New Tastes in Industrialized Countries and Transformations in the Latin-American Countryside: An Introduction to the Local Cases of Mexico and Chile

Alberto M.G. Arce

The recent reemergence of agriculture as one of the most dynamic sectors of the Latin American economy has once again stimulated research interest in the rural sector. Of particular contemporary interest are the social and political effects of the new export agriculture at the local level. This paper explores the relationship between the social demand for fresh fruits and vegetables from the North and the variable responses of actors and localities engaged in the production of food. It takes the production of new agricultural exports in Mexico and Chile as examples of the ways in which commodity circulation is re-organizing everyday practices while assessing some of the social consequences. The new rounds of interconnectivity between the South and North present opportunities to develop a more comprehensive analysis which includes spatial, cultural and social variability as one of the characteristics of the globalization tendency in agriculture. In conclusion, the paper presents some cultural, social and political issues surrounding the process of fruit and vegetable globalization and the significance of studying social discontinuities in rural sociology.

Alberto Arce is Lecturer in the Sociology of Development at the Agricultural University of Wageningen, the Netherlands. Some of his recent publications include a chapter co-authored with Norman Long, entitled "Bridging Two Worlds: An Ethnography of Bureaucrat-Peasant Relations in Western Mexico" in Mark Hobart's *An Anthropological Critique of Development, The Growth of Ignorance.*

Introduction

We are living in an increasingly diversified and commodified rural world. Rural areas in the South have traditionally been regarded as 'mirror images' of the main centers of economic growth, and following opposite social and economic processes. This paper questions this assumption. Exploring the cultural character and the social implications of recent agricultural demands in the industrialized countries, and the social and physical space transformations of some Latin American countries, this paper will address the issue and nature of the globalization of agriculture, its local manifestation, and the translation of this process by local actors.

The new production of agricultural commodities in Latin America has been part and parcel of the restructuring process affecting the world in the last decade under the rubric of structural adjustment and liberalization policies. No new and improved agricultural reality has emerged, however, from the character of the local transformations; on the contrary, a debate has emerged over how we should characterize this new scenario.

At this early stage in our thinking, the precise nature of the connection between concepts, and how these processes affect the local level, cannot be predicted outside the specificities that link the contemporary cultural transformations and the politics of value of

commodity exchanges required in the present situation. This paper is thus concerned with the changing of patterns of consumption in industrialized countries and the cultural representation of what is natural in agriculture. Recently, however, the demand for fruits, vegetables and quality agricultural products from the industrialized centers of consumption have subordinated third world localities into new consumption markets. The character and nature of this incorporation is very much the focus of a set of fundamental research questions garnering political and academic attention in rural sociology (see Llambi, 1990; Arce and Marsden, 1993).

In this paper I will argue that the new agricultural globalization process is not necessarily leading rural localities into the uniformity of production predicted by the followers of the internationalization school (Sanderson, 1986). Instead, this 'new style' of export agriculture seems to become an important element in the 're-localization of rural localities' and in the diversified social and physical patterns surrounding export agriculture.

Farmers are confronted by an entirely different kind of consumption pattern, characterized by fragmentation of markets, different forms of production and quality, diverse delivery access points and complex and diverse sets of genetic and biotechnological reconstituting processes involving freshness, color, shape and size. These constitute a quasi-invisible trend, since it shows the transformation of agriculture from the production of a standardized commodity to the art of using the quality and 'content' of agricultural knowledge to add value through the naturalization of these commodities rather than their industrialization. Exotic agricultural products, such as grapes, avocados and passion fruit have acquired an immediacy for the consumers in industrialized countries, while they maintain an essence of distant novelty and a segmented all year around quality market in America and Europe.

The places of agricultural consumption (supermarkets, restaurants, shopping centers etc.), influence the coordination of production time and actively encourage diverse styles of farming to satisfy specific segments of the food market. The ideology of healthy eating is spread through the diffusion of knowledge from food market places, and the use of 'intelligent shelving'. At the same time, the environmental effects in supply agricultural areas, and the variability of organizational forms of local enterprises, as well as the transformations in the labor market and the conditions associated with land based production, are all distanced processes that are presented in the West as a 'new' phase of agriculture development. These processes, conveniently detached from the social effects of commoditization at the local level, usually concentrate on the reconfiguration of time and space to supply consumers with a reliable all year around agricultural commodity. In brief, our perception of contemporary agrarian transitions in Third World countries should take into account the global demand for new agricultural products, local differential responses and the social effects of this restructuring of agricultural production-consumption in the social construction of our contemporary representation of food.

The issues introduced here demand considerable theoretical and empirical depth of treatment and debate. What becomes important here are the ways in which the study of food consumption in industrialized countries helps us to explain some of the contemporary social processes of rural re-localization in an era of agricultural globalization. In particular, it allows a focus upon the changing nature of social consumption, production and marketing in industrialized and Third World societies and as well as a concentration upon the ways in which global processes connect cultural and

social transformations associated with agriculture. This paper intends to start to explore these issues albeit in a limited way. The first part of the paper deals with some key issues of the cultural context and nature of exchange of the new agricultural commodities in industrialized countries. In the second part, the impact of export-oriented agriculture in Chile is explored. In the third part a case study from an irrigated area of Jalisco, Western Mexico is used to show the diversity of local responses to agro-export demands. Finally, the paper concludes with some remarks on how to characterize these uneven global processes and local differential responses of contemporary agricultural transformations.

Supermarkets, Fresh Vegetables and Fruits: The Social Construction of the Food Market

Cathedrals, monuments, and buildings such as train stations, hotels, malls and market places, have a direct impact on people's actions and conduct. At the same time they have a discursive influence on how we construct a world view and our cultural practices. Likewise, the new agricultural demand for fresh vegetables and fruit in industrialized countries has its cultural context in the supermarkets.

The overall pattern of UK consumption of fresh vegetables and fruits has shown an upward trend since the 1970s, contributing significantly to a widening trade gap in the early 1990s, and a concomitant downward trend in the consumption of beef and veal, which fell by 19% between 1980 and 1986. Fiddes (1990) recently suggests that these changes can only be understood in relation to "the cultural context of the ideas that inform individual actions." He argues that food selection is an ideological process (1990:230). Changes in consumption are contextualized in the ideas and awareness of people. Therefore, the question here is what are the organizational transformations and key ideas that have triggered such changes in consumption patterns.

The restructuring of patterns of food consumption has to do with how the social disjunction between food, culture and politics has been linked, reorganized and packaged in industrialized societies by institutions and actors. This contextual transformation has coincided with the reconstruction of the old market and retail trade contexts. In industrialized and middle income countries more people now purchase their food from supermarkets. Supermarkets have reinforced the importance of consumerism in modern societies; this relatively new consumer environment has the characteristic of presenting an abundance of choices, and unlimited possibilities for shoppers to display their lifestyle and taste for food (nutrition, kitchen store capacity, etc.). This new cultural context has facilitated a situation where consumers' choices are not just directed to saving money but in general to allowing them to superimpose on the market their high, or low, standards of quality. In this sense, within this new cultural context of shopping, food purchases are associated more and more with the quality of life of consumers.

