

Introduction

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In this book, we probe the theme of *the new frontier of resistance to global neoliberal agri-food*. In particular – and distancing ourselves from claiming the production of a comprehensive analysis – we propose a critical review of the logics, forms, and actors that characterize current resistance, focusing on “how far” it can go in terms of being an effective alternative to the dominant system.¹ Its *raison d’être* originates in the development of a number of new forms of resistance that have characterized agri-food since the late 1970s. We identify these new forms as self-limiting. Structural contradictions suggest that they are incapable of bringing about a substantive change in agri-food, and this claim invites fundamental questions about their core function in processes of social regulation.

The new social responses we focus on are the consequence of two late twentieth century socioeconomic events. The first stems from the establishment of *neoliberalism* as society’s dominant ideology and political praxis and the concomitant extraordinary growth of the power of transnational corporations. The second concerns the *erosion of the standard mode of democracy* that typified the post-World War Two Fordist regime. Expressions of neoliberalism changed the nature of tensions between state, market, and society, which in turn diminished the relevance of established strategies of reform and restructuring. Through the presentation of thirteen independent chapters, this introduction and a concluding chapter, the book provides an updated and critical analysis of current resistance in agri-food. These chapters were originally prepared for the mini-conference “The New Frontier of Resistance in Global Agri-Food” that took place in conjunction with the XIVth World Congress of Rural Sociology held in Toronto, Canada in August of 2016. After undergoing a peer-review process and revisions, they were included in this book. This introduction and the book’s conclusion in Chapter 14 were specifically written for this volume.

Neoliberalism and corporate industrial agri-food

A large body of literature has specified the transformation of agri-food that has taken place since the 1970s (i.e., Bonanno and Busch 2015; Wolf and Bonanno 2014). Often referring to the globalization or industrialization of agriculture and food, this wealth of scholarly contributions has illustrated the many

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problems engendered by neoliberalism. Among those, the concentration of capital, the growth of large transnational corporations, the contamination of the environment, the crisis of peasant and family farming, the exploitation of labor and the underdevelopment of farm and rural communities have occupied center stage. Overlaying these material problems, neoliberalism denies the potential of expertise applied in the public domain applied to the challenges of planning and responding to social problems. These structural problems and empirical evidence of social (Piketty 2014), economic (Mirowski 2014), and ecological insecurity (Igoe, Sullivan, and Brockington 2010) associated with dominant strategies of social regulation, however, have not diminished the popularity and frequency of policies based on the desirability of the free market. While neoliberalism is not a coherent and unified body, these policies contain some constant characteristics and claims that define the current mode of governance of the economy and society.

Salient among these characteristics are the emphasis on the desirability of the free functioning of the capitalist market, the notion of market competition, and the ideas of individuality and individual freedom. According to classic proponents of neoliberal theory, such as F. A. Hayek, Ludwig von Mises, and Milton Friedman (Hayek 2011 [1960]; von Mises 2005 [1927]; Friedman 1982 [1962]), the capitalist market and competition centered on individual freedom constitute the most efficient and fair ways to address the allocation of socio-economic resources and rewards. Freely acting individuals, neoliberal theorists contend, liberated from the burden of tradition and institutions, create a just, efficient, and dynamic society. Justice, efficiency and dynamism are generated through competition that results in the appropriate rewarding of meritorious individuals and the application of discipline to poor performers. Neoliberal theorists contend that state-centered bureaucratic decision-making processes are flawed by information deficits and the power of special interest groups. Competition, conversely, allows individuals to assume full responsibility for their actions. Through a program of deregulation and erosion of norms, individuals are free to act and to advance strategies based on their knowledge of requirements (costs) and consequences (benefits).

As these benefits are realized, the composition of society and the distribution of property rights will continually reflect the best possible allocation of human, natural, and economic resources and distribution of rewards. In this context, individuals are empowered to act and, simultaneously, are called to become responsible and accountable for their actions. Denying any positive role of the state unless directed at the creation of more markets, stressing the undesirable effects of both the redistribution of income and the de-commodification of goods and services, and emphasizing personal responsibility over the concept of the social safety net, neoliberals view *responsibilization* as a tool to achieve emancipation from the overbearing and inept “nanny state.” As individuals take control of their actions and move away from obeying state mandates, they not only break away from following improbable “all knowing” state leaders and planners, but also their responsible behavior becomes one of the primary conditions for

the creation of a better society. Contending that freely acting individuals permit the best possible outcome of socioeconomic and ecological interaction, they argue that alternatives to “free market capitalism” fail on both normative (i.e., justice) and technical grounds (i.e., allocative and dynamic efficiency).

