can be imposed externally, the ill-defined nature of rural space and the multiple meanings attributed to nature and countryside resources. All three cases illustrate the complexity and multifaceted nature of the changes in rural livelihoods that result, directly or indirectly, from globalization. Despite similar external pressures, the cases show that the direction of change is neither homogeneous nor predictable. The play of politics, at both local and national levels, affects outcomes, as also do the adaptive strategies of local actors and fluctuations in the global economy.

This is true even in the first case, soybean production in Brazil, which is an example of one of the most radical reconfigurations of rural landscapes and livelihoods brought by large-scale export-oriented production. The second case, milk production in Jalisco, Mexico, illustrates the increasing importance of international standards of quality and safety for the survival of even those enterprises that supply a domestic market. The third case looks at the apparently paradoxical case of the revival of indigenous identities in the face of economic liberalization and globalization so that they become an important element of the new ruralities in Latin America.

The Case of Brazilian Soybeans

The major Latin America soybean producer is Brazil, whose 2003 production of 51 billion metric tons approximated that of the USA at 66 billion tons. Argentina is the second largest producer in Latin America, but, in recent years, several Latin American countries have considerably extended their soybean production, notably Uruguay, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras and Paraguay (Faostat data, 2004).

The impact of the change to soybean production on rural livelihoods is both direct – on the areas in which it is implanted – and indirect through the expulsion of existing rural populations. In Brazil, the conversion to soybean production of large areas of Southern Brazil, such as the state of Paraná, resulted in an estimated net migration of 2.5 million displaced rural workers in the 1970s (Martine, 1988; Mahar, 1989, p. 31; both quoted in Browder & Godfrey, 1997, p. 168). Since 1980, the area under soybean cultivation has risen from 8.8 million hectares to 18.5 million hectares, extending into the Center-West states of the Brazilian Amazonia, such as Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul (Flaskerud, 2003). By 2002–2003, soybean production and soybean farms were larger in the Center-West of Brazil than in the traditional Southern area of production.

Large-scale soybean production in Brazil is usually based on a no-till system, particularly in areas of poor soil, which accounts for some 50% of production, in which herbicides are used to limit weed growth. Though in comparison to U.S. production systems, the large-scale farms in Brazil are more labor intensive, they need only a fraction of the labor used in small-scale farms. One estimate put the labor needs of a 30 ha ecological soybean farm at 147 h/ha/year compared with 40.5 h for a 3,000 ha herbicide farm (Ortega, Miller, Anami, & Beskow, nd). A 50,000 ha soybean farm in the Center-West employs between 200 and 300 workers on a year round basis

(Flaskerud, 2003). Large-scale producers are closely allied to multinational companies, such as Monsanto, for seeds and herbicides, or food and feed-stuff companies, such as Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), for sales and processing. Though Brazil has been one of the few countries to ban genetically modified (GM) seeds, their use has grown in recent years and in 2004 they were permitted on a limited scale by the government (Rohter, 2003). Monsanto produces GM seeds that are resistant to herbicides, facilitating no-till production systems.

Nevertheless, small-scale soybean farming can survive in the face of large-scale production. In fact, the small labor-intensive soybean producing farms of between 30 and 300 hectares can be more profitable per hectare than the large farms (Ortega et al., nd, Table 4). However, the scale of production of the large farms drives down prices. The small soybean farmer gains little advantage from the innovations in seed and herbicides since their production systems usually include intercropping, which makes herbicide use inappropriate. In this situation, the introduction of genetically modified seeds and the expansion of large-scale soybean farming have become a divisive political issue in Brazil.

The Brazilian Landless Worker Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)) was first organized from the state of Paraná, and has become one of the major opponents of the introduction of organically modified soy seed, lobbying government to prohibit their use and taking direct action against Monsanto experimental stations (MST website). The MST is also engaged in the resettlement of landless agricultural workers and the development of production cooperatives. It produces organic soy seed and runs soybean farms in Parana that produce high yields using conventional seed. The MST supported the Worker's Party candidate, Lula, in the 2002 Presidential elections in Brazil, but has since become an opponent of his agricultural policies, including permitting the use of GM seed for soybean production. Lula's justification has been the priority he gives to producing food cheaply for the poor in Brazil and the role of soybeans not only in generating export earnings but of providing feed for cattle and poultry production. The MST does, however, cooperate with some of Lula's government agencies, notably the Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA).