Clunies-Ross (1990), examining the production of organic food in England, argues that although supermarkets do not pay high prices for products, and their 'cosmetic quality' demands are very strict, for producers they offer the advantage of selling a large quantity of their products. Most fresh vegetables and fruit from Latin America are marketed through such supermarkets. Supermarkets, with their techniques that stimulate consumer choice through advertising and diffusion of knowledge, have been in the forefront of the fresh vegetables and fruit market expansion in Europe and America (Wrigley, 1992). Supermarkets have decided that, in order to refor-

mulate the value relations between changes in pattern of consumption, taste, knowledge and price, they have to produce evidence of the variations of the product, catering for the individual character of consumer choice. Wine is a good example of how supermarkets have socially constructed specific situational niches for individual choices.

The strategies of supermarkets in England have been very influential in encouraging people to consume fresh vegetables and fruits. Nevertheless, it must be underlined that consumers cannot be considered passive subjects, who simply respond to advertising inputs. The extent to which various consumer organizations have emerged in Europe to demand a safer and better quality of food shows that the process is interactive. Supermarkets make strict demands on farms, processors and distributors to time the supply of food of the right quality and appearance, as well as the right volume at the right price. Supermarkets are concerned with being seen as responding as sensitively as possible to consumers' demands.

It is possible to illustrate this idea by briefly presenting a recent public controversy affecting bananas in the UK (April-May 1992). Supermarkets, on behalf of the consumers, launched a campaign highlighting the nutritious and healthy quality of bananas. The first point in this campaign was to emphasize a 'statistical reality', i.e. that England was consuming a third less bananas than Germany. The supermarket discourse was constructed around two notions of value. The first illuminated the intrinsic value of the banana on nutritional and health grounds. The second argued that the banana was overpriced in the market. The implication was their overvalued price was stopping consumers from eating more of them, and therefore they were being denied the chance to incorporate more 'natural goodness' into their everyday diet.

The overvalued price of the banana in the British market was explained by the BBC International Service as a historical consequence of the days of colonialism. More specifically, by the end of the 1850 and beginning of the 1860s the Caribbean countries found that their main commodity crop, sugar cane, was becoming a redundant commodity in the international market. The British established a new colonial cash-crop, the banana. This venture has been a success story because of the protectionist measures that have insulated the Caribbean producers from competing with the larger Latin-American producers.

The supermarket discourse argues for an end to protective policies and for bringing free competition into the banana trade. This conflict is somewhat in line with the EC's attempts to stimulate banana consumption. The rationale here is, that with competition, the price of the banana will drop and the market will expand. On the other hand, the Caribbean countries feel vulnerable, knowing that they cannot compete on equal terms with their Latin American banana counterparts. The Caribbean countries argue that it is a moral duty for the UK government to maintain protectionist policies in favor of Caribbean banana producers. In this discourse, the Caribbean producers have strongly emphasized the need to maintain the aims of the Commonwealth. This political nostalgia of past colonial relations have been used so far effectively to counter-attack the present moves for an extreme liberalization of trade relations.

The nationally powerful supermarket lobby argues that political independence occurred a long time ago; therefore Caribbean countries have no right to expect preferential treatment in the UK internal market. While they recognize that bananas are important commodities in the economy of the Caribbean countries, they argue that it is not the responsibility of the UK consumer to subsidize Caribbean development. According to them, support for

overseas development is the responsibility of the British Ministry of Overseas Development and not of the consumers.

The banana issue represents an example of how important supermarkets have become in representing both their own and consumer values and interests. So far, supermarkets, by focusing on protecting their consumers' interests have managed to identify and politically use this contradictory frame of values to criticize state regulation policies. This situation, as an icon of the global fruit trade, presents us with a clear demonstration of how commodity and non-commodity relations are not simple properties of objects, but are attributes that are relative to the social life of a food commodity in a global situation of exchange. However, whether the supermarkets or the state manages to regulate policy over bananas, accumulation still occurs. For the producers, the cultural context of this conflict of interests and values will have different consequences. For instance, if supermarkets regulate bananas, they will introduce a free banana trade policy that will create a new source for competition and conflict not only between producers in the Caribbean and Latin America, but also between producers of agricultural commodities that traditionally served different markets from within the EC, Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the above chronicle of the banana case, it is clear, that the supermarket, as a consumption space, has used a combination of cultures and interests of consumption with the opportunity to elaborate a stress discourse. Supermarkets are asking for more complex political relations with the state and its existing political food regulations. In the controversy about the banana, particular actors attempted to impose their own values on the food commodity. However, their actions triggered a sequence of further actions from the people affected. The effect of this was a commodity (bananas) charged with different values. This value contestation forced to the forefront the identity and actors' interests and then obliges them to renegotiate their relationships around the commoditization of the product. In seeking to assist the explanation of value contestation in different spaces, we need to pay attention to local processes of internalization of the global demand for fresh vegetables and fruit, but before we turn to that, it is important to describe the re-organization of 'food tastes' at the level of actors in industrialized societies. The aim here is to provide an insight into the social agencies that are socially constructing this new contemporary agricultural demand in an era of global and discontinuous social change.

Actors' Representation of Food and their New Tastes

An expression of the interweaving between economy, culture and politics is the rising of public consciousness and better understanding of the importance to live healthily. This knowledge has been coupled with a recognition on the one hand, of the cultural and environmental consequences of our modern relationships with nature (Goodman and Redclift, 1991), and on the other, at an individual level, that the meaning of trust and risk are embedded in the consequences of modern life (Giddens, 1990) and in the regulatory process of food in a period of public critical assessment of modern farming practices (Flynn and Marsden, 1992). At one level the green representation of health and food has been very effective, because it has linked, culturally and politically, the importance of the green issue to the everyday life of people. Nevertheless, this issue of the individual and health responsibility is a complex one.

As Fiddes (1990) argues, health as a rational, scientific pursuit, which has always been controlled by experts has been too distant from the everyday practices of individuals. A

useful contribution in this connection is the work of Turner (1984) on the impact of science on the regulation of human bodies in modern societies. In this line of analysis Turner argues that medicine is the key institution in the secular regulation of bodies. In his view

> [t]he necessity to regulate labor provided a materialistic and historical perspective on the development of disciplines. The dietary regime appeared to be a perfect way into this analysis, partly because the term 'regime' permits one to connect a medical-life-plan with the large notion of a government. (1992:6).

