

Rural Sociology and Rural Development in Portugal – History, Recent Trends and Prospects¹

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN PORTUGAL

History of the rural world of Portugal² may justifiably begin in the present: with the major problems affecting Portuguese agriculture, demographic contraction in the countryside and the uncertainty that prevails in the reconversion of rural areas.

The basic problems facing Portuguese agriculture have often been debated. The sector's output and productivity figures are fairly low: the country fails to produce the primary goods it requires and its food shortage is chronic. The constrictions that jeopardise the agricultural sector are various (Lima 1991, p. 345): (1) the asymmetry of agricultural incomes, reflected in the heterogeneity of different types of agriculture – business-type farming, part-time farming and traditional 'peasant' type farming plots (a subject we shall come back to later); (2) the rigid land market, arising from the defensive ('peasant-like') behaviour of clinging to the land and speculating on its value; this rigidity prevents any alteration to the land-ownership structure, which is characterized by the fragmentary character of most of the holdings and a limited number of medium-sized or large farms; (3) considerable ageing of the agricultural population (and, more generally, the rural population), as a result of intense international and internal migratory flows and the subsequent fall in birth-rates; (4) the low level of instruction of Portuguese farmworkers

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2. This study refers only to mainland Portugal and so does not analyse the Autonomous Regions of Madeira and Azores.

(illiteracy, which in 1981 still was present in 18.6 per cent of the population of school age in Portugal, is especially prevalent in the elderly population living in rural areas and linked with farming). Another limiting factor should be added: poor development of the agro-industrial and agro-food sectors. Though sited upstream and downstream of the agricultural sector, to a large extent their weak development accounts for the inability of the production and sales structures of Portuguese agriculture to compete in a highly competitive open market.

These constraints assume almost a structural character in the country, insofar as their presence has been felt over a considerable period of time. However, a recent pressure has been added to them. Portugal's membership of the European Community in 1986 has already brought significant financial resources into the country, particularly for the less developed regions and the agricultural sector, but the impact of these resources on agriculture will be felt only after a transition period which is designed to produce the requisite conditions for the agricultural sector to become more competitive.

One may well raise the questions as to how the present situation came about. Portugal is characterized by profound regional disparities, with significant consequences for agriculture and the rural social structure. As a rule, the main dividing lines are to be found in a Coastal/Inland vertical and North/South horizontal. Roughly two thirds of the population is concentrated in the coastal regions of the country, which amount to about one third of the surface area of the territory. These are the regions which, for a long time (particularly in the post-1950 period), have registered the highest demographic growth rates, caused by in-migration and natural increase. Here one finds the most urbanized regions of the country; the resulting population density differences are often substantial. These same coastal regions are responsible for the bulk of industrial and tertiary output: at the close of the 1970s, they accounted for roughly four-fifths of GDP and nine-tenths of the output of processing industries and services (Lopes 1980, p. 344). However, distribution of population and activities in the coastal regions is uneven: the two biggest metropolitan areas in the country – Lisbon and Oporto – are responsible for half or more of the economic indicators mentioned.

The North/South separation is founded on other principles. Settlement forms are varied: to the north, population is dispersed, whereas to the south, it is concentrated (it is precisely this dispersion, together with an important 'diffuse' industrialization in the rural environment, that makes it difficult to fix the outlines of the metropolitan area of Oporto, whose broadest region is normally identified as being a 'diffuse urbanization' or 'conurbation'). The structure of agricultural property also varies: the small holdings (like the small and medium-sized industrial and service business enterprises) are more common in the north, while in the south, the large

capitalist farm estates prevail. In the north, social relations are more centred on the family and kinship, whilst in the south one finds a social system based on paid work. Several socio-cultural factors acquire contrasting forms. From a political standpoint, the ideological defence of property and of classical economic models in the north have resulted in a certain political conservatism; in the south, the socio-economic reality of the wage-earning system has led the agricultural proletariat to identify with left-wing ideologies, as expressed in the vote for the Portuguese Communist Party. Catholic religiosity, though tending to model itself on Euro-Occidental patterns, continues to predominate as a daily habit in rural Portugal and is traditionally practised more fervently in the north than in the south (França 1981; Almeida 1986b). The various economic and religious factors involved lead to diverging demographic models: for instance, birth rates have always been higher in the north of the country.

The origins of these regional disparities are remote. For centuries, the coast has benefitted from maritime trade (reinforced at the time of the Discoveries), while the inland regions have been confronted by difficult relations with Spain (economic relations between Portugal and Spain assumed any real measure of importance only after the two countries joined the EC in 1986). Since the nineteenth century, industry and services have made use of local harbour facilities and existing population concentrations, and so have developed coastal infrastructures (Lopes 1980, p. 346). Geographically the territory is subject to different influences. In the north higher rainfall and humidity (due to the Atlantic influence), better soil quality and the mountainous countryside have always favoured intensive agriculture and small family property. On the other hand, the drier, flatter regions of the south, which have a Mediterranean climate, are more suited to an unirrigated form of agriculture and a more pronounced role for the latifundium (Ribeiro 1986).