Brazil's agrarian landscape is being substantially changed by its 'new' major agricultural products – oilseeds & derivatives and meat & meat preparations. Whereas the old agrarian heartland of Brazil, the states of the Center-South and South of Brazil, account for a steadily declining proportion of Brazilian agricultural production, those of the Center-West and

North, the Brazilian Amazonia, are expanding production and production areas rapidly, increasingly at the expense of the Amazonian forest. Originally, the colonization of the Amazonia region was conceived by the military governments of 1960s and 1970s as part of enhancing national security by developing the frontier, providing land for migrants displaced from the South and as a means of relieving land-pressure in the North-East (Browder & Godfrey, 1997, pp. 67–71). The transport networks established to facilitate colonization together with land grants and low land prices made the Amazonia attractive to extractive activities, particularly lumber, but increasingly to cattle-raising and subsequently to soybean production, creating a sequence in which small-scale farmers, timber extraction and roads prepare the way for pasture, which when degraded, can be turned over to soybean production. This sequence is a dynamic one since large-scale livestock producers sell their lands to soy production and move further northwards to new frontiers (Castro, 2004).

The small-scale farmers that first colonized the area were often displaced by the larger operators, either forcibly, by being bought out, or through the failure of their enterprises. Poor soils, poor communications and lack of local markets made small-scale farming relatively unprofitable. Even the basic foodstuffs sold in small town stores in Amazonia were imported from the Center-South of the country (Browder & Godfrey, 1997, pp. 281–285). However, as Browder and Godfrey (1997) point out, these processes did not result in rural landscapes totally dominated by large-scale farming and by surplus extraction entirely for the benefit of national and international corporate interests. Rather, the development of the frontier gave rise to two distinct patterns of urbanization – a corporate and a populist urbanization (*ibid.*, p. 100). In states like Rondônia, the influx of landless farmers from the South coupled with the support of the Brazilian Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) ensured that small-scale agricultural colonization predominated. Timber extraction and small-scale mining helped power the colonization process, but, from the beginning, it was based on a network of small urban settlements closely integrated with agricultural and extractive activities, often by the ownership of both urban and rural properties.

The pattern of populist development described by Browder and Godfrey is one of a shifting and chaotic pattern of urbanization as old frontiers are exhausted and new ones opened up leading to the decline of old urban centers and the rise of new ones. However, it is a pattern of agrarian development that appears able to sustain a relatively large population, of whom few are specialized agricultural producers. Decentralization in Brazil also supports this pattern of urbanization by mandatory transfers of

revenue from federal government to state and municipal government. These transfers increase local revenues, giving local authorities more say in the allocation of jobs in the social services and public administration.

Corporate urbanization, which Browder and Godfrey see as predominating in the state of Pará, is based on large-scale projects – construction, mining and agriculture. These brought not only the workers needed for the project, but a large number of migrants attracted by the prospect of the economic opportunities being created. Currently, the driving force of corporate urbanization is soybean production. Initially, this concentrated in the non-forest areas, but with the expansion in demand, the new areas being cleared in Mato Grosso are forest. The governor of Mato Grosso is a member of one of Brazil's largest soybean producing companies and advocates increased deforestation of the state to improve production (Rohter, 2003). Small and medium size towns arise to service the projects, such as the town of Campo Verde in Mato Grosso, a center for soybean production, storage and agricultural vehicle dealerships, with a population in the municipality that grew from nothing to 30,000 in 15 years. The soybean production and distribution system is also the basis for several intermediate size cities in Mato Grosso, such as its capital Cuiabá with a population of some 500,000, and the nearby city of Rondonópolis with a population of 150,000. These towns often have a dualistic structure in which the purpose-built housing of the workers in the projects contrasts with the informal housing of temporary and service workers.

The Brazilian soy bean case shows the power but also the limits of economic globalization. The rising worldwide demand for soy is an interesting case of a newly valued food very popular as both a direct and indirect (through animal feed) source of protein that originated in East Asia and now is used worldwide. The demand for soy is transforming vast tracts of the Brazilian countryside, including the deforestation of part of the Amazonian forest. Note, however, that the triumph of large-scale production systems in the Amazonian region is as much political as economic. The profitability of soybean farming in Amazonia depends on government support in terms of the provision of cheap land and transport infrastructure, as well as allowing deforestation and the use of genetically modified seeds. Party politics flourish in Brazil and play an important part in shaping outcomes, namely through the struggles of the landless workers' movements (MST) and the political maneuvering of the soybean lobbies at national, state and municipal levels.