This relationship is apparently significant when people are forced, as a disciplined population, to adopt the discourse of the health experts. "Medicalization, secularization and rationalization appeared to be the great forces which have operated on the body, or more precisely on the body-in-the everyday-world" (Turner, 1992:4-5). Therefore, the contemporary and complex associations between cultural, political and ethical considerations about health, nature and agriculture represent the social need to consume green commodities, as a way of regenerating ourselves, and the will of the individual self to take control of one's own body. In this sense, consumption of fresh vegetables and fruit expresses a rejection of modernization beliefs and a dietary regime that is not based on high calories and cholesterol. Fears of modern agricultural technology and chemical residues on food must be interpreted in the wider social context, where new social and moral values are challenging the unrestricted exploitation of the natural environment.

In this context, fresh vegetable and fruit consumption is a practice and expression representing how consumers are internalizing the emerging discrepancies between state policies, the economic sphere and the transformations of the agricultural and food sectors. In short the globalization of agriculture and the recomposition of production processes across national boundaries, has facilitated consumers, who, while once regarded as merely part of the reproduction of labor, through their food consumption activities share direct responsibility in issues of health without the mediation of medical experts. Furthermore, the environment, as a public issue in industrialized countries, has been socially constructed around a range of everyday life practices. Food consumption is one of these.

Information about the production process, origin and content of green commodities in the supermarkets of Europe and America has created a new cultural landscape, where grapes, apples, pears, peaches, plums and wine from Chile; tomatoes, melons and watermelons from Mexico; and snow peas, broccoli and parsley from Guatemala surround consumers from high- and medium-income countries with 'new meanings', associating exotic places, different type of values, and what people in industrialized societies believe is 'natural and green' together. The concatenation of these beliefs and practices, some of them contradictory to the existing institutions, have constructed a new spatial materiality for consumers. However, green consumerism which dictates the form in which the various supermarkets must modify their trade contexts to provide information to the consumers, is less specific about the local effects of this global food re-organization in Third World localities. As industrialized societies have changed socially and economically, consumers' perceptions of agriculture, nature, health and tastes have changed. These in turn generate a dynamic of scale which motivates different local rural responses in an era of global re-organization of the food context.

Let me turn now to assess the significance of export agriculture, as a global tendency that

has intensified the production of non-traditional food commodities, a processes that has favored the assembling of differential processes at the local level. The interrelation of these local processes has started to modify dramatically the contextual circumstances of rural production in some Latin American countries. To illustrate this point I introduce in the next section the case of Chile. This classical example of agro-export production in Latin America allows us to portray the significance of these local processes.

The Chilean Case

In the specific case of Chile, major policy initiatives to expand exports and reduce the vulnerability of the country from traditional exports initiated a dramatic transformation of agriculture. The international demand for fresh fruits and vegetables generated a local dynamic, whereby the production of commodities such as grapes, apples, pears, peaches, and wine became valuable and important food commodities. They represented the flagship of Latin America export diversification. In the case of Chile, the value added by agriculture to the national account (the average annual growth rate) was 3.9% during 1981-1989, while within the decade 1961-1970 it was just 1.9% and during the time period of 1971-1980 only 2.2%. The Chilean case has been presented in development economics as one of the most successful experiences in this type of export agriculture. During the period of 1985-1986 the agro-export activities in Chile were reported to contribute 27% to the total foreign currency earnings of the country.

By 1987 the main international market for Chile was the USA, consuming 53.9% of its production of fresh vegetables and fruits, followed by Holland 17.7%; (South Arabia) 6.2%; UK 4%; Italy 3%; Germany 3%; the Arab Emirates 2%; Belgium 2%; Sweden 2% and other countries 8%. Chile has become the most important agro-export producer of Mediterranean fruits in the Southern Hemisphere. According to FAO figures, in 1991 alone Chile produced 50% of grapes, apples, pears and peaches, surpassing countries such as Argentina, New Zealand and Australia (Gomez y Echenique, 1988).

There are at the present time some 250,000 permanent, and 300,000 temporary jobs provided by export agriculture in the Chilean agricultural sector. The expansion of jobs in agro-export activities is dependent on the expansion of export volumes; thus, it has already led to some important social and cultural changes at the local level. One of the most significant is the incorporation of women into agricultural labor markets. Of the labor force working in vineyards, orchards and packing plants, 60% is female (Cruz, 1986). There is no doubt that the dynamism of Chilean agro-export agriculture is a direct legacy of the authoritarian Chilean state privatization programs (Rivera, 1992; Yotopoulos, 1989; Gomez y Echenique, 1988; Silva, 1987) and the implementation of neo-liberal policies (Van de Valle, 1989). The effect of these policies pushed the commoditization of Chilean agriculture to an extreme. The introduction of different sets of values with serious social costs produced the reconstructed agricultural sector, and finally established a new discipline of production over the existing land ownership system. By 1979 about one-half of the beneficiaries of the land reform had lost their access to land (Foxley, 1982; French-David, 1983).

Since 1983 emphasis was given to export incentives. Among the new economic measures was a strengthening and reorganization of the state's export development agency PRO-CHILE. According to Moran (1989) during 1984-1986 agricultural exports increased by 19% per year, compared to the 8.4% increase

during 1980-1984.

While there is plenty of evidence and something of a consensus that new frameworks of value have been internalized in the Chilean countryside by the actors' involved in agro-export activities, there is very little information about the local social processes refashioning rural Chile itself. Peasants expelled from their old places of residence (see Chonchol 1990) have been forced to reconstitute their local knowledge in order to relocate themselves and their life-worlds. This process of the newly commoditized reality is an area of importance that requires study. As Cruz and Rivera have shown (1984), peasant life is evolving as perceptions and nostalgia of the old land reform past meet the experiences and tensions of modern times. In the producers' representations different value notions have mingled with the past and the more recent Chilean political experiences. The ongoing commoditization process of social relations and the dance of different frameworks of valuation and contradictions are confronted with the new actors' abilities to construct the Chilean countryside. These social constructions constitute a fragile and heterogeneous confluence across different interests and rationalities. It is in this process of mediating and internalizing the commoditization influences that a sociologist can find the meaning to the changes of the Chilean countryside and to the transformation of actors' struggles. It is at this point where the specificity of Chilean agrarian transformation can be revealed in an era of globalization.

An Overview of Local Processes in Chile

1. *The Role of State Policies:* Transformations in Chilean agriculture have been a direct result of state economic readjustment policies that were directed toward strengthening the production of tradable commodities. These policy instruments consisted mainly of a reversal of the agrarian reform land distribution program, and in facilitating the institutional context for accelerated capitalist modernization of agriculture. These two processes were possible because of the authority of the military Junta in strictly controlling the implementation of an economic neo-liberal framework of policies. The final reconstitution of the local countryside was achieved through the strict control of credit, and with the arrival in 1986 of financial domestic and international groups that started to organize the production of fruits, buying agricultural land and linking localities to the growing international market of vegetables and fruits.

