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From the guest editor

The broad question of what constitutes globalization and how it impacts the world has been the subject of much debate and analysis. In the literature on agro-food systems, numerous authors have described agricultural globalization as an unavoidable process, largely the result of the increasing power of multinational corporations (McMichael, 1994; Friedmann, 1993; Bonnano et al., 1994; Thrupp, 1995). Critics of globalization feared that power over global processes would concentrate in the hands of a few profit-seeking firms; that globalization would bring “global cultural and economic homogenization,” and “integrate and merge the economic activity of all countries into a homogeneous model of development” (IFG, 2002: 23).

Recent analysis of concentration in global agricultural commodity chains, however, has yielded a more uncertain understanding of economic concentration as a result of globalization. Friedland (2004) compared concentration in various processed and fresh food sectors and found uneven development in the global reach and concentration of agricultural firms. Rather, he found that concentration takes place in specific segments of commodity systems and there is a slow tendency towards overall concentration in agri-food chains. Furthermore he states that “until now, most globalization studies have focused on macro-trends and only a few have paid attention to the degree to which globalization occurs in specific locations, spatially, or in political units such as nations” (Friedland, 2004; 13).

But there have been many disparaging social and economic inequities, as well as environmental destruction, documented as a result global systems of agriculture, particularly in the agro-export sector. The increased use of pesticides to meet quality standards for agro-exports has lead to problems of soil and water contamination and worker health (Grossman, 1997; Wright, 1990). The increased use of contract farming in the agro-export sectors of less developed nations has, in some cases, led to cycles of

economic booms and busts as well as increased indebtedness of small farmers to their export companies (Watts, 1994). Farmers have abandoned the cultivation of indigenous varieties of crops in favor of commercial crops, contributing to the genetic erosion of cultivated plants (Brush, 1999). In more developed nations, the shift towards offshore agricultural production has caused the loss of many small and medium sized farms, as well as the deterioration of many rural economies (Adams, 2003)

Both the “feared” and “realized” impacts of globalization have prompted the reconsideration of which elements characterize sustainable agriculture. Scale has become a critical element of sustainability. The development of local economies, the protection of local environments, and the preservation of local cultures and histories have become the projects of practitioners and scholars interested in sustainable agriculture. As a result of the focus on scale and relocalization, community supported agriculture, farmers’ markets, agritourism, artisan, and traditional food products have become culturally and economically valued aspects of many places.

However, as we continue to consider what constitutes sustainable agriculture, the stark opposition of global and local scales has become problematic (Imbruce, 2006a). We must be careful not to champion localization as the antidote to globalization (DuPuis and Goodman, 2005; Hinrichs, 2003). Just as “the global” is not interchangeable with the scale of capital, “the local” is not unequivocally the scale of empowerment. The local is not an apolitical arena where social justice prevails, and localizing food systems do not necessarily create enormous progressive changes (Hinrichs, 2003). Dupuis and Goodman (2005) caution against “unreflexive” localism. They argue that there can be negative consequences to not critically reflecting upon the means of localization; the denial of the politics of the local and the cooptation of alternative solutions. Dupuis and Goodman find that, “an inclusive and reflexive politics in place would understand local [food] systems not as local ‘resistance’ against a global capitalist ‘logic’ but as a mutually constitutive, imperfect, political process in which the local and the global make each other on an everyday basis” (2005: 369).

This guest edited issue of *Agriculture and Human Values* will take up the questions of scale and agency in order to ask how actors involved in the management of

agricultural and forest resources are taking advantage of local contexts as well as global changes to develop new economic opportunities. The theme for this special issue emerged from the panel, “Markets, Migration and Changing Systems of Plant Use,” organized for the Ninth Congress of the International Society of Economic Botany in Canterbury, England in June of 2004. It was during this panel that the papers by Imbruce, A. Steward, and Chibnik and Purata were first presented, albeit in a somewhat different form. Since that conference panel, the issue has incorporated new concerns. The conference panel discussed the creation of new markets as a result of migration and corresponding systems of resource use, and focused on innovative uses of biodiversity to meet market demands. The panel sought to move beyond the general critique of globalization by exposing global systems that appeared culturally and ecologically advantageous at the level of local production. But the use of scale as an organizing concept has become increasingly problematic (as discussed above), and, as a result, the theme of the issue has shifted to focus on the interaction between global and local scales in order to consider the politics of global actors, agency, and the creation of sustainable practices (rather than the practices themselves).