Even in the case of large-scale soybean production, the transformations produced are uneven and partial because of the shifting and provisional

nature of soybean farming. This situation generates a variety of small-scale opportunities. Poor transport infrastructure and the need to transport products, such as soybeans, over large distances generate a demand for small-scale commerce, repair, and food and lodging services. Entrepreneurial opportunities emerge which can be combined with small-scale farming to provide livelihoods. This Brazilian case also shows the analytic inappropriateness of the rural–urban divide. The Amazonian population is highly urban, and even those extracting a living from agriculture maintain houses in towns and more basic shelter in the rural hinterland.

Mexican Dairy Industry: The Case of Jalisco

Mexico provides a striking example of a Latin American country with a marked deficit in the export of agricultural products. This trend has continued with the implementation of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Mexico now imports large amounts of grains (even maize), animal foodstuffs and milk products due principally to lower U.S. prices. Mexico is presently the world's leading importer of powdered milk: the devaluation of the peso in 1994 and the economic crisis that followed led to an overnight doubling of domestic market prices (García-Hernández, 1998). One recent study argues (Rodríguez-Gómez, 1999, pp. 339–340) that this trend toward globalization brought about three contradictions in the internal market: the dairy industries preferred, because of cost factors, to use imported powdered milk and milk derivatives; farmers' had to face the issues of high production costs and low wholesale milk prices; and the dairy industries justified their use of imported goods in terms of the low quality of Mexican products which did not meet international standards. In general, the farmers blamed government and its incapacity to regulate imports and to provide support for domestic producers for this deteriorating situation. Another factor was that milk prices were kept at an artificially low level to benefit urban consumers rather than farmers and rural consumers. After 1994, government policy vis-à-vis milk consumption shifted from a system based on price control to a social program aimed at supplying subsidized milk to lower income groups (Lara-Covarrublas et al., 2003, p. 86). Rodríguez-Gómez (1999) goes on to look in detail at the dynamics of these processes in the state of Jalisco (see also the studies by Cervantes Escoto & Soltero Beltrán (2004) and Lara-Covarrublas et al. (2003)).

Jalisco leads the production of Mexican milk production (18% of the total during the period 1990–1998). Most of this comes from the region of

Los Altos, which accounts for an incredible 13% of national production. Early in the 1990s, the ministries of Agriculture and Commerce, together with the social compensation programme (*Solidaridad*) joined forces with the Los Altos-based regional and transnational dairy industries (e.g. Nestlé, Lechera Guadalajara, Parmalata) to encourage the formation of small- and medium-scale farmers' associations for the cooling and marketing of milk cooperatively. A principal aim was to improve milk quality throughout the region, but 90% of the dairy producers lacked the material and technological basis for achieving this. The role of the dairy processing industries was to persuade these farmers' associations to purchase cooling tanks and market the milk collectively. They also introduced a new graduated pricing system based on a hierarchy of quality levels. In this way they sought to get farmers to adhere to the standards of production set by international trading companies in accordance with their established quality criteria. This entailed two processes: increased vertical integration of production units with milk suppliers, and the production of so-called 'better quality' and 'safe' milk at lower prices (Cervantes Escoto & Soltero Beltran, 2004, p. 208). Yet, although these various industries collaborated with each other, thus giving the impression that they were operating with the same concept of 'quality,' a whole series of discourses developed that favored specific definitions, commercial practices, and power relations between farmers, traders, agro-industrial enterprises and government agencies.

The issue of quality standards stimulated the organization of legally recognized dairy producers' associations (*sociedades de producción*) that had ongoing contracts with particular processing companies for marketing their total milk production. In return the industry promised to facilitate farmers' access to cooling tanks, either by providing them on loan or by offering group credit for their purchase, but the companies retained the right to reject milk that did not meet their quality standards and to determine the prices they would pay. The state agencies also offered access to tanks and credit, and in some cases assumed up to 40% of the costs of building the tank and installing electricity and other utilities. However, despite all this external investment in the promotion of quality-controlled milk production, farmers' in Los Altos initially showed a reluctance to opt for these new arrangements.