2. *Changes in the Agricultural Labor Market:* The establishment of the agro-export activities has produced important changes in the agricultural labor market. Rodriguez found in 1985-86 in the Aconcagua Valley, that during the two months of maximum employment, the ratio of temporary to permanent work was 5:1. In the months of least activity, the ratio of temporary to permanent work was equal or lower. In the period of high labor demand, a large number of urban students and women joined in harvesting activities and fruit packing. One of the most significant phenomena of agro-export activities was the incorporation of women in large numbers to the labor market. This process has important social consequences for the redefinition of marital and family responsibilities in the changing households.

3. *The Urbanization and Style of Existence in the Countryside:* Peasants expelled from their homes have settled in small *poblaciones* outside the agro-export unit of production. These settlements are established on marginal public lands, sometimes on abandoned railway stations, around their former villages or on the edges of towns. In 1980, the population of these small rural shanty towns was estimated to be between 200 and 250 thousand families.

This constitutes approximately a population of one million people that has initiated in the rural areas the process that is to found in Third World urban-development.

Lacking adequate basic services, these settlements, with more than 55% of their labor population working as temporary workers in the fruit export sector, and another 45% working in the informal sector or depending on minimum government employment programs, today constitute one of the new social environmental features of the agricultural transformations in Chile (Cruz and Rivera, 1984; Ortega, 1987; Campana, 1988; Gomez y Echenique, 1988; Martinez and Suvayke, 1990; Chonchol, 1990; Rodriguez, 1987). The population of these new settlements have urban patterns of consumption, they consume commercially prepared food and use modern systems of transport to commute to their agricultural jobs.

4. *Food Choice:* The stimulus for agricultural development has favored a shift of local consumption habits, both in relation to the 'traditional' forms of food provision (households) and to the establishment of a dietary regime that has permitted a new style of life connected to the larger notion of the changes in the labor market. While in Chile there has been a long tradition of consuming pasta and canned food, the association between supermarkets and the indigenous production of food for mass consumption is a relatively new development. The main potential market is represented by consumers who can no longer produce or prepare their food in their households. Food consumption has changed as a proportion of their total expenditure, and as the standard of living has deteriorated, food consumption has also changed in content. These trends have been assisted by the incorporation of women into the agro-export sector, and the dramatic changes that have occurred in food retailing.

5. *Transformations in the Traditional Chilean Rural Landscape:* Agro-export production has transformed the landscape of rural Chile. Local entrepreneurs have replaced traditional fruit varieties with faster growing trees, especially in the irrigated and more productive agricultural areas. The introduction of expert agricultural technical systems has overcome the local environmental constraints by reducing the logistic difficulties that the traditional tree varieties presented, whilst increasing tree homogenization of fruit production. The design of efficient systems of fruit production has allowed the domestication of trees to fulfill the tastes and standards required by the international market.

Local people have responded to these processes, actively trying to solve their own problems through interpersonal networks, local social relationships, and acceptance of the intervention of non-governmental organizations, either as individuals or in groups. Local actors have not passively adapted to these changes. A failure to theorize the specificity of these processes (internalization) can make us fall back into structuralist or universalist interpretations of the effects of rural changes in an era of agricultural globalization.

In the next section I will take the issue of how agriculture as a global tendency is internalized and interpreted by local actors. This specific difference of contemporary agriculture is a complex process, which I intend to introduce by presenting the main range of entrepreneurial variations that agro-export agriculture generates at the local level.

Local Variation of a Global Demand: A Case from Western Mexico

Fruit and Winter Vegetables

Highly appreciated by American consumers, Mexican melons, watermelons and tomatoes have constituted an economic modality

that has traditionally favored the north-west regions of Mexico. Nevertheless, the production of these valuable crops in the last twenty-five years has been established in other regions, such as western Mexico. Export agriculture has expanded and become an important element in the Mexican strategy of economic recovery.[1] Moreover, the work of Rama (1985) suggests that export agriculture has evolved from comparatively crude efforts to grab private profit into more sophisticated systems of agricultural production managed by 'techno-science' and up-to-date forms of administration. Seen in this light, export agriculture becomes an important mode of transformation[2] requiring careful local case studies in order to establish its significance and its consequences for the environment and the local economic and social systems.

The areas of research on which this section of the paper is based are two contiguous valleys in the southern part of the State of Jalisco, some 200 kilometers south of Guadalajara City. This location has experienced in the last ten years a process of spatial integration into the export-oriented network of fruits and tomatoes for the US market. Over a short period of time, in the valleys irrigated by the rivers Armeria, Ayuquila and Tuxcacuesco, a diversity of small and medium-scale producers and local private entrepreneurs backed by foreign contacts and capital have ventured to satisfy the demands of the US consumer market.

In 1982, this region witnessed the inauguration of a five year cycle of melon and watermelon production that exhausted the fertility of the soil and brought foreign companies into direct contact with local producers. A dramatic transformation of the local view of nature occurred, bringing about a shift from a behavior that valued rain, the soil and clean water to a fetishism of these 'green' crop commodities. This process stimulated the 'manufacture' of local traditions such as the regional celebrations of the melon (*la fiesta del melon*) and the yearly masses to worship watermelons. These festivities incorporated local people, their political institutions and the Catholic Church into relations with American export companies, regional entrepreneurs and the Mexican beer and soft drink companies based in Guadalajara. The latter usually provided the financial sponsorship for these celebrations. Although this bonanza lasted for just five years, it did manage to establish among local people a new 'situational logic' and the emergence of new 'bodies of knowledge'.[3]

Towards the end of the 'boom' period, the production of fruits and vegetables in the area of Autlan, El Grullo and El Limón was affected by crop diseases and an increase in the costs of production, but fortunately, so far, the region has been able to avoid total collapse. Serious organizational problems affecting producers arose with the commercialization of the products, with corruption and with the growth of local conflicts. The diversity and complexity of different types of property relations (i.e. ejido, private property and agro-industrial enterprises), the different labor processes in the area (i.e. State--organized, Mexican-private and ejido enterprises, and US/transnational enterprises), and the maintenance of a highly diversified agricultural pattern of crops, mitigated the economic and social effects brought about by the termination of the fruit and vegetable bonanza. This experience obliged producers and the State to reorganize their strategies in relation to export agriculture. These elements are the effective starting point of my local analysis.

The Local Context of Export Agriculture

The agro-export system of production in Autlan, El Grullo and El Limón is an external

expansion into the local horticultural and fruit cultivation system. People in the area have known for a long time how to take advantage of the hot climate and irrigated agriculture. In some instances this knowledge can be traced back to the hacienda period (Heijdra, 1988). However, local producers tend to identify the 1950's as the relevant time to which they trace their recollection of the origins of the horticultural production system.

Don Miguel, ejido president from the agrarian community of Ayutita in the municipality of Autlan, remembers:

> Our ejido used to supply tomatoes, cabbages, lettuces, radishes, chilies and herbs to the old market in Autlan. Autlan was the vegetable center for the coastal area until 1955, but this eventually came to an end, because we lost the old market [a fire] and in 1968 the first foreign company arrived here. (1987)

Don Miguel's interpretation is that in the 1947 fire, the small local producers lost not only their old market building, but also their control over the local and regional vegetable market. Don Miguel argues that after 1955, local traders started to buy vegetables in Guadalajara, advantageously using the truck route to the coast of Jalisco that went through Autlan.

