

Summaries

Rethinking the “Urban Sociology”. Part two: from a need of consistency to an unpredictability hypothesis, by *Paolo Guidicini*

I come back to the debate which was begun in the “first part”. Now, I focus on the concept of “structure” as a basic moment in the empirical research on the territory (in particular, the concept of perceived structure will be considered). After that, I will stress the connection between science and technology, and the importance to insert them in an Urban Sociology debate (Heidegger and the concept of Ge-Steel). Then, I will conclude putting into evidence the difficulty in territory fruition.

Key words: social morphology, structured territorial context, safety/technology, ontology of decline.

Between food security and sovereignty, by *Ada Cavazzani*

The author is discussing the different meanings and applications of the concepts of food security and food sovereignty, with reference to *scarcity/lack of food, food quality, universal right to food*. Then the article introduces the themes that will be developed in the papers included in this volume. It underlies in particular the opportunity of analysing food issues with an integrated approach, linking the strategies of the agro-industrial system with the new social practices for sustainable food production and responsible consumption. Finally it recalls the renewed interest of rural sociologists for peasantries and rural movements.

Key words: food security, food sovereignty, alternative food networks, sustainability, peasantries, rural movements.

The imperial conquest and reordering of the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food: a theoretical contribution, by *Jan Douwe van der Ploeg*

Empire is a new mode of ordering and governance. Food empires are monopolistic networks that control large, and expanding, parts of the production, processing, distribution and consumption of food. But food empires are not necessarily involved in the physical realities associated with these processes. Food empires control the *routing* and the associated *transformation* of agricultural and food products. In this respect food empires clearly represent an “invisible hand”, a series of combined and repeated interventions into the markets that together represent “extra-economic power”. Empires (and food empires particularly) do not only center on control, they simultaneously represent the *appropriation and centralization of value*. Due to Empire, value has, as it were, become footloose; it is increasingly becoming “a ghost”.

Key words: empire; imperial networks; food production; world market; global exclusion; theory of value.

Food crisis and financial speculation on commodities markets, by *Giordano Sivini*

In this article the author analyses the factors that have produced the rise in commodities prices, making exasperated a food crises that has been creeping for a long time. The tightly correlated evolution in prices for both agricultural and non agricultural commodities has called the attention on a specific financial instrument, the *commodity index*, that connects them to the futures market where international prices are fixed. To the *commodity index* make reference the major banks in Wall Street to manage their financial liquidity and that of institutional investors (pension funds, foundations, insurance companies), looking for new investment opportunities after the sub-prime crises. The speculations on both sub-prime and commodities show that, independently from the perspectives of accumulation, the over accumulated capital increases the rent by dispossessing the living conditions of millions of people.

Key words: food crisis; financial speculation on food; accumulation by dispossession; agricultural futures; sub-prime; commodities index.

Multi-functionality vs. food sovereignty?, by *Philip McMichael*

This paper examines the conditions under which the two strategic concepts of “multi-functionality” and “food sovereignty” have emerged, refocusing the development narrative toward a politics of sustainability. Both multi-functionality and food sovereignty represent sustainable alternatives to neo-liberal political economy. The author argues about the necessity of a paradigmatic shift regarding the meaning of human development in order to revalue food and agriculture as foundations of civilization, in the epistemological sense, and as vectors both of social and ecological sustainability and of public health.

Key words: multi-functionality; food sovereignty; food regime; sustainability; food regime transition.

The rural movements: biopolitics and ungovernability, by *Annamaria Vitale*

The aim of this papers is to analyze and verify the social effects of the collective practices addressed as *rural movements* in the European literature about rural development of last decades. The reference is to those practices developing new ways of farming and models of rural development. The evidence of these processes overcomes the theoretical perspectives of the last century about the unavoidable disappearance of peasant world. However, the point is to interpret these new practices considering also the constitution of the processes of governance as the new form of social regulation in the post-fordist restructuring phase. Insofar, this work aims to demonstrate the irreducibility of these new rural practices to the mechanisms of *governance*.

Key words: rural movements; community development; governance; biopolitics; post-fordist restructuring; collective action.