Regional disparities are to be found in the different economic and social development 'models' of the regions. For Santos (1985) and Reis (1985), for instance, regional divisions are related to the linkage between capitalist output and forms of social reproduction. In the coastal north – including the metropolitan region of Oporto – a form of capitalist production based on traditional small and medium-sized enterprises in the secondary and tertiary sectors is associated with low wage incomes implying small-scale part-time agriculture, in addition to a small market-oriented family agricultural sector. In the inland north non-capitalist family agricultural production, with low productivity, together with some tertiary activity, is paired with incomes supplemented by emigrant remittances, public transfers (retirement pensions) and financial interests. In the metropolitan region of Lisbon the capitalist production/reproduction 'coincidence' is perfect: output, particularly industrial and tertiary output, is essentially capitalist, whereas family incomes are of the salary

type. In the south (Alentejo region), something similar may be found: the large farm estates are more often than not run in a capitalist manner. We are left with a small coastal belt in the south (Algarve), whose economy is based on tourism.

The historical evolution of the Portuguese agricultural sector has given it a particular stamp (for a history of Portuguese agriculture see Cabral 1974, Caldas 1978). Several of the problems affecting Portuguese agriculture today could already be seen as the end of the nineteenth century: for instance, poor productivity, the increase in small holdings in the north and the existence of latifundia to the south (in fact, uneven property distribution prompted several recommendations for change, including proposals in favour of 'internal colonisation' of the population, moving from north to south, along with the dividing up of the large capitalist farming estates).

However, a variety of different factors prevented any structural alterations. In the south, the land structure remained untouchable on account of grain protectionism, introduced at the close of the nineteenth century and reinforced by state subsidies on the price of bread in the post First World War period (the so-called 'political bread' policy). Other factors include an agricultural policy whose aim was to prevent social conflict in the rural areas, particularly the 'Wheat Campaign' in the 1930's) and the longlasting ties between landowners and political power (Medeiros 1978; Pais *et al.* 1976, 1978). In spite of the political measures introduced, the most conspicuous social outcome for decades has been serious social conflict in the countryside between the rural proletariat and the employers, aggravated by cyclic unemployment crises.

The renewal of small-scale family farming in the rest of the territory was, in turn, made possible by the 'functional' role played by emigration and emigrant remittances in the Portuguese economy from the late nineteenth century. For decades, emigration has played a fundamental part in Portugal. On the one hand, migratory flows out of the country to Brazil between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1920s and the huge flows to Europe between 1950 and 1973 created the Portuguese diaspora (it is estimated that today some four million Portuguese and their close descendants are dotted around the world, compared to a current domestic population of roughly ten million). On the other hand, emigration has assumed an important economic and social role. It has ensured the country's financial balance — the permanent negative trade balance has been stabilized through currency remittances — and it has provided an escape valve for demographic pressures that have not been absorbed by domestic economic activity (on emigration, see Serrão 1977). As the majority of emigrants come from rural areas, particularly from peasant agriculture, it has been possible to preserve many of the peasant small holdings with their archaic productive patterns.

The stability of agricultural structures has always been linked with demographic retraction in the rural areas. Migratory exodus consisted of emigration and intense internal migrations, particularly from the mid 1960s, when the greatest internal pole of attraction was Lisbon. During this period the Portuguese economy showed some signs of modernisation, with the opening up of frontiers (membership of EFTA) and a significant industrial surge. Another factor should also be referred to: the Colonial War (1961-1974) contributed to demographic decompression in rural Portugal and also to the relative increase in the female and elderly populations.

For a number of decades the state forged a range of ties with the rural world. Throughout the country, the *Grémios de Lavoura* (Farming Guilds) and the *Casas do Povo* (Community Centres), whose main functions were to regulate agricultural activity and reduce social problems, were promoted (Lucena 1991). To the south, the concern of the state was to cushion the most serious consequences of the existing production model, particularly the seasonal unemployment crises: public works were fostered to provide employment to the rural unemployed. It must, however, be stressed that the main functions of the Welfare State were scarcely known in Portugal before 1974.

It is little wonder that the political regime which dominated Portugal between the late 1920s and the early 1970s – an authoritarian one, characterized by economic autarchy and social and ideological immobilism, and whose leading public figures were António de Oliveira Salazar and Marcello Caetano – incorporated the peasant imaginary in its ideological references, particularly political traditionalism and the economic self-sufficiency of 'ruralism' (Rosas 1986). The rural space, with its family and religious virtues and customs, was used as a barrier to the possible temptations of technological progress and the universal values of capitalism, centred on urban-industrial development.