The second important development in Don Miguel's view was the character of the economic operations of the foreign companies. According to him, companies used to send first class tomatoes to the US market, but second and third class tomatoes were dumped into the local and regional markets. This form of operation induced local traders to reject local production. Eventually, small producers were forced to rent their lands to the companies. The best land ended up under the control of the companies and the ex-independent small producers were either forced to rent less fertile land in the valley, or to migrate in search of work.

Don Miguel strongly disapproves of the technology used today for the production of vegetables, especially the application of chemicals in the tomato plantations. Don Miguel argues that the serious problems of plant contamination in the valley have their causes in these modern horticultural techniques. Despite these observations, Don Miguel concludes that the companies have done a lot of good for Autlan, mainly because they have been able to provide new jobs for the local people.

The valley of Autlan offered the companies local experience in horticulture and a centralized irrigation system constructed during the 1955-60 period. The irrigation system was restored between 1974 and 1978; today it covers approximately 9,000 hectares. When the companies moved into Autlan they did not expect to encounter any political resistance. However, opposition did come from traditional local politicians. The local political response was to encourage the cultivation of sugar cane, to the extent that 5,000 out of 9,000 irrigated hectares were eventually devoted to its production. As a consequence, the incoming agro-export companies were forced to organize their ventures on non-irrigated land, which meant that they had to invest in the drilling of artesian wells. Paradoxically, it was this need to drill wells that persuaded ejidatarios to rent their plots to the companies (Verhulst, 1988).

Generally speaking, while the local horticultural tradition has continued in the valley, it is the agro-export companies who control today's vegetable trade. However, this control is not absolute and small producers and government personnel are aware of the risks and possible benefits of the companies' domination and, consequently, seem to be interested in the generation of strategies to regain control over production and commerce. According to official figures from The

Mexican Ministry of Agriculture (SARH), tomato production and the agro-export system contributed nearly 30% of the total agricultural value generated in the Autlan District in 1987, while the sugar mill activity generated over 70%.[4]

The vegetable production is in the hands of five main firms; of these one has 100% US capital investment, one has 50% government credit (FIRA) and 50% US capital, two companies have 60% government credit (FIRA) and 40% local private capital, and one has 100% capitalization from private Mexican sources. Out of the total production of tomatoes, 33% goes to the US market (normally beef-steak and cherry tomato varieties are exported); 20.1% is directed to the Guadalajara market; 23.5% ends up in the Mexico City market; 16.7% is sent to Monterrey; and 6.7% remains in Autlan for local consumption.[5]

Of the companies mentioned, three buy production from local small producers and are important local brokers trading with US firms. The company that has 100% US capital investment has acted as the agent of the Griffin and Brand Company. In this capacity, it first specialized in the melon and watermelon trade and later in the export of vegetables. This firm was one of two that developed refrigeration equipment to pre-cool fruits. The other is the company constituted by Mexican capital, Vergeles, which is enjoying a rapid process of expansion. The third company, depending partially upon US investment, has managed to generate a direct link with middle and small US brokers of vegetable products, a commercial situation that has allowed this Mexican agro-industrialist to take advantage of US crop demand.

The preceding discussion constitutes a brief introduction to the context of the agro-export system in the Autlan area. However, the social life of the agro-export system is a complex process, which I intend to elucidate initially by presenting some of the types of entrepreneurial organization that are found at the local level. This allows us to focus upon the interplay of different life-worlds and the bodies of knowledge of the actors directly participating in the agro-export system. I analyze three of the five main agro-exports companies in the locality.

The Entrepreneurs of Autlan, El Grullo and El Limón

The owners of the agro-export companies constitute the local archetypes for the image of an entrepreneur. As such, a real coming to terms with these actors requires a dialogue with some of them. I intend to achieve this by drawing upon material collected by research colleagues and myself during 1987.

Case 1: Diego

Gonzalez (1989), in a study of the life history of an entrepreneur from Autlan, provides us with a window for understanding some of the elements defining the identity of one of these actors. According to Gonzalez, Diego, the entrepreneur, spent his childhood and youth in an coastal area of Western Mexico. From this experience he had a memory of how strong men had cut down trees, burnt the forest and opened the land for cultivation of cereals and later established cattle ranching. In the entrepreneur's model, nature appears on the boundaries of Mexico's 'human' society. Ejidatarios (peasants) are perceived as political creations of the state against whom it was futile to fight because one can never beat the Mexican political system. Consequently, Diego's own meaning of agriculture is constructed by a practice that subjugates nature and makes the soil a producer of commercial crops.

Diego's entrepreneurial career started after he finished secondary school. He cultivated

watermelons for the American market on his father's farm in Michoacán. From this experience he learned about the importance of brokers in the marketing of fruit in the US. His good economic results motivated him to intensify his involvement in this line of production. Following on from this experience as a producer of fruit, Diego became an important organizer of the first local Association of Horticultural Producers. His aim was to negotiate directly with US companies with a view to establishing a system of credits and a minimum guaranteed price for the fruit at the beginning of every production cycle.

Eventually, Diego was elected first president of the Regional Union of Horticultural Producers and through this organization he became a member of the National Union. Within four years, a network of producers from different localities started to have enough power to deal with the American companies and to be a political factor to be reckoned with in the region.

One of Diego's most ambitious projects was to establish a warehouse in the US as a distribution point for directly supplying fruit to supermarkets. This project failed. Eventually, in 1980, the agrarian reform was applied to his property and Diego was forced to start a new venture in Autlan. Diego entered into a partnership with his wife's brother, who at the time was supervising tomato cultivation for a company backed by Mexican and American capital. They worked together for three years, Diego then becoming an independent producer. During these years, Diego learned about tomato cultivation and invested in machinery. Using his previous experience with the international market, he visited the US and managed to secure annual contracts. These contracts finally consolidated his situation as an entrepreneur. Diego started his operation with four hectares of tomatoes; after seven years he was cultivating 250 hectares of tomatoes in Autlan and opening up new areas in other states. Today, his is the fourth most important agro-export company in Autlan.

Gonzalez's study presents Diego as a clear case of a local innovator, showing how the entrepreneur developed his business, assembling along the way various political, institutional and technical advantages that he had extracted from different environments in order to achieve what he wanted. Diego introduced a new system of sprinkler irrigation in the valley after the levels of underground water had become critically low. He also brought from the US some new experimental seeds to increase tomato productivity. Diego, as a very articulate economic actor, was also able to generate a social discourse to enroll ejidatarios into the expansion of his enterprise. He used the Agrarian Law with imagination and implemented a system of benefits through a 'legal' paper organization named the Local Solidarity Association (Associacion de Solidaridad); this was a clever device to rent land from the ejidatarios under very convenient terms.