The seven papers and commentary by Karl Zimmerer in this issue will explore the contradictory, place-based manifestations of global processes but without rendering “place” as a bounded or static territory. A place is considered a geographic unit embedded in history, politics, culture, and market networks, at multiple scales. The seven papers within this issue will describe how actors in various places are coping with global change in differing ways. Migration, tourism, and communication technologies have blurred borders and led to the creation of new markets as well as new production practices to fulfill market demands. Producers are revaluing forest and agricultural products as a result of new global markets, creating new economic activities for communities, and in the best cases, creating practices that foster biodiversity and resource conservation. Other producers are developing alternative economies in opposition to global markets in order to lessen foreseen (or current) negative effects on lands and livelihoods. The case studies provided in this issue give insights into the dynamism of both problems and solutions. Exogenous and endogenous changes are continual, and

solutions in place today may not be relevant or functional tomorrow. It is difficult to predict long-term outcomes.

In a similarly themed issue of *Ecumene* (Bebbington and Batterbury, 2001), the interplay between local and global processes is taken up. That issue demonstrates that actors (or networks of actors) make use of the relationships among the scales to further their own objectives. In their words, “scale becomes [at least sometimes] a resource and not just a hierarchy down which forces cascade and ultimately affect people in particular places.” (Bebbington and Batterbury, 2001: 374). The case studies in this issue are further illustration of this agency or local dexterity. But where the studies in *Ecumene* focus on the less developed world, and seek to understand how globalization is changing rural life, the papers presented in this issue encompass a wider geographic scope and includes cases from more developed nations. Together, they take one step further in their treatment of scale as a variable for understanding how places are not only reshaped by, but are also reshaping global processes.

Localization is not necessarily incompatible with globalization and may be open to the use of neoliberal, or “glocal,” logic (Swyngedouw, 1997). Increasingly, it is recognized that global influences on places are not homogenous, but that the particularities of cultures and places also influence global processes (Escobar, 2001; Long and Roberts, 2005; Bebbington and Brattlebury, 2001). Gramsci (1971) believed that hegemony and counter-hegemony are mutually transformative; that new strategies in social, political, and cultural realms can change capitalism. Material changes, such as resource deprivation or environmental crisis, may incite transformative action, but ideological and political changes more decisively motivate transformative action (Peet and Watts, 1996). The actions of people and communities operating in places undergoing global changes are not only focused on bettering material conditions on a long and short term basis, but their actions also are driven by an ideological and/or political purpose. Whether people take actions that are openly political (e.g., participating in larger struggles of resistance), they act in political arenas and thus have the potential to transform dominating powers. By focusing solely on the global hegemony and corporate power, the actions of individuals and communities are rendered invisible. The

particularities of places go unnoticed, and this, in turn, affects our understanding of culture, knowledge, nature, and economy. By focusing on actions of people embedded in their particular places, in relation to global processes like the removal of trade barriers, decentralization, and migration, the mutually transformative aspects of the local and the global can be seen. “Local” economies and culture are not exclusively produced by capitalism and modernity. Myriad relationships exist between producers and consumers, export agriculture and food security, commoditization and the loss of biodiversity, and modernization and cultural erosion.

Global phenomena can be seen as place-based, multi-scaled, and networked processes. Escobar (2001) provides an insightful review of disparate literatures from anthropology, geography, and political ecology on the conceptualization of place and its meaning in this global age. He examines the extent to which frameworks of analysis allow (or do not allow) us to view the world from the perspective of manifold, place-based practices. Escobar poses questions that will be taken up in this journal issue, “Can the world be reconceived and reconstructed from the perspective of the multiplicity of place-based practices of culture, nature, and economy? What roles will various social actors have to play – including technologies old and new – in order to create the networks on which manifold forms of the local can rely in their encounter with the multiple manifestations of the global?” (Escobar, 2001: 170-171). By addressing these questions this issue hopes to show that both globally and locally driven changes can be contradictory as well as mutually transformative.

Premises and case studies of the special issue

This issue will explore the practices, visions, and goals of individuals managing agricultural and forest resources within areas under the direct influence of global change. It will present case studies of rural peoples opting in and out of global markets. Particular attention is paid to the challenges producers face in realizing alternative, less exploitive

visions for the future and to producers who have been successful in simultaneously meeting the ecological and economic needs of their communities.

The geographic scope of the studies presented in this issue ranges from Latin America to North America and Europe. The forms of globalization that are addressed are free-trade, decentralization, development of an agro-export economy, conservation, migration, and tourism. The case studies that comprise this issue provide rich narratives, ethnographic detail, history, and agro-ecological data to cumulatively show that people create new opportunities for themselves, whether adapting to or reacting against the dominant reality of the global political economy. Their unifying thread is that producer agency drives the convergence of global and local level processes, leading to new markets and patterns of resource use, as well as newly created identities, both on an individual as well as community level.