After 1974, with the founding of political democracy, the country underwent considerable changes which were reflected in rural areas. On the one hand, rural political conflicts were aggravated. In the south, the so-called 'Agrarian Reform' often assumed violent proportions, consisting of the occupation of farmlands and the collectivisation of property, and led to the setting-up of 'Collective Production Units' and agricultural cooperatives (Barros 1979). To the north, some 'peasant' moves were of a conservative nature, in defence of property and on the prompting of the local 'notables'. As for production structures, however, adjustments were not substantial. The land structure was preserved. In the south, collectivisation of property and the subsequent return of property to the former owners in the late 1970s and the 1980s did not to any extent split up the farmlands, despite a government attempt at land-parcelling through the allocation of small and medium-sized plots to private

tenants. The postponement of a number of irrigation projects further hindered change in the region's productive capacity. To the north, small-scale agriculture held its ground, resulting in either commercial intensification or preservation of the peasants 'defensive' strategy — which, along with the investment of revenue from emigration, led to price speculation, and to the neglect or abandonment of agricultural land.

Meanwhile, traditional small and medium-sized industrial enterprises in the coastal north and coastal centre of the country (especially the textile and footwear industries which were export-oriented and were based on poor technologies and low wages) were re-vitalised, having profited from the crisis suffered by the heavy industries of the Lisbon region. This caused a situation already familiar in the 'rural' world to flourish: part-time farming, an important link between the 'rural' and 'urban' worlds, as well as support for new 'local' industrialization. The increase in state social benefits — which even today are regarded as insufficient — led to a greater transfer of incomes to the rural population. Reproduction of many small family farm holdings was strengthened by such different supplementary sources of income as emigration, dual activity and public transfers, along with increasing investment of savings in the banking system. The capacity of small family agriculture to adapt to different economic and social circumstances, before and after 1974, clearly characterize this type of agriculture as identifiable with the 'peasant' models and as more stable in social and economic terms (the regions that experienced more conflict and greater social privations after 1974 — the south and Lisbon area — were, in fact, the ones where family agriculture is more rarely found).

Even after 1974, regionalization and decentralization of public administration and finance to municipal areas — the process known as *Poder Local* (Local Government) — provided some impetus to the most depressed regions of the country. This progress was strengthened by the structural funds available from the European Community after 1986 (mainly the FEDER and, in the case of agriculture, the FEOGA). Reinforcement of regional structures, along with the crisis that hit the biggest national metropolitan centre — the Lisbon region — led to a situation where there was no aggravation of regional asymmetries in this period. However, from the mid-1980s, fresh symptoms of renewed international emigration prompt one to consider the frailty that continues to characterize much of the Portuguese rural, and urban, fabric.

When we think of rural development in a broader sense, in which the initiative and participation of local communities are fundamental, the picture is by no means brilliant. We may understand the passive behaviour of the peasantry over forty years, in the light of the centralism of Salazar's authoritarian régime. Since 1974, however, the picture has changed little (on the political behaviour of the peasantry, before and

after 1974, see Riegelhaupt 1979 and Pinto 1980). Local government in Portugal continues to be closely dependent on central government. The state and 'caciquismo' (notables) prevent participation and decision-making based on local communities, and this has systematic repercussions for rural development itself (Ruivo and Veneza 1988).

Trends in the Portuguese agricultural sector are shown in Table 1, which includes several indicators.

Table 1. Agriculture in the Portuguese Economy, 1950-1991.

	Gross Agricultural Product as % of GDP	Active Population in Agriculture as % of Total Active Population		
		Total	Wage-earners	Others
1950	34	51	29	22
1960	23	47	13	24
1970	14	36	14	22
1981	12	28	6	22
1991	--	17	--	--

Note: Because of different methodologies, the figures for 1991 are not fully comparable with those for previous years.

Sources: 1950-81: Lima 1991, p. 346, 1991: *Active Agricultural Population in 1991: Instituto Nacional de Estatística, Inquérito ao Emprego.*

Where output is concerned, the agricultural sector has been stagnating for a long time. Low growth rates have contrasted with the significant growth rates displayed by the other sectors of the economy, in particular after the mid-1960s. Its decline in relative importance may be seen by the declining share of the Gross Agricultural Product in the total wealth as well as by the declining share of the agricultural workforce in the total workforce. In 1950, the agricultural workforce still amounted to roughly half of the country's total active population; after the mid-1960s its decline was very swift, and reached a low of 17 per cent in 1991 – though this is still a very high figure by present-day European standards. Two other features have marked the recent decades of rural Portuguese development. One is the considerable decline in the wage-earning population employed in agriculture, (the rural 'proletariat', representing the classic capitalist sector of agriculture), in favour of family or 'isolated' workers who are close to the peasant model. In 1950, agricultural wage-earners represented 29 per cent of the total active population, compared

to 14 per cent in 1970 and 6 per cent in 1981. In contrast, employment in family-type small holdings remained remarkably stable: between 1950 and 1981, the share of non wage-earning workers in the total active population remained constant at around 22 per cent (see Table 1).