Case 2: The American

A different contribution, outlining the organizational capabilities of the entrepreneurial activity in the valley, arises from the work of Torres (1989). Torres points out that it is in the everyday interaction practices of the actors working for these companies that we may find reasons to explain the relative success of some of these agro-export enterprises. Torres argues that there is a process of company appropriation of the local styles of knowledge. The second point in Torres' analysis is the presence of flexibility in the company's process of decision-making. These two themes are present in his investigation of the room for manoeuver which exists within these enterprises. Torres explores these topics with the view of studying

the impact of these processes upon the workers.

The room for maneuver is concretely illustrated by a case study. The case concerns a change in management style in the agro-export company. The old style of management was introduced by an American, an ex-Second World War fighter pilot and a former tomato producer in Cuba prior to 1959.

To an important extent the American's entrepreneurial success seems to have been due to his ability to organize the company's working system in such a way that local conditions and the practical knowledge of the labor force were taken seriously into account, while at the same time effectively targeting tomato production for a combination of US and Mexican markets. However, the very success of the company eventually generated an internal struggle between conflicting organizational tendencies. This further stage is illustrated by the new style of management which arrived following the departure (retirement) of the American manager.

The new supervisor in the company was a young Mexican, recently graduated from the university. He was perceived by the company workers as having no practical experience. The workers resented the way he chose to impose his authority upon them, especially those workers trained under the American's original style of management. One specific and dramatic conflict arose between the new administrator and a senior worker who had 11 years of experience handling the greenhouse operations. As a result of this conflict, the worker eventually was demoted from the greenhouse operations to the company laboratory; the supervisor, to make the meaning of this move absolutely clear to the rest of the labor force, ordered a reduction in the worker's salary.

The new administrator placed a young woman, a recent graduate in agronomy from the university, in charge of the greenhouse operations. In this position she was confronted by workers' resistance to her techniques. The workers argued that the tomato plants were healthier, more resistant to disease, and offered a higher yield under the old system. The young agronomist perceived this opposition as a natural reaction against her gender. The fact that the company failed to obtain good results in production was explained in her view as the result of three extraordinarily bad agricultural years. She also argued that all the companies in the valley had suffered the devastating effects of a prevalent virus. In this way, she explained the company's problems by reference to external factors and thereby dismissed the importance of the changes in working practices and the position of the labor force.

The demoted worker and a section of the labor force had a different opinion. According to them, poor production was a consequence of applying ill-chosen techniques and erroneous decisions in the running of the greenhouse operations. According to their beliefs, it was essential that the tomato plants be 'domesticated' and nurtured for production within the greenhouses. For them, an overly impersonal and scientific treatment of the plants would produce sub-optimal results. Therefore, for the workers, the company's three years of disappointing output were an empirical demonstration that university training was not very important; rather, experience was the only way to acquire real knowledge.

Eventually, the workers felt vindicated, and had their views reinforced, by the removal of the young Mexican supervisor and the arrival of a new administrator. The new administrator re-called the old worker and reinstated him in charge of the greenhouse. The worker accepted, on condition that his salary would be the same as that of the university graduate arguing that his skills had

the same value as hers.

According to Torres, these situations reveal the capability of the workers to generate intermediate social spaces; these spaces are semi-autonomous fields of action where the workers can defend their knowledge, values, position and wages while the company gains the necessary flexibility to effectively integrate non-commodified labor relations into the strategy to overcome competition and internal conflicts.

The rest of this section draws on my own material and analyzes the way in which one of these companies has managed to expand and consolidate its operations in the nearby area of Tuxcacuesco. I take the point of view that some company entrepreneurs do not need to have a strong agricultural background nor, for that matter, is there a uniform requirement for organizational flexibility. In some cases, the organization of an enterprise depends on the manipulation of interpersonal networks and the capacity to exercise non-economic (e.g. political) pressures on different groups of people. In these situations, powerful forces external to the locality are organized by the entrepreneur to establish a network of relationships involving different local actors whose needs have been shaped by the entrepreneur and whose individual projects have become linked to the maintenance of the company's agricultural operations. This form of social molding accommodates the pursuit of personal interests within a scheme of local productive activity ultimately controlled by, and to the benefit of, the company.

Case 3: El Diablo

I first met the entrepreneur Ricardo Villadeoro, locally nicknamed *el diablo*, the devil, at a reception organized by the local *cacique*, the political boss of Tuxcacuesco, to celebrate the regional meeting of the Jalisco Small Producers Association. Ricardo Villadeoro said:

> As you probably know, I am not from Tuxcacuesco. I am from Autlan and I have been here for ten years and I love it so much that I decided to live here. In Tuxcacuesco I am the person in charge of the Vergeles management. In my company I have everything, so we don't need government assistance; if I need technical assistance I can bring the best expert here in less than twenty-four hours. Let me tell you a fact. Last year I made a profit of around $1,000,000. The profit was not made from the production of tomatoes but from the production of zucchini. We obtained an average of 17 tons per hectare. We sold the production in the export market (US) and in the Guadalajara market.
>
> It's a risky venture to produce tomatoes; for instance, last year [1986], I didn't sell a single box of tomatoes in the US, because the government implemented an import ban on Mexican produce. The real problem for us is the international and national market, not the virus. [Laughing, he added, just before leaving] I know how to control the virus, but the market is well beyond my control.

This conversation advanced my knowledge of Tuxcacuesco's local entrepreneur, but it was not until I started to work through the other social actors and their relations with the company, that his detailed personality finally started to emerge.

The next day, on a field trip to see an ejido, the local SARH official told me that all of the area that I had seen was under the control of Ricardo and Vergeles. They had bought more than 100 hectares of land under different names. "He controls the largest irrigated unit in Tuxcacuesco", he added.

> From my point of view this is good. When the land was under the ejidatarios' control, they never had resources to cultivate the land or pay the electricity bills for operating the pumping station. Ricardo, on the other hand, always pays on time, and he has brought about important

changes in Tuxcacuesco. Villadeoro rents a lot of land to small private producers. In fact, he doesn't need us [i.e. government support] because he has excellent economic resources and technical support. Ricardo was the first here to use women as labor and although he pays them a little less than the official salary, one fifth less for their *jornal* [a day's work of 8 hours], this is because in practice you cannot make a woman work more than six hours; nevertheless, this innovation has been a very good thing for the local households.

The official then continued to list for me some of the entrepreneur's innovations. First in the list was the application of powerful insecticides using tractors. Second, an intensive system of production was introduced. During the dry season, Villadeoro cultivated watermelons, melons, tomatoes, chilies and zucchini and, during the rainy season, sorghum. The last of his achievements was to establish a demand for labor which he drew into the Tuxcacuesco area from nearby poor agrarian communities. At this point I took my inquiries about the entrepreneur to one of the community's suppliers of labor. In El Guamuchil[6] Don Salvador, a small producer and one of the two truck owners in the community, said to me:

I organize the people from El Guamuchil for *el diablo*. When he needs workers, *el diablo* waits for me in the town and asks me to bring people the next day. So I tell the people in the community through a notice I put on the ejido's house. I say that anyone interested in working in Tuxcacuesco should be ready at five in the morning in front of the ejido house. I take them to the field and in the afternoon, I bring them back to the community. *El diablo* pays me for the truck journeys, but what is more important, he changes my tires absolutely free. We need the work at Vergeles, because several families in the community have no access to land and others do not have the money for agriculture. Some people used to work in mining, but since the accident, in which several young people died, no one wants to work in this any more. Now they prefer to work in the fields.