The transformation of these principles into policies has created an agri-food system that is characterized by the power and growth of transnational corporations, and by the accelerated exploitation of human and natural resources. The growth of transnational corporations has coincided with an unprecedented concentration of capital and corporate global hypermobility, or the ability to move about the globe in search of convenient factors of production facing only limited opposition from local actors and institutions (i.e., Howard 2016; Bonanno and Constance 2008; Wolf and Bonanno 2014). This corporate global sourcing has significantly weakened the regulatory capacity of nation-states and the self-determination of communities and regions that find themselves forced to become parts of projects that make local resource available for corporate exploitation. The result is the availability of “cheap and abundant” food that is heralded as the successful completion of one of the most fundamental missions of industrial capitalism: inexpensively feeding the global working masses. However, this rhetoric conceals the disempowerment of labor and communities that accompanies it, the vast processes of inequality that it engenders, and the ecological contradictions of industrial agriculture applied to farm-level resources and larger ecosystems. The legitimating power of “cheap food for all” and references to a “consumer-driven marketplace” do not hide the rampant exploitative and unsustainable nature of industrial agri-food.

The erosion of the standard mode of democracy

The concentration of power in the hands of transnational corporations, roll-back of state controls, and the industrialization of agri-food are resisted, and this resistance is founded on several decades of academic critique and popular mobilization (e.g., Howard’s *An Agricultural Testament*, Carson’s *Silent Spring*, Berry’s *Unsettling of the Land*, Willie Nelson’s *Farm Aid*, Hightower’s *Hard Times, Hard Tomatoes . . .*). Contemporary resistance and the concomitant calls for change unfold in a context that is drastically different from the mode of democracy and social regulation that defined resistance during the post-World War Two Fordist era. Fordism was characterized by the power of labor unions and labor-based forms of opposition to corporate capitalism. This type of resistance was successful largely because of the national dimension of capitalism, a compatible political system based on established mass parties of the right and left and the state control of the economy (Streeck 2016; Harvey 2014; Bonanno, Busch, Friedland, Gouveia, and Mingione 1994). In effect, the nation-based character of Fordism permitted the development of state sanctioned and regulated forms of opposition that were recognized and accepted by the primary social forces. This system was based on the shared notion of the importance of socioeconomic stability and the desirability of a liberal democratic system that protected

society from the severe consequences of economic crises and the establishment of extreme totalitarian regimes such as the fascist regimes of the inter-war period and the Soviet system. Accordingly, at least in the North, and as long as levels of profit remained high, unions had effective avenues of contestation available to them that they employed to achieve historically significant goals such as employment stability, good job remuneration, and an expanded system of social welfare. In agriculture, the struggles of unions signified improvement in wages, land redistribution programs, programs in support of the income of family farmers, and infrastructure spending that improved the quality of life and system of production of many agriculturalists and rural regions (Bonanno and Cavalcanti 2014). While a number of issues remained unresolved – including the exploitation of immigrants and ethnic minorities and women, the uneven growth rate between the North and the South, and the increasing exploitation of the environment that imperiled workers and consumers – it was felt that the labor movement was positioned to achieve more gains for workers and other subordinate groups that accompanied labor in its anti-corporate struggle. Ultimately, however, the effectiveness and power of this Fordist (standard) system of democracy rested on the fact that it allowed the downward redistribution of resources and, accordingly, generated stability and legitimacy for the system (Bonanno 2017; Streeck 2016; Wallerstein, Collins, Mann, Derluquian, and Calhoun 2013).

In the 1970s, as the rate of profit declined, socioeconomic instability dominated society and the Fordist system entered its final crisis, global neoliberalism began to erode the power of the labor movement and the legitimacy of state expertise and leadership applied to social problems and social trajectory. It transformed classic labor strategies of resistance and popular mobilization around themes of economic justice into obsolete tools and references. Under global neoliberalism, nation-states lost their ability to control markets and allowed the market to exercise control over the state. Accordingly, policies were reformulated in terms of market competitiveness rather than social goals. The objective of nurturing people to become good citizens was abandoned in favor of the goal of training holders of human and social capital to compete in the global economy. Land and natural resources increasingly took the form of commodities and became subject to the logic of finance and capital mobility. In this new system, democracy became redundant, and too slow to keep pace with and function effectively in an electronically mediated, globally integrated marketplace.

Along with the erosion of a mode of social regulation premised on interdependence between opposed class interests, contemporary democracy is characterized by a major shift in how expertise is understood and mobilized to channel development. Within the standard, post-World War Two mode of democracy, state bureaucracies justified and administered programs based on development of substantial internal technical capabilities (Rose 1993). The state specified social problems in domains such as health, work, transport, housing, and environment and created new forms of expertise and trained professionals

to advance interventions. While the knowledge that was created and invoked was linked to interests of specific class positions, racial groups, and the interests of men, there were highly visible appeals to the concepts of social good and general welfare (Pritchard, Wolf and Wolford 2016). Science and expertise were understood to be essential engines of notions of progress (Bush 1945). After putting a man on the moon, most everything was in reach of the state and its capacity to focus the scientific capabilities of public and private sector actors on contemporary problems. Essentially, the reliance of science was part of the technocratic solution to socioeconomic problems that defined the postwar Fordist era and the intervention of the state that characterized it (Harvey 1989).