The reasons for this were several. In the first place, producers and entrepreneurs in this region have a reputation for fiercely defending their independence vis-à-vis central government and other outside interests (Gonzalez, 1974). This attitude is deeply embedded in the history of the struggles of the *Cristeros* – conservative Catholic rebels, based in Los Altos,

who fought both the *agraristas* (i.e. protagonists of agrarian reform) and the Mexican state in the 1920s (Meyer, 1974). This socio-political stance is still evident in the contemporary politics and culture of Los Altos where everyday life and trust revolve around family and personalistic ties, and not joint ventures with government or large corporate institutions. Hence farmers were skeptical about the advantages of joining farmers' associations and shouldering collective and financial and other arrangements. They reasoned that this could endanger their own individual and family enterprises, and perhaps the other economic activities in which they were involved. Nevertheless, many farmers' associations came into existence, some effectively combining both smallholder *ejidatarios* and private land owners. In the end, while acknowledging the many difficulties and insecurities that such changes might bring, a majority of farmers voiced the opinion that they had little alternative but to form these associations along the lines proposed by the dairy processing industry, otherwise they stood to lose an important growing market for their milk.

On the other hand, farmers continue to sell in a wide variety of local markets. For instance, fresh milk is sold on a door-to-door basis in the towns of the region as well as to local cheese, butter, cream and local sweet processors. The latter operate a variety of quality requirements that fit their own particular technologies. For the small-scale industrial consumers of warm milk, such as the various artisanal creameries, quality simply means the absence of water in fresh milk, whereas larger scale processors equate quality with a certain milk temperature, approved levels of solids and fat contents, absence of harmful bacterial materials, and levels of acidity. The majority of dairy producers in Los Altos, therefore, adopt a diversified production and marketing strategy that enables them to supply 'modern' quality-controlled milk for the dairy industry, while continuing to provide fresh, less standardized, varieties for the local processing of cheese, butter, creams etc. Indeed, many farmers adamantly refuse to acknowledge that the cooling of milk adds to its quality. As Rodríguez-Gómez (1999, p. 351–352) points out, "But, farmers' responses are as contradictory and ambiguous as are the processes of social, material, cultural and power transformation brought by the standardization of this cultural form."

Nowadays Jalisco boasts more than 330 dairy farmers' associations, but this does not imply that 'modern' quality-controlled milk production now constitutes the central dynamic of family farming in Los Altos. In addition to dairying activities, these same farmers are involved in a variety of on- and off-farm work, including that of national and international migrant labor.

The family and regional economy is thus both diversified and flexible. One interesting dimension concerns the reconfiguring of roles within the families of small and medium-scale farmers. Children now take charge of delivering the fresh milk to the shared cooling tank; young men and women milk and feed the cows, while the wives are required to wash the farm's milk containers. In many cases, this results in the releasing of adult males from dairying to work on other tasks on the farm or they seek farm or off-farm work in neighboring areas and even as far afield as the U.S.

Another element that has significantly changed the agrarian situation concerns the way in which the newly founded farmers' associations have undermined the position of local commercial traders who previously acted as intermediaries between the dairy producers and the older processing companies. Now, of course, it is the farmers' associations that are directly responsible for negotiating with the dairy industries the terms and details of the milk contracts. Much of this process relates to quality standardization, which from the farmers' point of view entails the necessity of gaining as much autonomy as possible in the production process and achieving greater control over the profits generated in the marketing chain. Many similar processes pertain to other 'globalized' commodities and to a wide range of food products. The farmers' of Jalisco have made certain advances in these respects through collective actions spearheaded by their associations, but have not gained as much ground as their counterparts in Aguascalientes. The latter, it seems, have succeeded in strengthening their associations through the formation of a single overarching organization which allows for greater room for maneuver and negotiation with the dairy industry and state agencies. In Michoacán, in contrast, local systems of power and patronage have run counter to the goal of creating viable, profitable producer organizations (McDonald, 2003). As in the Jalisco case, milk 'quality' became a critical issue in Michoacán that was fiercely contested by the different actors: the small-scale dairy farmers, the larger producers, the milk processing firms and the government technical 'experts.'

The case of the Jalisco dairy industry underlines the degree of maneuver possessed by small-scale producers even in the face of the standardization imposed by international agreements and adopted by state agencies and large-scale distributors. This occurs, in part, through contestation over the differing definitions of quality used by local producers and consumers as opposed to those promoted by technical experts employed by government and large-scale distributors. Also important is the increasing political organization and clout possessed by small-scale producers in part advanced by democratization and political decentralization.