There are some 10 women and 20 men who regularly work for the Vergeles Company. The majority of them are landless young married couples. One of these laborers said that he does not like to work for *el diablo*: "The work there is hard and sometimes dangerous because of the strong pesticides they use". A producer who sporadically works for Vergeles commented: "I don't like to work for others (*en lo ajeno*), I prefer to find my food fishing in the river, but sometimes you need money, so *el diablo* is the only source of cash". Households are in constant need of cash. One reason is to pay for medical attention for family members; the cost of prescriptions is a constant source of worry. In a critical family situation a member of the household will get into debt and after the crisis has passed, he or she will work for Vergeles until the debt is repaid; only then will the sporadic worker resume his or her independent activities.

Scrutinizing the personal characteristics and identity of Ricardo Villadeoro, I moved my inquiries to the town again. There I interviewed Nati, ejidatario and cantina owner, 43 years old, born in Tuxcacuesco and member of one of the oldest families in the area:

Vergeles came to Tuxca around 1981-82, they introduced better irrigation techniques and they started the use of herbicides and insecticides here. Soon after that, producers started to use plastic hoses to irrigate their plots. Before the arrival of Vergeles we used lime and brimstone dust against plant infections, you see, we were really very ignorant here. One of our beliefs was to make large fires to combat mosquitoes, another was to observe the swallows so if they made their nests in the highest places, that was a sign that the year was going to be bad. We used to observe the purple ant; if we saw them wandering around with their offspring that was because the rainy season was going to be good. All that now is in the past; today the people don't talk any more about these beliefs. If you

> go to the square, people there will be talking about the latest insecticide and the best way to tackle the virus. We have lost the old ways. I still remember how the old ones told me their experiences and the way to get a good harvest. They used to tell you about life. Today people have lost the meaning of a good conversation.

The foregoing account shows that people like Nati are ambivalent. On the one hand, they see improvements through the introduction of new forms of technology and control over nature; on the other hand, they are a sad witness to the loss of local knowledge. Ambivalence about the effects of Ricardo in the area can also be seen in Nati's next description.

> Vergeles has created land conflicts. Ricardo, as representative of the local Society for Rural Production [a paper organization] has clashed with the sons of the ejidatarios. These are fighting to have access to land and they are campaigning to obtain Vergeles property. They have spent 17 years fighting. Last year they occupied Ricardo's land. The municipal police protected the producers who started to open the land up for cultivation; on the third day, the Preventive State Police [*los azules*] arrived here in seven pick-ups. These took control of the town, expelled the landless from Ricardo's land by force, and fought with the municipal police. They forced the municipal president to sack the local police commander and after that they brutally beat him. *Los azules* ordered him never to put foot in Tuxcacuesco again or he would face death.

Ricardo is seen by Nati as personifying local conflicts. Following the land problem, Ricardo was seen as an influential actor able to involve the state police in restoring the 'legality' of his agro-export company. This show of strength manifested itself through the political mobilization of external forces and influential people. This action revealed a new style of politics in Tuxcacuesco. The traditional cacique's style had in contrast been to isolate the area politically rather than to bring outside influences to his support.

Ricardo's extra-local political associations could be said to be derived from his entrepreneurial actions. Through one of the directors of Vergeles, who had a quasi family relation with the district representative of the Ministry of Agriculture based in El Grullo, Ricardo had access to the Secretary to the Governor of Jalisco. This SARH representative was the brother-in-law of the Secretary. The Secretary to the Governor in Jalisco, has direct authority to deal with internal problems of order, and in this capacity, he controls the Jalisco state police. The unusually quick and brutal form of intervention in an agrarian problem exemplified in the above case can only be explained as the action of a political authority who not only wants political tranquillity in the region but also wants to be seen as making this tranquillity possible. This role gained special significance from the fact that the Secretary originally came from Autlan and was a member of the cacique's political lineage. Nati argues that *el diablo* is part of a new reality constituted by the increasing importance of cash in the local economy. It is this process of commoditization of social relations that is revealed in the aftermath of the land conflict.

In another conversation, Nati kept coming back to the role of the 'invisible hand' in the process. He remembered how *el diablo* once demonstrated the company's importance to the local people. He sacked the brothers and sisters of those who had participated in the land conflict and he proceeded to refuse to buy the vegetables of those producers who had relatives involved in the conflict. According to Nati, the economic effects of this action were felt in the commercial sector of the town: With no income, people stopped buying things, leaving local shopkeepers with excess stock. Reflecting on this situation, he said: 'Could you imagine how many years we would go

back if Ricardo and Vergeles were to leave Tuxcacuesco?'.

In view of the preceding case-study, it is evident that the strategy leading to the successful establishment of the Vergeles Company included three crucial elements: the commoditization of the local economy, a new political style of control, and the introduction of technological innovations. These elements were brought together by the 'agency' of the entrepreneur who incorporated the company production system into the region. This process entailed the organization of local labor force circuits and the ability to inject cash resources into the local economy. These factors finally established Ricardo's company in the region and consolidated him politically with the traditional cacique group. Despite evidence of people's dislike and opposition to his economic and political activities, the different views share, more or less, a perception that is better for them to have *el diablo* and Vergeles in Tuxcacuesco than not to have them.

In conclusion, this section has examined three types of entrepreneurial agencies present in the area. In the first case, Diego, the emphasis was placed upon the individual socialization and political-institutional experiences of the entrepreneur; these elements pointed to the importance of extra-local influences and especially to the development of economic contacts with the US. In the second case, the focus was an American entrepreneur, who, though his style of administration was based on his personal experience, created 'social space' within his enterprise. In the third case, Ricardo Villdcoro, *el diablo*, using external political associations, managed to instill in others the need to participate in his enterprise. By successfully redefining the meaning of local needs, he was able to carve out a position of local indispensability.

While to some extent the aspects highlighted in each case may be present in all of them, I submit that the three stories reflect, to an important degree, the range of variation in agro-export entrepreneurial forms at the local level. This range represents a trend towards a new socio-economic organization of the locality. In essence, the demand of fruits and fresh vegetables in an era of globalization has been internalized by actors. This process of translation encourages a recomposition of the organization of the local production processes. Clearly, the agro-export expansion in Mexico involved not only transnationals but also 'innovative' local entrepreneurs. It gave rise to an alliance consisting of multinational, domestic entrepreneurs, the state, and local horticultural growers. In spite of their different interests these actors all appeared to have a common stake in the continuation of agro-export agriculture. Therefore, we need to ask, if it is possible to spread the benefits of agro-export production to other rural actors without alienating the interests of the most powerful members of the agro-export network. This is one of the central issues for local rural development in an era of agricultural globalization.

