

INTRODUCTION

Food embodiments, assemblages and intersubjectivities in Latin America: ebbs and flows of critical food studies

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Critical food studies

Economic subsidies and technological developments since the turn of the twentieth century, but in particular since the Second World War, have contributed to a revolution in the production, distribution, and consumption of food. To date, the field of agrofood studies largely analyzed developments by assessing the diffusion of technologies and change in state-based agriculture support policies. Compelling examples include studies of the emergence of cow's milk as a popular drink for humans in the United States (DuPuis, 2002), the industrialization of Dutch agriculture and the arrival of the "virtual farmer" (van der Ploeg, 2003), and the rise of the international development industry and the institutionalization of technology transfer in the Americas (Flora and Flora, 1989). The nation-state, in both developed and developing countries, has strategically promoted highly intensive forms of food production and circulation, thereby making food an object and objective of economic development and productivity policies.

The understanding of food as an object of research and policy has led to the study of the formation of commodity complexes (Goodman, Sorj, and Wilkinson, 1987) as a result of a new international division of labor (Sanderson, 1985). A "critical approach" to food studies has aimed to demystify the world market through a historical comparison of major international food and agricultural regimes (Friedmann, 1993, Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; McMichael, 1994, Friedland, 1991). Agrarian studies has pursued a range of political, economic, and cultural issues to address nuances of change in government and governance, in particular with regard to regulation (Marsden and Little, 1990; Lowe, Marsden, and Whatmore, 1994). By the end of the twentieth century, food studies became part of macro-explanations linking the social and political effects of national and international capital accumulation on employment, consumption norms, state

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regulation, legislation, and household livelihood and consumption practices (Goodman and Redclift, 1981).

These developments have tended to reify social institutions, displacing less formalized processes of social change, including the refashioning of food, beyond the responsibilities and control of people “on the streets” (for a review of this perspective, see Arce and Marsden, 1993, and for critical studies, Viteri and Arce, 2013; Fisher and Sheppard, 2012). As per this highly structural and functional analysis, there has been little or no room for actor agency and the possibility of multiple meanings of food. Nevertheless, this body of work has contributed important insights into food production and consumption as well as environmental, social, political, and cultural dimensions of global food processes. For example, studies of food as an expression of post-Fordism as well as of the emergence of non-state regulatory regimes in an era of growing internationalization and acceleration of commodity transfers called attention to changes in agricultural labor markets, the displacement of traditional farming and the related erosion of autonomy in peasant households (Bonanno, 1993), and the “nature and politics” of environmentalism and the state (Bonanno and Constance, 1996).

In this regard, Lynne Phillip’s (2006) provocative commentary on food and globalization was a notable contribution. She proposed the re-positioning of food studies itself as an object of research to explain “how food acquires mobility.” Her review turned attention to three developments: the expansion of commodity relations beyond national borders, the rise of non-traditional export crops and foodstuffs, and the establishment of free trade agreements. She called attention to how multinational corporations aggressively made use of increased transnational mobility of food for their own profit and how multilateral agreements, in particular the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, financial institutions (World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), and other international organizations (the World Trade Organization) oriented the governance of food within and beyond individual nation-states towards consumption and private interests. In her conceptual unpacking of these seemingly abstract institutions, Phillips brought to life the neglected everyday actualities of food circulation.

Since then, the interrogation of contemporary flows of ideas, people and food has described and analyzed what happens to people who are “gated” to their localities, for example women trapped in family farming and in rural areas. Growing awareness of the geographic mobility of people’s practices beyond state borders has contributed to thinking about food as a spatialization and semiotization of contemporary political economy (Lash and Urry, 1994).

A concern with food fragmentation, coordination, and reflexivity in a world of rising globalization has called attention to the need to “feed the global imaginary” and the tangible food materialities, socials and naturals beyond a traditional geographic focus (see Massumi 1996), especially in reference to events in Latin America. Conceptual understanding of food as an object that encompasses producer and consumer positions and is tied to an unfolding world of inequalities reveals a new intersubjectivity in government, environment and politics. The

ensuing rise of “food citizenship”, expressed for example in cosmopolitan movements for agroecology and food sovereignty, calls attention to different global perspectives (Sherwood *et al.*, 2013). People who are organized in family, neighborhoods and social networks act in and act on an emerging modes of existence (see Arce, 2009).