We now find ourselves in a situation in which experts and public agencies have diminished capacity to establish the legitimacy of problems, specify risks, and structure public debate. State expertise (science mobilized within state agencies) and knowledge claims in support of public policy decision-making (science brought to bear on the state) have come under harsh criticism. This was true years before Trump's election, as frontal attacks to the modernist and Fordist idea of the progressive and truth-generating power of science came from a variety of sources. Among others, they included postmodern theory and its arguments about the social creation of science and its lack of universality; Marxian accounts about science's class nature; Feminist theory's view of a male-dominated scientific sphere; and Critical Theory's analysis of the repressive and totalitarian turn of scientific knowledge. However, the development of contemporary populist sensibilities applied to knowledge have established new heights in the de-legitimation of scientific knowledge. In many ways, science has been cast as just another way of knowing – one that suffers from being ungrounded, indeterminate, and unaccountable. In the contemporary context of neoliberalism, individuals are encouraged to privilege their own knowledge and understandings and to be skeptical of the concept of knowledge for the public good. In parallel, the legitimacy of public investments focused around building capacity and pursuit of socially articulated priorities have contracted. Applied to agri-food, we note a significant shift in public expectations and popular debate regarding the role of the state in responding to environmental, social, and economic problems. This shift is characterized by an eerie silence regarding farming, nutrition, farm labor, land ownership, water, climate, and R&D. This situation stands in marked contrast to the second portion of the twentieth century, when resistance was very much focused on refocusing robust and growing capabilities and programs of state agencies and public universities and extension in order to address the structure of agriculture (family farm crisis) and environment (e.g., sustainable agriculture) (Hightower 1972; Friedland, Barton, and Thomas 1981).

In the wake of erosion of the standard mode of democracy, social regulation as we knew it has come to be replaced by governance premised on individualization and responsabilization. Public debates, contestation, and class opposition were declared dead and replaced with problem-solving processes executed through appeals to self-regulation premised on self-interest and references to

transparency and risks of consumer/investor flight. To the extent the state engages, the favored tool for addressing social and ecological problems has come to be “nudging”: reliance on subtle – sometimes subconscious – prompts to manipulate individuals’ behavior (Thaler and Sunstein 2008). Cognitive bias (Kahneman, Slovic, and Tversky 1982) – patterns of information processing that explain individuals’ decisions – has emerged as a favored explanation of social problems, as well as a primary target of efforts to redress them. These academic and popular fashions – and their status in national politics – highlight a thorough lack of appetite for mobilizing state authority to address social problems or pursue public goals. Engagement with questions of politics, interests, and public policy has been thoroughly supplanted by fascination with the self and efforts to understand capacity of individuals to process information. To the extent there is a social program connected to the science of cognitive bias, we might conclude that appreciation of information processing errors that derive from our “hard wiring” will permit us to guard against them, thereby allowing the aggregation of individuals’ decisions to produce even more optimal societal outcomes. Within democracy under neoliberalism, political legitimacy was replaced with market discipline, class-based opposition with consumer sovereignty, scientifically validated knowledge with the privileging of personal experience, and legislative interventions with tools for selling shampoo.

Resistance to global neoliberal agri-food

In agri-food as in other spheres of society, resistance had to be conceptualized and reorganized in ways that would overcome the new limits of traditional forms of contestation. This change was certainly an acknowledgment of the defeat of the Fordist labor movement – but it also accepted the neoliberal message of the ineffectiveness of class-based opposition that, paradoxically, occurred as global neoliberalism accelerated the exploitation of labor worldwide (Bonanno and Cavalcanti 2014). Based on actors located in the consumption sphere rather than in production, these new forms of resistance to global neoliberalism centered not only on the production of sharp ecological, and socioeconomic critiques but also through a variety of practical initiatives. Among these initiatives, some shifted attention from traditional concerns about state policy, the rural economy, labor, ecology, the family farm, and long-term productive capacity of farmland to issues about the consumption of quality food. Taking the form of “short value chains” (Renting, Marsden, and Banks 2003) and consumer and/or community-based “alternative agri-food,” these initiatives consisted of programs that resisted the industrialization of food production and consumption such as organic farming, biological farming, and slow food, and proposals that established different forms of production and distribution such as civic agriculture and farmers’ markets. Based on the actions of responsible, free, and reflexive individuals and market exchange, these initiatives have received a great deal of attention and are heralded as successful ways to oppose corporate transnational agri-food networks (e.g., Hinrichs and Eshleman 2014).