This happens in two ways. The first is that in the face of global changes, actors use cultural, social, and natural resources (three manifestations of the local scale) to develop new income generating practices. The second premise is that the new income generating practices are being developed to serve economic as well as social and environmental needs (the three tenets of sustainable development). Both premises draw attention to the actor's agency and how they manage their economic lives on multiple scales.

Cultural and social agency in global economic life

The influences of culture on economics are often overlooked. Free-market economists believe that the market holds transformative powers over all other realms of life and mutually advantageous arrangements between buyers and sellers should arise naturally under free-market conditions (Wolf, 2004; Bhagwati, 2004). Those who take a more critical stance on free markets and capitalism in general tend to focus on political influences on the economy or on economic impacts on nature and society. In this issue, Velasquez Runk et al. point out that research on livelihoods tends to emphasize the

effects of market access rather than how cultural beliefs and decision-making affect access. Recognizing this, economic anthropologists and economic sociologists do grapple with the complexities of social and cultural influences on economies, particularly in regard to agriculture and food systems (Wilk, 2006; see discussion on “embeddedness” in Sonnino, this issue).

Authors in this issue provide empirical evidence that cultural and social beliefs and practices influence the integration of places into the global economy. People who have historically been dependant on agriculture are finding ways to supplement or, in some cases, supplant their traditional practices with new ones. Over the past thirty years new traditions have been created that are profitable, fit cultural identities, take advantage of social systems, and utilize available natural resources. Examining the role that the “particularities of place” play in shaping new (global) economic activities also underscores the point that places are not bounded and culture is not static, but mutable (Bebbington and Batterbury, 2001; de Haan, 2000). Not only are communities adapting to changing conditions now, but several authors in this issue use an historical approach to show how communities have been adapting to change through time – it is neither a new or exclusively modern process.

As a case in point, Velasquez Runk et al. (this issue) call attention to the role of cultural beliefs and values on the diversification of Wounaan livelihoods in eastern Panama in response to regional changes within the last few decades. The increase in conservation and ranching has decreased the availability of land for other activities. Wounaan, who are swidden agriculturalists, have had to diversify their livelihood strategies in the face of this changing land use. Velasquez Runk et al. have found that the cultural esteem that the Wounaan hold for basketry has fostered the growth of a new enterprise. Wounaan baskets are now bought and sold in national and international markets and almost all Wounaan households derive income from basketry.

Global markets, tourism, and artisanship have also been intertwined in Oaxaca, Mexico. In Oaxaca, however, wood carving is a newly created tradition without longstanding cultural significance (Chibnik, 2003; Chibnik and Purata, this issue). Wood carving in the state of Oaxaca came about as a result of a state sponsored social project to

encourage craft sales in rural communities. Some families have completed abandoned agriculture to work as full-time carvers; others continue to farm, but agriculture has become a secondary, subsistence-oriented activity. Oaxaca is now renowned for its brightly colored wood carvings, *alebrijes*, which draw tourists and are sold regionally as well as throughout North America and Europe.

The effects of new markets are also taken up in two other articles in this issue. Imbruce and King provide examples of how cultural preferences for food items within immigrant communities provoke new agricultural practices. The falling price of maize in and high levels of migration from Mexico to the United States since the implementation of NAFTA has lead Mexican farmers to look for niche markets and value-added products. Ironically, Mexican immigrants in the United States have created a market for niche products from Mexico (King, this issue). King describes how maize farmers in the Zona Totonaca of the state of Veracruz, Mexico, have revalued a traditional product – maize husks – and given it commercial importance.

Immigrants do not only create new markets, they also create work for themselves in their new homes by producing traditional crops for fellow ethnic groups. The migration of peoples from Southeast Asia to the United States, since 1965 when the US reformed its immigration laws, has spurred new markets for agricultural products as well as new forms of agriculture (Imbruce, this issue). Agriculturally experienced immigrants from Southeast Asia have made secondary migrations from US cities to the tropical climate of south Florida in order to pursue agricultural livelihoods. Tropical fruits like longan and litchi as well as a great variety of Southeast Asian fruits and vegetables are now produced by small farmers in south Florida for sales all over the country. They exist because of, not in spite of, globalization.