The Resurgence of Ethnicities

Our third illustrative case is the apparently paradoxical one of the resurgence of collective indigenous identities in the face of the triumph of liberalism. In the nineteenth century in Latin America, political and economic liberalism was the explicit foe of corporate identities, particularly with respect to collective property, whether of the church or indigenous communities (De la Peña, 1998). In the mid-twentieth century, the study of indigenous communities was mainly the speciality of anthropologists concerned to document the cultural practices and peculiarities of what, at the time, seemed like a disappearing world. Rural sociologists tended, in contrast, to view indigenous populations, particularly those of the Andean highlands, Mexico and Central America, as peasants, whose customs and practices, including agriculture, could best be understood in terms of the constraints and strategies of family-based farming. The predominant view of Latin American governments tended to be that indigenous cultures were a barrier to modernization. Indigenous languages were prohibited in schools and in the work of government. In Peru, the government renamed the previously designated 'indigenous communities' as 'peasant communities' as an explicit step in their progress to modernization. In the case of Mexico, the indigenous past was revered, but the indigenous present was treated as a living museum and placed under the tutelage of the National Indigenous Institute. Thus any group that spoke an indigenous language and manifested a distinctive culture was separated from the mass of the rural population, whether 'peasant' or 'proletarian'.

By the end of the twentieth century, indigenous social movements had become some of the most active and consequential movements in Latin America (Kearney, 1996; De la Peña, 1998; Langer & Muñoz, 2003; Van Cott, 2000; Varese, 1996; Hale, 2004). They have gained political power in both Bolivia and Ecuador. They are even active and influential in countries, such as Argentina and Chile, whose governing elites, for long, resolutely denied that their countries had indigenous populations.

The nature and impact of indigenous identities and movements reflect the two facets of neo-liberal reforms in the region, one economic and the other political and social. The former brings increasing economic pressure on the rural and urban poor, whereas the latter promotes rights, democracy and what Hale (2004) calls 'neoliberal multiculturalism.' Democratization in the region has created spaces within which indigenous movements can develop and make their demands heard. In this, they have been supported by national and international networks of NGOs that work on human rights

issues (Deere & León, 2000). The United Nations and most governments of the developed world have also supported indigenous rights through sponsoring conferences, making grants-in-aid to indigenous organizations and, at times, through insisting that respect for indigenous rights and identities be part of multilateral loan and grant agreements.

The demand-making capacity of indigenous groups and their self-awareness as social actors have also increased with better communications, including the use of the internet, increases in levels of education of indigenous people and the mobilizing impact of migration and urbanization. At the same time, indigenous populations remain the poorest segment of the population with pressing necessities, which have been aggravated by the economics of neoliberalism, such as competition from cheap imported foodstuffs. Strengthening indigenous culture as a means of eliminating the marginality and powerlessness of indigenous people is a major platform for indigenous social movements and the organizations that support them (Iturralde & Krotz, 1996).

The aspect of indigenous identities and social movements that concerns us in this paper is their rural character. Not all those who identify themselves as indigenous live in rural areas. Indeed, in Chile, for example, a majority of the Mapuche live in large cities, predominantly Santiago. However, in most indigenous movements fundamental aspects of the construction of their identities are embedded in the culture and practices of agricultural, pastoral and forest activities. Also, some of the most important demands of indigenous movements are for agricultural and forest land, including the return of ancestral land (Alwyn, 2002). They claim the right to live according to their traditional laws and practices, as in the case of communal work arrangements, collective tenure, household relations or community rituals (De la Peña, 1998; Iturralde, 2001). These are most compatible with rural not urban life. Likewise, the demands of indigenous movements for cultural rights, such as multicultural education, are most easily implemented in rural rather than urban settings. Their emphasis on territorial autonomy and a return to a traditional rural life may, at times, be more political and ideological than a practical plan, but the consequent emphasis on the importance of agriculture to indigenous people is an important component of the new ruralities in Latin America.