Simultaneously, however, the fact that these programs center on consumer behavior and are market oriented has allowed critics to maintain that they are based on the same ideological traits that characterize neoliberalism. Additionally, critics have questioned their anti-corporate effectiveness. Not only has the expansion of corporate agri-food not been altered, but also many of the key features of these initiatives have been appropriated by those very corporate entities targeted by opponents. Critics further indicate that these programs limit participation of members of the lower classes and, because of their local nature, hamper broader participation. It is contended that the fact that they do not transcend market relations and the search for profit (commodification) allows, at best, a “benign” form of small-scale capitalism that remains vulnerable to corporate co-optation, capital concentration and market contradictions, including exploitation of land and labor (wage, family, and self). By failing to address the political economic foundations of the regime they contest, alternatives focused on “voting with one’s wallet” tend to address the symptoms rather than the cause (Bonanno and Cavalcanti 2014; De Puis and Goodman 2005; Guthman 2008; Johnson 2008).

Dwelling on this set of critiques, a second group of scholars stresses the power of transnational agri-food corporations. Corporate power serves to control oppositional forces, the sector, and nation-states (Heffernan 1998; Heffernan and Constance 1994; Friedland 1991; Howard 2016; Bonanno and Constance 2008). This corporate domination thesis emphasizes the limited power of oppositional groups under the neoliberal global system. The limited ability to resist is largely the outcome of the hypermobility of global agri-food capital that allows corporations to bypass opposition and also state-sponsored regulation. Additionally, transnational corporations have been able to employ economic crises to establish networks of production in places featuring a pro-corporate sociopolitical climate. As resistance emerges and pro-corporate sentiments decline, this group of scholars documents that corporations divest and relocate operations elsewhere. Following a similar logic, they stress the corporate use of immigrant labor to control wages, split the labor movement by pitting local workers against immigrants and, accordingly, limit labor strength and control its struggles. Discussing the various instances of consumption-based resistance, these authors indicate that corporations are often able to co-opt not only these initiatives but also some of the concepts that support them (Busch, Chapter 1 in this volume). While the power of corporations is generally acknowledged, some have argued that an exclusive focus on corporate power is ultimately counterproductive (e.g., De Lind 2011). Attention to the variety of forms that resistance takes, the strategies of the actors on the ground, and affective dimensions of resistance are identified as important complements to attention to political economy (Blesh and Wolf 2014; Brislen, Chapter 13 in this volume)

A third group of researchers stresses the “retreat of the state” as one of the primary features of the neoliberal regime. The implementation of de-regulation, the actions of neoliberal lawmakers and administrations that reduced state intervention, and the concomitant push for the creation of new markets, it is argued,

paved the way for the marketization of society and the expansion of corporate power. Defining current conditions in terms of “state versus corporations,” this group of opponents of corporate neoliberalization sees in the inability of the state to exercise control over the economy and corporate actions one of the most important aspects of global neoliberalism. Accordingly, they propose a return to greater state intervention and control of the economy and society. They call for the implementation of measures such as enhanced regulation of production and distribution of goods and services, expanded public sector roles in research and development, stricter state regulation of the environment and labor relations, and a renegotiation of transnational agreements and organizations such as NAFTA, MERCOSUR and the EU. This neo-Fordist posture proposes opposition to neoliberalism through the revival of progressive roles played by the state under Fordism (Bowen 2015; Denny, Worosz, and Wilson 2016; McKeon 2015).

While recognizing the progressive dimension of Fordism, critics of neo-Fordist proposals not only stress the issues associated with the unresolved contradictions of a Fordist style state intervention, but also underscore the fact that the state has been instrumental in the implementation of neoliberalism. They point out that “state versus corporations” is, ultimately, a false dichotomy, as the state has been neoliberalized and it is a primary agent in the implementation and maintenance of neoliberal governance. In this light, the challenge of structural reform is understood as a normative realignment of state resources and state authority. To the extent that agri-food resistance movements do not engage the state, limited progress can be expected (Bonanno and Constance 2008; Fridell 2014; Wolf and Bonanno 2014).

A fourth group of works underscores the importance of opposition to corporate neoliberal agri-food represented by proposals that de-commodify food and present it as a “right” (Carolan 2013; Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe 2010; McMichael 2014). The collective *Vía Campesina* project is often evoked as exemplary of this form of resistance. *Vía Campesina* advocates small scale and/or peasant farming as a form of agricultural production that is ecologically and socially sustainable and politically emancipatory. The establishment of food sovereignty – the capacity of those involved in food production, distribution, and consumption to control these processes – is regarded as a moral imperative and a key strategic objective. Offering a powerful alternative discourse, the identification of food production and consumption as rights stands in sharp contrast to the neoliberal proposal that sees food as a commodity and production as managed through market competition. Simultaneously, however, the project of championing small holders has been criticized for its limited ability to deliver a sustainable and just food system that is inclusive and global. It is not yet clear that agroecological production techniques and direct reliance on local systems of production can consistently address the food needs of the large and growing world population composed of members of the lower classes, non-farmers, and urban dwellers. Additionally, it has been pointed out that the pre-capitalist nature of peasant farming may not necessarily be applicable in advanced capitalist contexts (Bernstein 2014).