The predominance of family farm holdings may be seen in another indicator: the holdings in which the agricultural work is entirely or mainly performed by the household of the producer (family and 'semi-family' holdings) have increased in importance, and correspond to 90% of the total (Lima 1991). However, it should be noted that the fall in capitalist farming was far more widespread in the north than in the south of the territory. A second important feature of rural Portuguese development has been the increased distortion in the structure of land property: over the last few decades, the proportion of small-sized agricultural holdings has been constantly increasing: in 1979 the 'small holdings' (surface area less than 4 hectares) amounted to some 80% of all agricultural holdings, although they occupied less than half the total agricultural surface (Lima 1991).

The quantitative stability of family-type agricultural holdings belies a deep economic and social heterogeneity. Lima (1991, pp. 343-344) has recently drawn up a typology of the main sectors of Portuguese agriculture (another typology, of a broader nature, is provided by Barros 1981): (1) agriculture 'tending to be entrepreneurial', involving the producer's total commitment, whose surface and technical equipment are reasonable: this form represents about 11 per cent of the total number of holdings and 55 per cent of the total agricultural area; (2) part-time farming which, in most cases, plays a complementary role to incomes derived from other economic activities: it stands for 48 per cent of holdings and 32 per cent of the total area; (3) small-scale plural-income agriculture, characterized by the total involvement of the producer, but whose survival is ensured by incomes from other sources – dual-activity of other members of the family, social benefits, emigrant remittances, etc. (cases which Barros (1981) prefers to call 'residual agriculture'): this form represents 38 per cent of holdings and 9 per cent of the total area. According to Lima, economic dynamism in Portuguese agriculture can be assured only by the first and part of the second group of farm holdings – in other words, 17 per cent of holdings and 76 per cent of the area (1991, p. 345). However, official estimates do exist that point to a higher number of economically viable agricultural holdings.

SOCIAL SCIENCES, RURAL SOCIOLOGY AND 'RURAL STUDIES'

The history of rural sociology in Portugal is inseparable from that of social sciences as a whole, particularly in the period between the 1930s

and the 1970s. Moreover, the slow pace of its evolution is related to the inertia affecting the rural world and all Portuguese society at the time.

The political régime that ruled Portugal throughout the 1926-1974 period – the so-called 'New State' – was responsible for the poor scientific output of the social sciences. Sociology in particular acquired official existence only after 1974, having previously been restricted by the régime's ideological standpoint. Studies of a sociological type have always existed, but were spread among several subjects. The political democratization of 1974 brought about a veritable explosion in the social sciences – particularly in sociology. The amount of scientific information produced, especially within the university sphere (funding for independent social research continues to be insufficient), has far exceeded what had been achieved before 1974.

However, 'rural studies' in Portugal have a long history. For a long time there has been an interdisciplinary tradition among the various disciplines dealing with the rural environment. In the absence of sociological output in its own right, those disciplines have always made up the studies which we today refer to as rural sociology. The interdisciplinary tradition has become so deep-rooted that, even today, when rural sociology has obtained autonomy, many authors prefer to speak about 'rural studies' as a whole rather than individual disciplines (see, for a detailed description of 'rural studies' in the twentieth century, Cabral, no date).

The proximate origin of Portuguese 'rural studies' is to be found in the 1930s in the work of researchers and students of agronomy. The Instituto Superior de Economia of the Technical University of Lisbon has, since then, produced an enormous amount of 'rural monographs' for programme purposes, consisting of historical, social, economic and agronomic data from countless rural communities or farming properties in the country. Although they are often very weak as sociological analyses, they created a huge source of information and a habit of reflection on the Portuguese rural environment. Attempts to broaden the range of analysis, or to question some more sensitive aspects of rural life – as in the case of the rural housing survey in 1943, where mention was made of the population's poor living standards – were met with political force from the régime and publications were sometimes banned (Cabral, no date). During this period, some public bodies, such as the *Junta de Colonização Interna* (Internal Settlement Board), produced important material, including studies on village communities, forestation and common land. The most important names to remember in this period are those of Henrique de Barros, Lima Basto and Azevedo Gomes.

Secondly, ethnography and anthropology were responsible for the study of the characteristics of Portuguese rural culture in the 1930s and 1940s. Studies were conducted mainly on village community models and

traditional rural technologies. As some critics have stated, the ethnographic survey co-existed peacefully with the 'ruralist' ideology of the régime, thus accounting for its easier dissemination. In this school, the most important names in Portugal are Jorge Dias and Leite de Vasconcellos.