In Tuscany, Italy, new social and economic systems of agricultural production and exchange are growing out of a recreated notion of a cultural past (Sonnino, this issue). In a conscious effort to resist the perils of industrial, global agriculture, ex-urban Tuscan producers are redefining the rural landscape by connecting the agricultural present with the idea of what constituted the agricultural past. Sonnino explores the creation of saffron as a locally embedded product and shows how saffron producers are

actively shaping a new economy. The creation of the market for Tuscan saffron shows how products can come to be politically and culturally embedded. Yet, that embeddedness is hardly a static condition. Rather, through cooperation between producers and local governing officials, a product can be made to symbolize the unique attributes of a place.

Cultural beliefs can also infringe upon new market opportunities. In a study of agriculture in the Amazonian community of Carvão, Brazil, A. Steward (this issue) finds that decentralization of the federal government in Brazil, a neoliberal development strategy (Peck and Tickell, 2002), has had a profound impact on Carvão's economy. But where other researchers have found that decentralization acts against rural communities, in the case of Carvão, restructuring has created rural jobs and stimulated cash circulation and the informal economy. The new sources of income, in part, have turned people away from both commercial and subsistence agriculture. While the region has experienced the deflation of prices on traditional products (i.e., manioc), the rapid urbanization of the region is also promoting the growth of new markets for crops that can be easily and profitably grown or managed in Carvão.

The cultural and social dimensions of economic activities associated with the global economy are contradictory and complex. Actors develop income generating practices according to their social and cultural beliefs. Sometimes they work to their benefit and sometimes to their detriment. For some rural peoples, agriculture is only part of an economic solution, or is no part at all. For some urban peoples, a return to a rural life that includes agriculture is becoming part of an economic solution. In all cases, however, actors' choices of income generating practices are informed by cultural and social values.

Can sustainable practices result from new economic opportunities?

The second premise of this issue focuses on the relationship between income generation for regional and global markets and the environment. It is recognized that

people and nature are not separate entities. Nature and society are not in opposition; rather they are interdependent. Conservation cannot be practiced independently from development. People are embedded in their environments and the influence of social systems on landscapes needs to be recognized in order to make more informed conservation decisions (Denevan, 1992; Redford and Padoch, 1992; Fairhead and Leach, 1995; Raffles, 2002).

As the world's economies are becoming more interconnected, so are the world's environments. The influences of organized resource management institutions, knowledge systems, and coordinated conservation strategies are increasingly global in scope (Zimmerer, 2005). Conservation efforts are forced to interface with agriculture and other kinds of resource use as linkages between global environmental issues and other forms globalization (Zimmerer, 2005). How do people living in priority conservation areas cope with global change and adopt practices that fulfill economic and conservation needs? Can production of agricultural and forest products be reconciled with environmental issues?

Decisions about sustainability are being made more at the regional level with partnerships between states and communities, but contradictions threaten to undermine this process. Already marginalized community groups are excluded from decision-making because sustainable practices have become very profitable (Lawrence, 2005). In agriculture, there appears to be a "corporate-environmental food regime" that is emerging on national and international levels (Friedmann, 2005). This regime is a "specific constellation of governments, corporations, collective organizations, and individuals that allows for renewed accumulation of capital based on shared definition of social purpose by key actors, while marginalizing others" (Friedmann, 2005: 228). The meaning of organic, for example, has been diluted from its original social and ecological origins. It has become big business, creating a class divide on the basis of consumer access to "rich" or "poor" foods (Guthman, 2004).

Many American farmers concerned about the environmental effects of their practices are choosing not to become certified as organic by the USDA because they are not in agreement with the national standards. Organic certification is seen as a marketing tool rather than a means of maintaining ecological integrity (Zimmern-Kahan, 2005).

Instead farmer associations are creating their own standards and running their own conferences on sustainability.¹ Farmers also recognize themselves as stewards of biodiversity, and document wildlife as well as food varieties on their farms.²

Imbruce (this issue) focuses on the use of diversity in mixed cropping systems in south Florida in order to understand how and why crop diversity is used, as well as to highlight a form of agriculture that is often overshadowed by more dominant forms of single-commodity agriculture. Immigrant farmers are developing their own agricultural strategies (e.g., cultivation of multiple niche-products in a small area) to deal with issues of scale, such as competition from international growers, markets for value added products, ethnic markets, and the cost and availability of land.

King's study (this issue) on the production of maize husks in Veracruz, Mexico, highlights an unintended outcome of trade liberalization. She states that, "the increase in migration following the implementation of NAFTA reforms led to the expectation that, with the displacement of farmers from the agricultural sector, criollo [indigenous] varieties and traditional knowledge related to maize would be lost. While this has likely occurred in some parts of Veracruz and indeed throughout Mexico, in the Totonacan region of Veracruz there is reason to believe that the production of criollo varieties may have been reinforced by changes in market opportunities."