Toward a critique of resistance

Academic literature and popular engagement with agri-food resistance tends to focus on objects and strategies of resistance, the actors, and the small signs of progress, but we do not identify a robust tradition of critical reflection. Questions about theories of change, strategic objectives, and outputs/outcomes are not often discussed. Noting that it is easier to tear down than to build, we identify theoretically and empirically informed critique as important and hopefully generative.

Our primary analytical concern is to explore self-limitations of specific modes of resistance within the context of neoliberalism and erosion of democracy as structured in past decades. Specifically, we want to raise the possibility that some modes of resistance may give the illusion of freedom while constraining behavior and reinforcing structural controls. “Artificial negativity” as explained by Critical Theory allows us to see ethical or intentional consumption (e.g., Fair Trade, Organic, eco-certified, local) as a problematic response to the problem we confront and an incomplete stance for resistance (Antonio 2006; Piccone 1977). Artificial negativity draws our attention to the illusion of freedom and also a false sense of the significance of behaviors and discourses that oppose dominant forces. This resistance is illusory and manipulated. By virtue of providing an outlet for skepticism, and an organizational pole for opposition, unrest is contained and the integrity of the dominant regime is reinforced. While twentieth-century analyses stressed the controlling power of state bureaucracy in ‘the totally administered society’ (Horkheimer and Adorno 1969 [1944]; Marcuse 1964), corporate appropriation and reinterpretation of historically progressive concepts such as justice, ethics, responsibility, and regulation define contemporary arrangements. Similarly, theoretical formulations based on the post-structuralist views of Michel Foucault identify individuality, market competition, and responsabilization (i.e., regarding consumer choice, rather than politics, as engine for structural reform) as dimensions that, while appearing to be emancipatory, contribute to the strengthening of the power of the neoliberal regime. Blühdorn’s (2007) analysis of symbolic and simulative politics applied to ecological contradictions of our age advance a similar conclusion – i.e., much of the existing resistance and response by public and private actors must be considered to be gestural, given unwillingness/inability to challenge the structural foundations of unsustainability.² We aim to explore the contradictions of a range of resistance strategies in relation to their intended goals and in relation to the political economic context in which they have emerged.

Organization of the book

Adding to this debate and addressing its concerns, the chapters contained in this book are divided into three groups. As it will be illustrated in the concluding chapter, this grouping responds to our interpretation of the ways in which resistance is viewed and practiced. The first group of contributions supports

the view of the corporate domination of agri-food and its control over resistance (chapters by Busch, Bonanno, Wolf, Tilzey, and Som Castellano). The second group of chapters emphasizes the importance of the role of the state in the practice of resistance (chapters by Carneiro dos Reis, Sekine and Bonanno, and O'Neill). Finally, the third group of chapters stresses the different forms through which resistance is carried out. Moreover, these chapters focus on the development of resistance in different parts of the world, with an emphasis on the Americas (Latin America and the Caribbean through chapters by Fletes and Ocampo, Sankey; Gonzalez-Duarte, and Vansteenkiste; and North America through the chapter by Brislen).

The first portion of the book opens with the contribution by Lawrence Busch entitled "Is Resistance Futile? How Global Agri-Food Attempts to Co-opt the Alternatives." In this chapter, Busch contends that, while alternative agri-food movements have always intended to oppose the corporate, industrial agriculture, and food, they have failed to effectively do so. This is because they have downplayed the ability of corporate actors to co-opt alternative projects. This process of co-optation, Busch continues, takes place through five components. The first refers to the existence of the "Tripartite Standards Regime" that consists of the creation and implementation of standards, certification schemes, and accreditation processes. This Tripartite Standards Regime is designed not only by corporate actors, but also shapes agri-food activities and mandates conformity to corporate goals. The second component refers to the fact that assembly line technologies have penetrated much of agri-food production. Third, the use of assembly line technologies is accompanied by the use of a new type of Taylorism that increases efficiency and standardization and reduces worker autonomy and costs of production. Fourth, these technological and production changes have been made possible by the use of "big data." As the costs of computing and data storage have significantly decreased in recent decades, data collection and analysis have emerged as essential tasks in decision-making. Finally, alternative movements have unknowingly assisted corporations in the process of differentiating their production and products and, as a result, they have enhanced corporations' competitiveness. This overall situation, Busch concludes, requires an explicit denunciation of this system of domination. It also requires that alternative movements consider the systemic nature of domination and, therefore, overcome sectorial approaches to resistance.