Thirdly, development of 'rural studies' comes from agrarian economy (at this time, hard to dissociate from agronomy). From the late 1950s, the *Centro de Estudos de Economia Agrária* (Centre for Studies in Agrarian Economy) of the Gulbenkian Science Institute (a private research body linked to a foundation of considerable repute in Portugal) and the *Instituto Superior de Agronomia* produced work which, though of a predominantly economic stance, made up for the non-existent rural sociology. Some of the best studies on rural environments and on regional differences based on economic, social and geographical features stem from these (see, for instance, Alarcão *et al.* 1961). Some of the names associated with this scientific output are Eugénio de Castro Caldas, Mário Pereira, Manuel Loureiro, Henrique de Barros, Carlos da Silva and Alberto Alarcão. After 1974 the *Centro de Estudos de Economia Agrária* fostered both economic studies and substantive rural sociology, particularly with Afonso de Barros; however, this centre was recently closed down.

It was only after 1974 that sociology and rural sociology became independent areas, endowed with institutional and scientific legitimacy. At that point, the foremost degree courses in sociology to be found today were drawn up, and these included sets of subjects or departments oriented to rural sociology. With the reforming of other degree programmes and the setting up of new higher education institutions, rural sociology began to be taught in a number of different places. Research work undertaken in the rural sphere was, in the main, restricted to universities. The main institution of note is the *Instituto Superior de Ciências de Trabalho e da Empresa*, of Lisbon University, closely tied to the *Gabinete de Investigações Sociais/Instituto de Ciências Sociais* of the same university; it is there that a lot of the theoretical and empirical work was carried out. Mention should also be made of a series of other universities and polytechnics: the University of Évora, the University of the Alto-Douro and Trás-os-Montes, the University of Beira Interior, the University of the Minho, the Polytechnic Institute of Santarém, the *Faculdade de Economia* of the University of Soimbra (whose sociology group recently became a separate entity within the *Centro de Estudos Sociais*), the *Faculdade de Economia* of the University of Oporto, the *Faculdade de Agronomia* of the Technical University of Lisbon, etc.

During this phase, a wealth of theoretical and empirical work was done. In the theoretical field, initially there were varying degrees of critical assimilation of the international theoretical literature, including a

good representation of the French and Anglo-Saxon schools; this assimilation subsequently gave way to independent reflection. In the empirical field, research undertaken was varied and was performed by university staff, researchers and undergraduates – the work performed by the latter for their degree dissertations provided an important survey of the new realities of the Portuguese rural world. Despite the shortage of funding, there has been an ever-increasing amount of written work and scientific meetings. As early as the 1970s, the journals *Análise Social* of Lisbon University and *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais* of the University of Coimbra published numerous 'rural' studies; more recently, the journals *Sociologia – Problemas e Práticas* of Lisbon University and *Cadernos de Ciências Sociais* of Oporto University are among those that give most coverage to rural sociology. Some international journals have published several articles by Portuguese authors, such as *Agricultura e Sociedade*, *Sociologia Ruralis* and *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, for instance. During this phase a number of Colloquia provided outstanding contributions, such as the Colloquium on the Latifundium in the Iberian Peninsula (Barros 1980) and on Small-Scale Agriculture in Portugal (Various authors 1981). This activity culminated in the organization of the 13th European Congress for Rural Sociology in Braga in 1986 by rural sociologists and other social scientists associated with rural studies (Various authors 1986). The Portuguese Society of Rural Studies (SPER) was founded at that time and brought together research workers from different specialized areas (sociology, economy, anthropology, geography, agronomy, etc).

One finds some significant theoretical and bibliographical milestones in this sudden burgeoning of 'rural studies' in post-1974 sociology in Portugal. Early in 1976 a work of fundamental importance – notwithstanding the many inherent shortcomings – was published, *Modes of Capitalist Penetration in Agriculture – Agrarian Structures in Mainland Portugal (1950-1970)*, written by João Ferreira de Almeida, Manuel Villaverde Cabral and Eduardo de Freitas (Almeida *et al.* 1976) (the first two authors, in particular, have been closely associated with the most important research activities to date in Portuguese rural studies). In the 'peasant studies' tradition prevalent at the time in Europe – Claude Servolin, Vergopoulos, Pierre-Philippe Rey, Jerzy Tepicht and Teodor Shanin – the authors demonstrated the specific way in which Portuguese agriculture was integrated into capitalism, through the preservation of peasant-type family holdings and the sharp decline of traditional 'capitalist' holdings. The thesis of 'formal submission' or the vertical concentration of agriculture in capitalism is thus supported and reflected in the significant fall in the number of rural wage-earners. The greatest shortcomings of this work are now acknowledged by the authors: it overlooked the considerable heterogeneity that already existed at the time

in Portuguese agriculture, particularly with regard to the part-time forms it assumed, and it did not refer to the important role of the symbolic in peasant adaptation strategies.