In reviewing the resurgence of Black and indigenous collective movements in Central America, Charles Hale (2004) argues that the imagined and occupied spaces that these movements create are essentially rural ones. As Hale points out, there have been substantial achievements in extending and recognizing Black and indigenous rights in Central America, partly as a

result of the strength of grass-roots organizations, but also because of external backing from multilateral agencies and foreign governments. Hale shows how the multiculturalism that is promoted is mainly limited to the cultural sphere and rarely reaches migrants or city dwellers. It creates in Hale's words "contaminated spaces, where the hand of the state is already present in the very efforts conceived to contest state oppression." The material gains of the movements are usually over land rights, which in the past had been sources of bitter conflict between the landed elites of Central America and the Black and indigenous populations. Conceding land rights is now easier for elites because of the decline in the importance of agriculture in the Central American economies and a shift of investments from traditional export crops to financial, commercial and industrial activities. Land grants have little economic cost for governments since they are not accompanied by the economic and infrastructural aid needed to make local production commercially viable. Indeed, the greater control that Black and indigenous movements have won over local municipal administrations can be a pyrrhic victory in the context of the administrative decentralization fostered by neoliberal reforms. It shifts responsibility for alleviating poverty and providing services from national to the local level of government.

The resurgence of indigenous identities thus represents an unpredictable face of the changing ruralities that accompany globalization. They have led to a series of conflicts with the state and private interests (Arce, 2003b; Namuncura, 1999). Indigenous movements have often limited the expansion of large-scale projects in ranching, plantations, lumber or hydroelectric dams. The state's conception of preserving ecology, as in the case of national parks, can conflict with what indigenous people see as their traditional rights and farming practices.

Yet, the greater international visibility of indigenous movements gives them more clout than non-indigenous small-scale farmers in resisting encroachment. They are also a potential force behind the revitalization of small-scale, family-based farming and craft activities in many areas of Latin America. This revitalization often includes using traditional knowledge and farming practices alongside those of modern technology (Albó, 1996). In Chile, for example, we interviewed a young Mapuche professional, who was a computer technician in the regional capital of Temuco. He was active in one of the Mapuche movements and had returned to his family's small farm in the surrounding countryside. There, with the help of small loans from the German overseas development agency (GTZ), he was practicing organic farming, including the production of worms to make organic fertilizer. He, with several other local small farmers, sent their organically produced wheat

directly to Santiago, where they could obtain twice the price of that offered in the local Temuco market.

A further aspect of the resurgence of indigenous identities concerns the importance of 'social capital' and building trust relations within the new ruralities. We noted earlier how top-down central state development projects have been replaced in the contemporary period by a policy of decentralizing services and by placing more emphasis on community and other non-state contributions to rural development projects. In the 1990s, social investment funds in many Latin American countries provided relatively small amounts of money for local community development that required communities to bid competitively for the projects and to provide inputs into them. Durston's (1999, 2004) studies in Guatemala and Chile have shown that fundamental to the success of these projects is the degree of trust and communal organization present at the local level – what he labels, 'community social capital.'

In his studies, it is indigenous communities with a strong tradition of collaboration and a sense of identity that are often most able to make a success of the project. Equally important to the success of such community development projects, as Tandler (1997) shows in her studies in Ceara in Brazil, is the quality and effectiveness of the relationships established at the interfaces between the community and external actors, whether agencies of government or NGOs. One of the most common obstacles to achieving this arises from the mind-set of 'facilitators' who often undervalue local knowledge and view indigenous people and other rural groups as lacking in appropriate skills (Spink, 2000; Arce, 2003a).

Urbanization and globalization have also economically revalued traditional practices and cultures, making them an important part of the new ruralities. Tourism provides a clear example. Despite the importance of enclave-type tourist development, such as the beach resorts of Mexico and the Caribbean, there has been a growing emphasis on small-scale tourist development. A main aim has been to spread more widely the economic benefits of the increasing numbers of national and international tourists in the Latin American region. In those countries with strong indigenous cultures, these are increasingly being capitalized in terms of tourism, as in the case of the city of Cuzco, the Sacred Valley and the Inca trail in Peru. These tourist experiences include visits to traditional villages and fiestas, the employment of local guides and the purchase of traditional crafts. While the Cuzco area is a dramatic example of this new form of rural development, the Peruvian government development agency, FONCODES, has been promoting small tourism projects throughout the Andean area and into the

Peruvian Amazon. In Chile, the Mapuche have also been developing small-scale tourist enterprises at the local level, which create for the visitor something of the experience of 'traditional' Mapuche lifestyles.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A central theme of this chapter has been the contemporary diversity of rural areas in Latin America, based on differences in the ways that producers, large and small, accommodate to the demands of the global economy. We should be clear, however, that there are important differences between the diversity that exists today in rural areas and that which existed in the past. In the period of ISI, rural diversity was based on the uneven and partial nature of the capitalist transformation of the rural economy with peasant farming and traditional estates coexisting with modern commercial farming. In that period, the processes of transformation had a distinctly national character with marked differences between the agrarian structures of different countries that reflected their degree of urbanization and industrialization, and the actions of individual states.