In the following chapter, Alessandro Bonanno discusses the phenomenon of "best practices" and probes its alternative dimension. Stressing the popularity of this construct, Bonanno underscores that best practices are often presented as instruments that replace inefficient, authoritarian, bureaucratized top-down decisions with a system that offers fair, effective, technically superior, and scientifically based solutions. Moreover, best practices' extensive use of "progressive" concepts such as sustainability, social acceptability, and the safeguard of workers and the environment makes them acceptable to groups and individuals that oppose neoliberal, corporate agri-food. Bonanno analyzes the alternative dimension of best practices through a review of texts that promote them.

Employing the methodology of *grounded theory* and validating results through the techniques of *analytic induction* and *negative cases*, a number of key aspects of best practices are illustrated. In particular, it is argued that best practices ground their claims on the enhanced market competitiveness that they create. Additionally, this superiority in market relations justifies the argument that best practices are an effective system of governance, labor control, conflict resolution, and decision-making in production and consumption alike. Bonanno concludes that these claims are consistent with the tenets of neoliberalism: a situation that makes assertions about the alternative dimension of best practices untenable.

Steven Wolf focuses on resistance applied to the state and to public expenditures focused on environmental protection in agriculture in his chapter, “Accountability, Rationality, and Politics: Critical Analysis of Agri-Environmental Policy Reform in the United States.” The general argument emphasizes the relevance of the “adaptation of conventional commercial agriculture advanced through retargeting of public resources (e.g., agency budgets; laws, policies and administrative routines; subsidies; R&D; infrastructure . . .)” within analyses and interventions targeting agri-food sustainability (p. 00, this volume). Wolf critically examines ongoing efforts to introduce greater rationality, accountability, and discipline into the way in which incentive payments are awarded to farmers to advance environmental conservation. The empirical case highlights that dominant structures – discourses, political relationships, and administrative logics – are resistant to change. Wolf concludes that the dominant focus of reformers on introducing technocratic modes of accountability – i.e., efforts to bring data to bear to advance cost effectiveness of investments in conservation – need to be accompanied by attention to democratic accountability in order to realize social and ecological gains.

Stressing the problematic nature of resistance to neoliberal, corporate agri-food, in his chapter, “‘Market Civilization’ and Global Agri-Food: Understanding Their Dynamics and (In)Coherence through Multiple Resistances,” Mark Tilzey discusses the contemporary land sovereignty movement in Bolivia. His argument is based on the rejection of the binary view that opposes resistance to corporate domination. This highly structuralist approach, Tilzey argues, conceals the different forms of resistance that have emerged globally. In particular, Tilzey contends that resistance has emerged in three forms – sub-hegemonic; alter-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic – and that only the counter-hegemonic dimension of resistance could alter the corporate neoliberal domination. This is the sphere where land sovereignty is located. In Tilzey’s analysis, corporate domination is supported by the state. There is no structurally autonomous unfolding of capital, he contends, but capitalist development is linked to the hegemonic position of class fractions within the state that permits the expansion of the state–capital nexus. The neoliberal food regime and corporate domination are authored by the state and the state has been instrumental in the corporate co-optation of resistance. Tilzey underscores that the case of Bolivia demonstrates that the state is a fundamental actor in the differentiation of capitalism rather than simply an agent of the transnational neoliberal class. It is precisely this complexity

of capitalism and the role played by the Bolivian state that have allowed the capitalist co-optation of resistance and the transformation of counter-hegemonic claims into pro-capital, neo-developmental policies.

The chapter by Rebecca Som Castellano entitled “Resistance to the Neoliberal Food Regime in the Sphere of Consumption: Considering the Importance of Mental Labor in Food Provisioning” underscores the relevance of gender in the processes of neoliberal corporate domination and resistance to it. Brought to the fore by some important studies on the role of women in agri-food production, the relevance of gender exploitation has not been adequately probed by studies on consumption. Accordingly, Som Castellano proposes a study of the ways in which gender norms are reproduced in alternative agri-food practices. Her analysis of the role of women in households that engage in alternative forms of food provisioning centers on the significant mental labor that women perform. Based on a qualitative analysis, she stresses that alternative forms of food provisioning are demanding for women and this is particularly the case for women who are poor, unemployed, live with a partner, and have children. In her final argument, Som Castellano contends that the inadequate treatment of patriarchy allows contemporary dominant discourses to remain largely unchallenged.