In the early years following 1974, studies of the Agrarian Reform were also intense. The Agrarian Reform, limited to the southern half of the territory (the Alentejo) – the latifundia and employer-type agricultural zone – was characterized by the wholesale occupation of lands and collectivisation of farming. However, the disparity between the political and economic impact of Agrarian Reform was considerable, both at national level and within the agricultural sector itself. Although the subject of heated political debate, which spread well beyond rural frontiers and deeply divided not only the supporters of the Portuguese Communist Party (at the time well implanted in Portugal and the champion of Agrarian Reform) but also most of the remaining political groups, reorganization of agriculture had little impact upon economic realities. The Agrarian Reform was to face serious problems in the 1980s with the return of land to the former owners along with government action designed to parcel up the land. The most systematic work on this phenomenon was undertaken by Afonso de Barros (1979 and 1986). Mention should also be made of studies by Matias Ferreira (1977), Oliveira Baptista (1978), Silva Martins (1975), N. Jazra and A. Bandarra (1976 and 1981) and António Barreto (1983 and 1987). The last author became Minister of Agriculture in 1977, in one of the most disturbed periods of the Agrarian Reform process (for a synthesis of the studies on Agrarian Reform, see Nave and Reis 1988; for a study of the pre-1974 social conditions in the Agrarian Reform zone, the works of Cutileiro (1971), M. Villaverde Cabral (1974) and Castro Caldas (1978) are the most important).

Small-scale family agriculture was not overlooked, particularly from the late 1970s onwards. Less controversial than the latifundia (although, after 1974, the peasant-type rural population assumed a role that to some extent checked the predominance of left-wing political forces), it prevailed in the rural areas of the rest of Portugal. What is more important, it acted as one of the forces for social stability in post-revolution Portugal. In fact, the internal political and economic crisis was to be hinged on the post-1973 international economic crisis, with the closing of emigration to Europe and the crisis of various models of industrial growth. Besides absorbing some of the social shocks caused by these transformations, small-scale agriculture also acted as a support for the surge of 'local' industrialization in the coastal north and centre (Santos 1985). Some of the most important studies on small-scale agriculture were presented at a Colloquium concerning this theme (Various authors 1981). The role of part-time agriculture was also focused on by Cabral (1983), Lima (1986) and, in the area of geography, by Carminda Cavaco (1980).

In the late 1970s, an important theoretical and methodological reflection on the specific nature of Portuguese rural space developed. Having assimilated the leading external theoretical references, and having consolidated an increasing empirical base (and, no less important, having overtaken the phase of heated political discussion), major work was produced, mainly in the universities, on the rural environment. Two names were decisive in this reflection: those of João Ferreira de Almeida and José Madureira Pinto, whose work led to doctorate theses which were later published (Almeida 1986a; Pinto 1985; see also Almeida and Pinto, 1980). Their empirical studies covered the same region – the coastal north of Portugal. Especially notable in their work was the exhaustive characterization of social structures in the countryside, of the emerging symbolic universes, and of the multiple city-country links, particularly commuting migrations to the metropolitan region of Oporto, industrialization in a rural milieu and the multiple associated strategies. The authors also endeavour to list the 'internal functions' and 'external functions' of Portuguese rural space, in an attempt to articulate the strategies and structures that link reproduction of the rural environment to the surrounding urban world.

Important works of theory, all of which are the outcome of doctoral theses, were produced by Afonso de Barros (1986), on the theme of 'Lati-fundism and Agrarian Reform', and more recently by José Reis (1992) and Pedro Hespanha (to be published). Reis and Hespanha studied the problems of industrialization in a rural environment, in the coastal centre of the country, and the various linkages between peasant strategies and industrial dynamism. Reis's focus is above all economic, particularly from an industrial standpoint, whereas Hespanha concentrates more on rural strategies centred on land ownership.

Some other works studied the linkage between emigration and the rural world, or the various sources of income and reproduction of family agriculture - the various forms of 'partial abandonment' of the fields. Gil Nave and Manuela Brito Reis (1986), for instance, belong to the first group, besides other studies on the impact of remittances and the return of emigrants to their home environments. These studies indicate the mere reproduction of survival mechanisms – or an economic complement – arising from emigration. In the second group stands the previously mentioned Sousa Santos (1985) who is concerned with the regionalization of economic and social development patterns in Portugal (linkage between types of production and sources of income), as well as insertion of the country in a European 'semi-peripheral' context (see also Lima (1985), Cabral or Barros).

By and large, the rigorous analysis of quantitative data on Portuguese rural space, drawn from statistical sources such as Agricultural Enquiries and Surveys and General Population Census (from the Portuguese

National Statistics Institute), comes from the realm of economics. But such analysis has always acted as a support for sociological studies. Such is the case, in particular, of Aida Valadas de Lima (1985, 1986 and 1991) or Francisco Cordovil (1979); for an excellent synthesis of statistical information available on the country's agricultural sector, see also Lima and Cordovil (1986).