Social innovation and connection strategies of alternative food networks, by *Ada Cavazzani*

This paper is discussing the social innovation represented by the alternative food networks in Italy. With reference to the scientific debate, the analysis is fo-

cussed on three main issues: the diversity of the networks, their common principles and the strategies of inter-connection among the different networks. These networks are based on the development of direct relationships between producers and consumers and on processes of food re-localisation. They counteract the dominant agro-food system by promoting quality products distributed through short chains. The emerging inter-connection between the various collective practices linked to the question of food production is interpreted as an alternative globalization. Initiatives promoted by peasant organizations of Latin American, African and Asian countries tend to be reinforced by the connection with the alternative practices of food producers and reflexive consumers of Western countries.

Key words: social innovation; alternative food networks; peasant agriculture; short chains; critical consumers; inter-connection.

Seeds, peasants and markets: the networks for another agriculture, by *Alessandra Corrado*

The search for control over resources, the re-appropriation of knowledge and the development of new relationships of exchange in local markets show the diffusion of original patterns for rural development. Moving from the case of the French association Réseau Semences Paysannes and of some Italian experiences, this paper aims to illustrate the new practices and strategies developed by small rural producers in order to cope with the expropriation process menacing their existence. These are considered as examples of peasant agriculture based on the capacity of re-socializing and re-localizing food. The paper concludes by outlining how these practices can challenge the techno-scientific system of knowledge, the institutional system of governance as well as the economic system of global market.

Key words: peasant agriculture; peasant networks; biodiversity; participative selection; farmers markets; rural development practices.

Critical consumption and food networks, by *Silvia Sivini*

This paper explores the development of alternative practices of production and consumption of food in Italy, pointing out the attention on the potentiality of the short food chains aiming to improve the conditions of small producers as well as on the emerging of critical consumption practices that have encouraged the constitutions of the solidarity purchasing groups (GAS).

In particular, this paper presents the results of a national survey about the direct selling practices involving small rural producers as well as the GAS. The networks developed by these actors present specific aspects that are not considered by the analytical approaches just focusing on spatiality, but can be interpreted as “networks of resistance”.

Key words: critical consumption; agro-food networks; biological production; solidarity purchasing groups; short food chains; direct sale.

Aware consumers and sustainable development: reflections on food, by *Gianluca Brunori, Francesca Guidi, Alessandra Lari and Adanella Rossi*

This paper offers a contribution to the analysis of the processes of transition of the food systems, that are sustained by the innovations introduced by reflexive consumers. After reviewing the literature on consumption as driver of change, the authors propose to explain consumption models and consumers’ identities in the

framework of innovation theories. The analysis is applied on consumers solidarity purchasing groups. Their innovative role is expressed by the capacity of co-produce, together with other actors, new structures, material and immaterial, for everyday life. This implies as well a re-definition of boundaries between consumption and production, commodities and services, private and public, domestic and civic.

Key words: innovation networks; transition theory; critical consumption; sustainable development; solidarity purchasing groups; citizens-consumers.

The bio-ethical farmers in Calabria. Processes of integration between alternative networks of production and consumption, by *Anna Elia*

The organic agriculture sector shows points of contact with the peasant model of farming because of the strong connection existing between production and nature. In Calabria, the incapacity of political institutions to re-modulate the EU environmental measures framework in a negotiated planning with local actors (by the Rural Development Plans) has caused the marginalization or exclusion of many small farmers. Nevertheless they have found by themselves solutions for the valorization of local productions. Drawing on the experience of the “bio-market of Nicastro”, promoted by small producers adopting “ethical ways of farming”, this paper aims to analyze the networks involving producers and different local actors and their actions in order to develop a negotiated agricultural framework.

Key words: bio-ethical farmers; alternative networks; organic agriculture; farmers markets; peasant agriculture; self certification.

Present and future of peasant culture, by *Osvaldo Pieroni*

While a re-evaluation of the peasant role is emerging at the scientific level, public and institutional opinion is still influenced by the classical image of anti-modern peasants. In the last years, rural sociologists and some agrarian economists have emphasized the persistence of the “peasant model of farming”. Considering the present food and environmental crises, the new functions developed in the family farm represent a structural change, both in social and economic terms. By proposing the definition of strategic fertility as a specific relationship with the soil in view of a durable reproduction, the author is outlining the new relevant aspects of the peasant culture.

Key words: peasant culture; peasant agriculture; family farm; land; biological fertility; co-evolution.