The second group of chapters opens with “Reflecting on Counter-Hegemonic Strategies of Food and Nutritional Security: Notes on the Brazilian Case” by Carneiro dos Reis. The Brazilian case, Carneiro dos Reis contends, offers an instance of resistance promoted through state action. The emergence of neoliberal globalization in the last decades of the twentieth century, Carneiro dos Reis maintains, has enhanced the global power of corporations and weakened the ability of developing nation-states to implement independent policies. This situation has been contrasted by the electoral success of progressive political parties that employed the power of the state to address socioeconomic inequality and problems. In Brazil, the Party of the Workers implemented wealth and land redistributive strategies that greatly benefitted poor segments of society by providing them with access to land and food. Simultaneously, however, this emancipatory state action has been tempered by the power of corporate elites that were able to strengthen their position and benefit from the development of global networks of production and consumption. Carneiro dos Reis concludes by stressing the contradictory results of state based forms of resistance.

In the following chapter, Kae Sekine and Alessandro Bonanno probe the emancipatory role of geographical indication (GI) policies in Japan. Employing the case of miso, a traditional food, these authors document the concomitant existence of two competing GI models. The first is based on the European Union approach that considers the identification of the quality of products in terms of local culture and tradition rather than the market. The second model follows the US approach that sees GI as an extension of market competition and therefore supports its existence in terms of trademark regulation. The implementation of these two models, these authors continue, shows the importance of state action for the control of undesirable consequences of market fluctuation.

However, it also indicates that GI policies can be the source of conflict and instability. They conclude that GI measures are forms of market regulation and therefore cannot be considered parts of the free market-based neoliberal project. Simultaneously, and while the GI measures could be beneficial to the revitalization of family farming and agricultural regions, structural problems make this alternative to free market oriented policies problematic.

This section of the book concludes with a chapter by Kristie O'Neill. In her study, "Community Action, Government Support, and Historical Distance: Enabling Transformation or Neoliberal Inclusion" she illustrates the emancipatory role played by the Kenyan state. Through the empirical investigation of three local counties, she documents the ways in which government agencies and local actors joined forces to implement collectivization programs aimed at improving farming practices and food production, providing farmers with needed access to credit, and protecting them from corporate exploitation and co-optation. Despite these accomplishments, however, she concludes that state intervention has not been able to generate adequate standards of living and establish a system that can fully oppose the further growth of neoliberal globalization.

The third group of chapters includes works that emphasize the diverse forms through which resistance to neoliberal agri-food takes place. The contribution by Fletes and Ocampo entitled "Peasant Resistance to the Transnationalization of Agriculture in Mexico's Southern Border," analyzes the case of resistance in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. Since the 1980s, the implementation of neoliberal policies, these authors contend, has exacerbated the crisis of the peasantry and small farm holders. Not only have these groups suffered the brunt of the negative outcomes of market liberalization, but they have also been defined as inefficient producers and perceived simply as poor segments of the rural population rather than relevant sources of local food and stewards of the land. Following this approach, neoliberal Mexican Administrations opted to insert Mexico in the global division of labor through policies that stressed lower wages and competitive advantages based on inexpensive factors of production. In agri-food, this posture translated into the elimination of measures that protected peasants and small farms from market fluctuations and corporate competition and that resulted into the transformation of the Mexican agri-food sector into one of the primary supplier of fruit and vegetables for the global North. As these policies fostered the further impoverishment of the farming population, they engendered resistance. Through references to specific initiatives, Fletes and Ocampo show the diversity of this resistance, its local roots, and its strength. In particular, they demonstrate the everyday dimension of this opposition that, they conclude, remains ultimately unable to alter the structural conditions that define contemporary neoliberal agri-food.

Kyla Sankey in her chapter "Communities Against Capital? The Politics of Palm Oil Expansion in Colombia's Middle Magdalena" stresses that the evolution of the agri-food sector in that country has been characterized by the expansion of commercial agribusiness, of which palm production is one of the

most representative instances. This process, she shows, is centered on agrarian extractivism and land grabbing. Defended by dominant groups and the government as a process that engenders growth, it has, instead, created severe negative consequences that threaten the ecosystem and the livelihood of many poor social groups. The implementation of programs for the expansion of the cultivation of palms, this author argues, reveals the multiple aspects of the process of resistance and the many strata of the peasantry. In the specific case of palm production in Middle Magdalena region, the expansion of the cultivation of palms has created a further stratification among peasants that benefitted the “middle peasantry.” In turn, this situation has fostered peasant support for palm production that translated into peasant acquiescence to the expansion of the neoliberal agri-food model. Accordingly, rather than generating opposition, the implantation of palm production further expanded the ideological and economic domination of the neoliberal regime.