Anthropological analyses of rural space have proved to be of great importance, though now divorced from ethnographic compilation. The recently published studies of João Pina Cabral (1986) and Brian O'Neil (1987), or the works of Raul Iturra are instances of this line of research. Founded on an intensive approach to several rural communities, especially in the north and centre of the country, the authors study 'community' models of social organization or symbolic universes: the great social, economic, symbolic and religious complexity they find contrasts with the usual simple picture of peasant villages. In another, more empirical, vein, although particularly attentive to specific communities and the phenomenon of popular religiosity, mention should also be made of Moisés Espírito Santo (1980).

Historical, geographical and demographic studies, or works arising from other subject-areas of sociology related to the rural world – such as analyses of social stratification and class, migration or the family (as an example of the latter see the recently published thesis by Nelson Lourenço, 1991) – could greatly increase bibliographical references. Even though we omit them here, they have contributed a great deal to our understanding of the Portuguese rural space.

It is perhaps in the mid-1980s that rural sociology in particular, and 'rural studies' in general, enter a new phase of their existence. The gradual erosion of boundaries between the urban and rural world, between industry and agriculture, individual strategies of urban thirst and those whose goal is the continuation of the rural world, lead to some extent to a subject crisis – which may, after all, be no more than the restructuring of its object (and of the corresponding theory). The European Congress for Rural Sociology, which took place in Portugal in 1986, may well have heralded the recent peak (and turning-point) of the discipline. From there on, some of the social scientists devoted to 'rural studies' change their thematic focus, and opt for study-subjects that are not always linked to the area (the family, the urban middle classes, for instance). In a word, we witness a patent scattering of rural studies.

It is true that what is now happening with the autonomy and vitality of rural studies is not unique; the tendency for subject areas to dissipate affects other areas of sociology and of the social sciences as a whole. For instance, at the First Portuguese Sociology Congress in 1988, we witnessed the fusion of urban and rural sociology in the theme entitled 'Urban and Rural Sociology'; this same fusion is maintained at the Second

Portuguese Sociology Congress in 1992, but this time within a broader theme where not even sociology, in the strict sense, is recognizable any longer: 'Social and spatial recomposition and regional and local dynamics'. There are two possible readings of these events: one, the final invasion of rural space by the urban world (a new 'end of the peasants'); the other, more plausible one, that of the mutual need for disciplines that deal with the territory. Today, urban sociology is strongly in need of an understanding of the 'community logics' that lie within it, as well as the multiple strategies linking the urban and the rural – from the seasonal return to the village birthplaces, to the modern secondary residences; questions of 'space', formerly confined to geography, invade all scientific disciplines, from economics to sociology; in other words, there is a global restructuring of traditional issues.

When talking of rural studies as a whole in Portugal, it is common practice to say that they may essentially be distinguished by their micro or macro approach (Cabral, no date; Lima 1991); one may also add that they have passed from a post-1974 phase, in which the structuralist focus prevailed, to another present phase in which case studies predominate (Cabral, no date). This last phase may reflect the growing awareness of the multiple complexities that characterize the rural fabric, besides the fact that the frontiers are becoming more and more indistinct. Whatever the case, it was the coincidence of theoretical approaches and empirical studies, combined with the theoretical fertilization of different disciplines, that has enabled us to grasp the distinctive traits of the Portuguese rural space, as well as its heterogeneity, both of which are naturally linked to the international specificity of Portuguese society.

FUTURE TRENDS

In view of the work completed to date, there is likely to be considerable development in 'rural studies' and rural sociology in Portugal, although this may be incorporated in a number of new issues. The resources already acquired for research and teaching suggest that its development will embrace important micro-sociological areas such as the study of local organized communities, changes in values and symbolic representations, typologies of relations with the environment and religion, as well as analyses of a more macro-sociological scope. In these areas, the changes that have occurred in social stratification and social mobility, and the economic, social, political and cultural changes that are beginning to take place in the Portuguese rural space, will determine the object of 'rural studies'. However certain challenges of a problematic nature persist, and will be reflected in the appropriateness of the scientific paradigms and methodology employed, with regard to the currently visible and/or

foreseeable changes in rural space.

As a first major issue, one should stress the extent to which the persistence of the urban/rural dichotomy is still valid. The changes that have taken place or are taking place following Portugal's admission to the EC in 1986 are moving towards the restructuring of rural space in multiple ways. On the one hand, one finds that some specific economic activities are located in the rural space (tourism, leisure, etc.). On the other hand, we are confronted with new social needs resulting from the ecological balance between humankind and nature, along with the demand for participation and decision-making identified with local communities. Though having a greater impact in developed capitalist countries, such phenomena may in certain circumstances be seen as a trend in Portugal.