Contemporary rural diversity in Latin America reflects the direct impact of global flows of trade, investment and information that are, in contrast with the past, unmediated by national governments. Furthermore, these global processes envelop rural economies whose capitalist transformation is, in most cases, far from complete. Even small-scale family farmers in Latin America are increasingly part of these processes, whether in terms of increased international migration or through being directly affected by the changing priorities for foodstuffs in the world market. Free trade brings with it more competition for the small-scale, family-based rural producer and demands more of that producer in terms of product standards. The growing urban markets of Latin America threaten to further marginalize the situation of the small-scale producer, creating demands for a wider range of foodstuffs that are met through large-scale national and international distributors and retailers who deal directly with large-scale producers.

Beak as this situation may appear for the survival of small-scale family agriculture, we have chosen to emphasize the possibilities still open in rural areas for people to adapt to the new situation and create spaces for their own endeavors. Transnational companies and their national allies cannot completely monopolize control over rural production and labor, especially when agricultural yields are critically affected by changes in climatic and ecological conditions. Also, there is no guaranteed market for a country's

agricultural products in the face of changing consumer preferences and competition at the world level over major export agricultural commodities. With increased democracy and administrative decentralization, there are now more political opportunities at the local level for small-scale farmers, other small-scale entrepreneurs and farm workers to further their interests. The possibility of alliances with non-farm social groups across the rural–urban divide increases as the countryside begins to serve the short-term and long-term recreational and residential needs of city dwellers, both foreign and national.

National and transnational migrant networks connect up many rural areas of Latin America with labor markets in the large cities of Latin America, Europe and the United States. Remittances and information flow back to rural families and communities, facilitating improvements in services, supplementing incomes and, at times, becoming a basis for new entrepreneurial ventures. Some of the poorer communities can only survive because of remittances. These processes entail that rural spaces are neither discrete nor self-contained. In this context, research needs to address the multiple interfaces that now connect the different types of rural inhabitants with a wide range of external actors. With this comes a clash of cultural perspectives and practices, but also the possibility for negotiation and accommodation.

Contributing to the reconfiguration of the rural is the diminished role of the state in rural development. The state has relinquished many of its tasks to non-state bodies, such as NGOs, private companies and bilateral aid organizations. In rural areas, many NGOs and private consultancies are now actively providing technical inputs into agriculture and facilitating the capacity of better-endowed farmers to supply markets at comparative advantage. Existing policy rhetoric and politico-economic circumstances have opened up new spaces for interest groups to contest these ‘realities’ – in some cases, successfully resorting to the use of information technologies and global networks to galvanize public opinion and to press their particular claims.

These conditions and dilemmas make it increasingly difficult to design models for promoting specific development trajectories, for identifying alternative scenarios, or for predicting the side effects of mainstream development policies. Indeed these various side-effects and the breakdown of many well-intentioned development efforts have become the central predicaments of international aid, as witnessed by the failure to foresee or effectively deal with ecological disasters, civil strife, severe imbalances in local economies, and the dislocations brought by the now huge transnational migration process. The complicated mixture of intended, unintended, and unanticipated outcomes of development policy compounds this situation.

The research challenge is considerable, but is best met by combining, as Buttel (2001) argues, both political economy and actor-oriented perspectives. We would add to Buttel's review of late twentieth century agrarian political economy by emphasizing the increasing importance of urbanization in shaping and, at times, destroying rural space. The increasing importance of off-farm work among rural inhabitants, as well as their family and work links with urban areas at home and abroad, means that rural areas cannot be analyzed as discrete economic and social spaces. The challenge for both political economy and actor-oriented perspectives is, then, to avoid using a fixed spatial idea of the 'rural' or the 'agrarian,' while still retaining a sense of the difference that the distinctive geographies of rural areas make to outcomes.

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