Columba Gonzalez-Duarte probes the issue of cyberspace resistance and interactions between humans and non-human in resistance. Analyzing the case of the Monarch Butterfly, in her chapter, “Resisting Monsanto: Monarch Butterflies and Cyber-Actors,” she documents the existence and development of an online butterfly enthusiast community that aims to resist agribusiness giant Monsanto and expanded use of genetically modified crops and glyphosate, a weed killer, which reduce availability of milkweed, the sole food of monarch caterpillars. As in the case of consumer and community-based resistance, this instance represents an effort to oppose corporate agri-food and threats to nature. However, differing from more established forms of resistance, this opposition is based on the struggle of protecting butterflies and the hardware and software that enables the cyberspace community to organize and perhaps move from anonymous communications to grounded politics. Gonzalez-Duarte concludes that the nature of opposition and its transformative potential are challenged by an emergent partnership between Monsanto and the citizen science project that anchors the online community. The flexibility and heterogeneous makeup of resistance is simultaneously a strength and a weakness.

An analysis of two opposite developmental models is proposed in the chapter by Jennifer Vansteenkiste entitled “‘Haiti – Open for Business’: New Perspectives on Inclusive and Sustainable Development.” She illustrates the manner in which alternative forms of land use based on local culture, identity, and “place-making” represent a relevant opposition to corporate control agro-industrial projects. Focusing on the case of Haiti, she documents that corporate-based developmental programs centered on agro-exports meet only short-term objectives and fail to engender autonomous and enduring socioeconomic growth. Conversely, community-based efforts that dwell on local human, cultural, and natural resources represent substantive alternatives to agro-industrial models of development. She concludes by stressing the importance of the concept of placemaking in the creation of alternative forms of growth.

This segment of the book is concluded by Lilian Brislen’s “Imperfect, Partial, and Interstitial: Gradations of Resistance in a Failed Food Hub.” Employing the

case of a failed food hub in the state of Kentucky in the USA, Brislen stresses the complexity and diversity of alternative food initiatives. This diversity, she argues, problematizes schematic analyses that dwell on binary modes of opposition. Simultaneously, her analysis offers novel insights into the possibility of understanding and mobilizing resistance in terms of the variety of actors, actions, and resources that constitute opposition. Pursuing the task of reconstructing resistance away from dated ways of conceptualizing and practicing it, Brislen contends that a new language and imagination are needed to effectively construct opposition. In this context, she proposes a “post-binary approach” to the understanding of alternative agriculture that transcends the primacy of financial concerns to focus on non-economic values and a new ordering of human, land, and food.

In the concluding chapter, Bonanno and Wolf propose some final reflections on the analyses presented in the volume. The authors contend that these analyses can be heuristically grouped into three ideal types that offer differing theorizations of resistance. The first ideal type stresses the “variegated” mode through which resistance takes place. It underscores that opposition cannot be simply understood in the binary forms of repression vs. opposition for there is not a single form of repression and opposition. Additionally, however, it views forms of production and consumption that are ultimately market based as emancipatory. Accordingly, it maintains an ambiguous position that simultaneously supports the neoliberal logic of the market along with the overcoming of “marginal utility.” The second ideal type theorizes the relevance of the action of the nation-state as it contends that the neoliberal agri-food regime is forcefully opposed by state-implemented land and wealth redistributive policies. Underestimated in this approach, however, are the facts that the nation-state has forcefully been a vehicle for the neoliberalization and corporatization of the economy, and society and that the current neo-Fordist proposals do not address the limits of classic Fordism. The third and final ideal type theorizes the unfolding of resistance to neoliberal agri-food in terms of artificial negativity and unidimensionality. This theorization underscores the ability of corporations to co-opt alternative projects (artificial negativity) and to impose conformity to market requirements (unidimensionality). It also underscores the limits of alternative proposals that approach the struggle against the neoliberal regime in sectorial terms. Overall, Bonanno and Wolf conclude their final observations by arguing that evolution of the neoliberal regime will continue to be directed by corporate forces and that this corporate domination will be opposed. In this context, the scrutiny of forms of opposition remains a fundamental task for scholars and political activists alike.

Notes

- 1 By critical analysis we refer to an analysis that uses of the notion of critique. Critique is defined as the analytical effort to explore the limits of validity claims. In this case, the objective of our analysis rests on the elucidation of extent to which claims of resistance

against global neoliberal agri-food reflect actually opposition to this dominant system. The concept of critique finds its roots in the classic tradition of Kantian philosophy and Marxian analysis. Kant's notion of the "critique of reason" is utilized to assess the power of ideological formulations that find legitimacy in the claimed validity of their accounts of history. For Kant, it is paramount to explore the extent to which reason can explain reality for if left without empirical verification it remains inconclusive. Simultaneously, Marx's "critique" of political economy is directed at revealing the discrepancy between the claims of the neutrality and fairness of the capitalist market and its exploitative reality. The economy is political (i.e., class constructed and based), Marx contends, and the free exchange that supposedly characterizes the functioning of the market is based on processes of violent expropriation, exploitation and domination. Following this tradition, the process of conducting a critique refers to the evaluation of phenomena by contrasting pertinent theoretical claims with relevant historical occurrences.

2 See also Dean (2009) for a similar argument applied to society as a whole.

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