From this standpoint, Portuguese rural space is not necessarily obliged to evolve as a clearly defined outcome of economic activity arising from a urban-industrial 'continuum', determined by the economic progress and growth of developed Europe. The emergence of new social needs which prove impossible to achieve in the urban space will cause the evolution of rural space in Portugal to lengthen and deepen, both conceptually and in real life. Bearing in mind the fragility of peasant productive structures and the nature of the soil and climate, it is likely that the Portuguese rural environment will undergo changes arising from the placing of leisure-related industries and services and of certain social strata from urban contexts in rural areas.

The second great challenge will be to apprehend and analyse emerging local communities as open systems capable of achieving a specific identity, able to foster development of rural space through a relatively endogenous social process. If a specific relationship between local rural communities and their environment persists, combined with decision-making and participative processes based on informal social relations and symbolic representations sustained by intrinsic values and models, it is also imperative to study rural social space in terms of integration and sociability permeated by factors emerging from modern rurality.

It is likely that social and political regulatory mechanisms will be made up of forms of participation and decision-making more in keeping with inter-awareness and endogenous cultural identification. Classic relational ethnocentrism, which sustained social action in the decision-making of 'local notables' and rested upon submission to traditional values, may give way to the development of relations of a democratic, informal type, combined with values of cosmopolitanism and universality.

Bearing in mind the constraints affecting the Portuguese agricultural sector and the structural conditions imposed by Portugal's membership of the EC, it is difficult to foresee the trend in agricultural development.

If small-scale agriculture of the plural-activity kind, in which the families draw part of their incomes from economic activities performed outside their holdings, is maintained, then it is not the entrepreneurial form of agriculture (which in the early 1980s amounted to 11 per cent of the total number of holdings and covered 55 per cent of the total productive area) that will overcome the underlying structural deficit. Even if the entrepreneurial agricultural sector manages to acquire the capacity to compete with its European and world partners, the obstacles facing it are large. Firstly, entrepreneurial-inclined agriculture will have to change its productive and marketing structures. Recourse to new technologies will prove both functional and productive, provided that manpower training and retraining is recognised as a crucial component in its development. A harmonious organizational model may require effective forms of management in which all workers are given some share in participation and decision-making.

Secondly, one must invest in education and the increase in wage-earnings of entrepreneurial agriculture. Investment in these areas will enable the eradication of high illiteracy rates from the Portuguese agricultural sector and rebuild effective management models and marketing methods. On the other hand, to ensure that skilled labour is available, agricultural labourers' wages must be raised and they must be granted the social benefits in effect in the EC.

The outlook for plural small-scale activity and plural-income agriculture is that it will tend to survive for some years. However, in the short and long term, with economic and social development of the commercial and industrial sectors and the effects of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms, and in view of its structural fragility, it is possible to imagine that it will gradually lose its present form.

The effects of the CAP and other EC structural funds (along with the effects of public policies in Portugal after 1974), have already been felt on the restructuring of rural space in Portugal. Collective facilities and infrastructures that were set up at local and regional level in rural areas – particularly in basic sanitation, health, education, roads, etc – are signs of the changes that are taking place. Bearing these changes in mind, along with further prospective changes arising from EC funds and policies (European Commission 1992), the following medium and long term trends in rural areas may be anticipated:

- diversification, with the development of non-agricultural activities on the present farm holdings;
- greater importance attached to protection of the environment;
- an increase in aid to help young farmers set themselves up;
- the targeting of community aid on small and medium-sized enterprises in the more disadvantaged zones;
- additional community co-funding for the less developed regions

covered by objective 1 of the structural fund reform (FEOGA – Guideline);

- development of associativism and information;
- implementation of structural stabilizers; withdrawal from the land; enlargement of land ownership; reconversion; the relinquishing of agricultural activity; income supports.

By applying these measures, a number of structural changes in Portuguese society are possible, with considerable implications for rural development. Such development, taken in conjunction with structural constraints imposed by EC membership on the internal dynamic of Portuguese rural areas, may lead to a number of trends:

1. an improvement in processing and marketing methods for agricultural products in entrepreneurial agriculture;
2. the setting-up of infrastructures for agricultural activity;
3. the development of activities linked to industry and services related to leisure in the rural space;
4. the formation of local communities situated in rural space, sharing an active role in decision-making and participation with regard to rural development strategies and objectives;
5. an improvement in the standard of living, based on better wages, social benefits and improved socio-cultural modes of life;
6. the setting up of cooperatives and associations with endogenous characteristics, particularly oriented to rural development and defence of the environment.

Although the rural development prospects we have outlined for the Portugal space are subject to a number of conditioning factors, there is one general and irreversible structural base: the limitations of a society open to change and competition within the EC and the world system.

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