Alternatives are manifested in many ways and there is no clear delineation between production for local and non-local markets nor between "quality" or conventional foods (Watts et al., 2005). In the agri-food sector of Europe, boundaries between "alternative" and "conventional" food systems are becoming increasingly blurred (Sonnino and Marsden, 2006). Historically and territorially embedded agriculture is considered a means of rural development in Europe (Marsden et al., 2000; Goodman, 2003), but as Sonnino's study (this issue) on the saffron economy in Tuscany shows, the understanding of farmers' needs and motivations is crucial for the identification of the kind of support necessary to implement sustainable models of rural and agri-food development. The saffron producers found that *Crocus sativa* (pistils of which are harvested to produce saffron) is well suited to the biophysical attributes of their land. The producers also found the required social and political environment for processing saffron.

Nevertheless, the commercial success and subsequent need to increase saffron production is threatening the sustainability of the saffron network.

Commercial success is also undermining the sustainability of wood collection for the production of alebrijes in Oaxaca (Chibnik and Purata, this issue). The wood used to make the carvings, *Bursera glabrifolia* (locally known as *copalillo*), had been harvested locally. But with the increased production of alebrijes, artisans have depleted local sources of copalillo. They must rely instead on wood trucked in illegally that does not always suit their needs. In the interest of promoting the sustainable management of copalillo populations, wood carvers and harvesters have cooperated with scientists to develop a regionally based management plan. The result has been a product that can be rightfully labeled an “ecoalebrije.” Nonetheless, there was nothing “natural” or inevitable about the way in which these two communities came to cooperate. Chibnik and Purata show sustainable management to be impossible without the negotiations of skilled and willful actors.

As the market for sustainable products is growing, traditional exports, like soy, are being revalued as “organic” or “sustainably produced.” Soy production is rapidly expanding into forested regions of the Brazilian Amazon, and sustainable production is of concern. But the meaning of sustainability is hotly contested. Local actors are voicing their concerns about development projects that they feel can either potentially benefit or undermine their livelihoods. C. Steward (this issue) describes how three sets of soy actors – agribusiness and government, conservation NGOs, and local farmers’ organizations – each hold differing views of what constitutes both profitable and environmentally friendly soy. She demonstrates how local farmers’ livelihoods have not been considered in the current “environmental” or “forest friendly” soy projects. In response, a network of Brazilian social and environmental organizations has created a list of parameters to take into account the needs of all soy actors. The organizations recommendations reflect a larger resistance, led by the Via Campesina, to neo-liberal economic policies and export-oriented agriculture. By building a network of small farmers, indigenous people, and community fishermen, the Via Campesina is globalizing local resistance efforts and is attempting to put its members’ needs at the center of agricultural policy negotiations.

Conclusion

Scholars are recognizing that although globalization and urbanization are changing rural life, the diversity of places, differences in political organization, and adaptive strategies of local actors have led to various outcomes (Escobar, 2001; Long and Roberts, 2005; Bebbington and Brattlebury, 2001). Rural life has changed in Latin America and agriculture can no longer be privileged over other income-earning livelihoods. Likewise, the distinction between urban and rural life is blurred, and the number and types of actors in the countryside has increased (Long and Roberts, 2005). Out-migration may generate new sources of money, such as remittances, but migration also creates new markets. The falling prices of traditional agricultural products and the high levels of migration in Mexico since the implementation of NAFTA has raised questions about what incentives remain for the production (and concomitant conservation) of traditional varieties and, perhaps more importantly, who will remain in agricultural production

Agricultural shifts are being seen in the US and Europe as well. While many small American farmers have been out-competed by offshore production since trade liberalization, in the case of south Florida, small farms are taking advantage of the transportation infrastructure of global agriculture, a situation that is illustrative of multi-scale networking. In Europe, a once abandoned countryside is being remade with new visions of "quality" agriculture.

It is the goal of this issue to bring out the contradictions of the global economy by showing how local actors are actively shaping their economic lives through the use of local resources and global opportunities. Some actors have achieved great success and have surmounted, at least temporarily, ecological as well as economic challenges. But, commodity values as well as networks of production, processing, and marketing are constantly negotiated, constructed, and contested. The ways in which actors claim, reclaim, and use their cultural, social, and natural resources shape the ways in which they respond to the demands of the global economy and, in turn, remake the global economy.

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Notes

¹ Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association Annual Conference, August 17-20, 2006. "Building Sustainable Communities: Agriculture as the Foundation of Social Change." Hawthorne Valley Farm, Ghent, New York.

² See the Farmscape Ecology Program at Hawthorne Valley Farm at: <http://www.hawthornevalleyfarm.org/fep/fep.htm>.

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