Conclusions

This paper has presented and examined some of the central issues of an era of agricultural globalization. Beginning with the issue of new patterns of consumption in industrialized countries, we attempted to suggest that contextual transformations, i.e. from the old market to the supermarket, have contributed significantly to the social construction of a new type of consumer in the industrialized countries, one who is more willing to display in his/her everyday behavior the lifestyles and tastes for healthy food.

Emphasizing the interweaving between

economy, culture and politics, the paper indicated that new agricultural demand for fresh vegetables and fruits in industrialized countries is part of an ideological process associated with consumers becoming aware of the discrepancies between state policy and state regulations, expert knowledge, environmental issues and the contestation of values in the economic sphere. In short, the basis for any study of agricultural transitions is to be found, I argued, in the study of the local effects of the globalization of agriculture and in the understanding of the recomposition of local production processes across national boundaries. This raises important questions about the diversity of local responses in an era of globalization and about the social and political nature of the **new local processes**.

The globalization of fresh fruit and vegetable production has brought together distant spaces of production and consumption, diverse styles of local entrepreneurship, the interaction of diverse environments through the actions of a corporate food industry and the construction of new networks to provide a whole range of different food commodities for the urban and suburban consumer of the West.

In this paper, we examined the **local processes** that have arisen from the production of non-traditional food commodities. In the Chilean case, local and dramatic modifications in the landscape of the countryside, together with the advent of actors' deployment of new value-attributes to material resources, food choices, family re-organization, the adoption of new lifestyle etc. have constituted a **new social agrarian configuration** in which actors need to redefine their local social identities and culture.

As the Mexican case shows, it is the social organization of the food production in an era of globalization which needs to be studied and explained. Why do the preconditions of agro-export agriculture have to be expressed in a large range of diversity at the local level? Whether or not this agro-export mode of agriculture is sustainable, and to what extent the new local and international entrepreneurial activity networks are flexible and durable enough to avoid the uncertainty and volatile circumstances of the international food markets is an important issue in rural sociology. To what extent Latin American entrepreneurs, national producers and government policies can avoid risks, distribute the benefits and maximize the options open to these food products is difficult to judge at this particular moment.

Nevertheless, from the brief overview in this paper, we can suggest that while the internationalization phase of agriculture has affected peasant farmer strategies through the integration of spaces (Sanderson, 1986), agriculture in an era of globalization has intensified the production of non-traditional food commodities, a process which has favored differential responses and processes at the local level. As I showed earlier with the Chilean case, these local interrelated rural processes have started to modify dramatically the contextual circumstances of rural production in some Latin American countries.

It is necessary to study the social construction of the 'new' Latin America countryside space in an era of globalization, but stressing the importance of examining how actors use global tendencies in practice, and how this affects the process of local rural development. We need to study the distribution of power and legitimation in rural local contexts under these on-going agricultural transformations. Is power to be seen as a fixed property in an era of globalization or as a flexible outcome among several actors? Is power a consequence of the 'new' interfaces between economic, culture and politics? Is the translation of actors from industrialized countries an important factor

influencing the negotiations between the corporativist food sector and the producers of fresh fruit and vegetables in the South? Is this approach relevant to explore in contemporary rural sociology the relation between power and authority within the global network of fresh vegetables and fruits?.

This paper points to the importance of studying how actors from industrialized and from developing societies, through their everyday practices and interactions with their local environment and culture have created temporary and fragile bridges across international value discontinuities that may have initiated a new process of agrarian transitions in Latin-America. Globalization is different from the era of internationalization of agriculture. Today the exchanges of values at a global level are only possible with the organization of diverse local processes of agricultural production change. This is a controversial development path that seems to reject the use of only one form of value.

Notes

1. Agricultural export crops, including coffee, strawberries, tomatoes, horticultural products, cattle and sugar, are reported to have increased from US$ 1.89 billion to US$ 2.16 billion from 1987 to 1988 (*Financial Times Survey*, 12 October 1989).

2. 'Mode of transformation' is a concept used by Elwert and Bierschenck (1988) to deal with the process of change. They suggest that transformation is a dynamic model "insofar as the incorporation of new elements may transform the mode of transformation itself" (1988: 100). They argue that "outside interventions are not predictable in a precise [instrumental] way. The self-organized characteristics of a system are not an interplay of different [group] interests, strategies, sets of norms, social perceptions whereby the social actors create legitimate norms, compromises, cease-fires and modes of conflicts which together form the social structure" (1988:102).

3. 'Situational logic' is a concept used by Prattis (1988) that refers to the ability of people to share a common view about how to take advantage of any opportunity in a particular reality. For an attempt to evaluate the significance of knowledge in development studies see Arce and Long (1987) and Arce (1989).

4. Official meeting to evaluate institutional policies during 1988. This meeting was organized by the CNC in the local 'Club of Leones' of El Grullo (11-7-87). This meeting was chaired by the district head of the Ministry of Agriculture (SARH).

5. The five main export vegetable companies in the area are: Los Leones, Autlán, De la Costa, Bonanza, Vergeles.

6. From the same community, see Arce (1989)

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■

RESUMEN

Las nuevas preferencias en los países industrializados y la transformación en el área rural latinoamericana: una introducción a los casos particulares de México y Chile.

El reciente resurgimiento de la agricultura como uno de los sectores más dinámicos de la economía latinoamericana ha vuelto a estimular el interés por la investigación en el área rural. Los efectos sociales y políticos de la nueva agricultura de exportación a nivel local son en la actualidad de interés particular. Este trabajo examina la relación entre la demanda social desde el Norte de frutas y vegetales frescos y las diversas reacciones de los actores y las localidades involucradas en la producción de alimentos. A la vez, toma la producción de las nuevas exportaciones agrícolas en México y Chile como ejemplo de las formas en que la circulación de mercancías está reorganizando las prácticas diarias, al mismo tiempo que evalúa algunas de las consecuencias sociales.

Los nuevos giros de la interconexión entre el Sur y el Norte representan buenas oportunidades para hacer un análisis más comprensivo, que incluya la variabilidad espacial, social y cultural de la tendencia a la globalización de la agricultura. En conclusión, este trabajo presenta algunos de los problemas sociales, políticos y culturales que surgen alrededor del proceso de globalización de las frutas y vegetales frescos y la importancia de estudiar en la Sociología Rural las discontinuidades sociales.

***Alberto Arce** es Profesor en el Departamento de Sociología del Desarrollo en la Universidad de Agricultura de Wageningen, Holanda. Algunas de sus publicaciones más recientes son "The Social Construction of International Food: A New Research Agenda," con T. K. Marsden en **The Journal of Economic Geography**.*