Contemporary critical food studies explores the significance of the migration of people, ideas and things in the reality of their food actualities. It explores how actors that are engaged in the re-internalization of global processes (re)script, for example, the family farm to the social life and market demands of the global social imaginary, forging potential contributions through agriculture and food practice. Such local and global dimensions of agrofood studies are not merely at conflict. Through encounters, relationships, and co-constructions, they also nourish one another in endlessly rich and recursive ways.

Although food scholarship has contributed to reconfiguring food as an object of global imagination, people (even food scholars themselves) have to eat and experience food. This happens in a diversity of ways: via microorganisms, taste, bodily sensation, and affective cognition. Food materialities are encountered in a multiplicity of physical forms, shaped by human design, natural vibrancy, and by the contingent moment. We see the global imaginary as an extension of the contemporary critical cognition of worldly materialities. Nevertheless, scholars have generally overlooked the dissolutions and re-assemblages of food – what we summarize here as the multiple objectivities and intersubjectivities of food. In this sense, the next step in agrofood studies, we argue, is to examine the re-localization of agriculture and food to the everyday lives of people (and non-people) – and within that, in the diverse spaces of food production, circulation and consumption.

Re-situating food in daily experience

Drawing on case material in the European Union, Maria Fonte (2010) provides insights into the empirical and policy “re-localization” of food. Following an exploration of academic controversies over local food, she concludes that alternative food ventures exist in the voids generated by the unfolding effects (and affects) of the standardization of agrofood industry. Fonte argues that the coexistence of alternative and conventional food is possible as long as competing food movements do not threaten the conventional agriculture and food industries. She identifies the principal obstacle of this re-localization and its competitive survival as the declining number of people in the rural space and the displacement of their knowledge. Fonte explains that this is the result of a science-dominated discourse that renders people’s daily experience in agriculture and food to a technical event. For example, experts establish percentages of permissible emissions (e.g., fertilizer runoff, pesticide residues and more recently methane and carbon gases), thereby controlling access to “sustainability.” Fonte argues, however, that the application of such normative knowledge to food blocks, rather than facilitates, sustainable rural development.

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In our view, this normativity in the European Union as well as in similar examples of food re-localization in Latin America represents a situated, regional application of “ecological modernization”, roughly understood as the state and regional institutionalization of norms for scientifically informed environmentalism and “best practice” (Mol, 2001). In its preoccupation with space and form and commitment to an alliance of expert and state-based regulation, public policy neglects or negates the rich intersubjectivities in the habitation of a territory. Fonte states that the local, understood as socio-spatial proximity, tends to emphasize the reconnection of producers and consumers through unique means of food circulation and exchange. In addition, Fonte speaks to a linguistic “localness,” explained as the relationship between food and territory that rests in the specific conditions of experiencing a mode of existence and knowledge in a particular landscape. This material intersubjectivization of food, for example in creating new identities through regional labeling of cheese and wine, goes beyond the cognitive agency of human actors (see also Tsing, 2015). According to Fonte, socio-ecological interactions of locality generate a unique set of discourses that mobilize rural and urban actors, food producers, and consumers. As a means of addressing such interactions, critical food studies has become interested in examining processes of translation and the significance of vernacularization of material performances of food outside the normal neoliberal market conventions. While bringing together the material and the affective cognition of food, actors and territory, these multiple discourses establish food as a highly creative and dynamic association involving mind, body, and the world.

Such discursive and material multiplicities, we suggest, mobilize subjects into subjectifications (e.g., the collective ennui of needing to recognize or defend one’s food territory vis-à-vis competing interests), generating embodiments (a particular product, such as “champagne”) within materiality (the emergence of price nuances, markets, and certification schemes), affectivity (determination of a form of feeling in romance) and cognitive-material food assemblages (struggles to determine the intangible properties of champagne and hence its “territory”). These are distributed and composed in physicochemical traits – for instance connections between mind and brain of individuals as well as in the manifestations of emerging corporealities. If a person loves wine and cheese, for example, that flavor is not just a matter of individuality, but also of taste, touch, smell and collective memories – that is, social contagion (Gronow, 1997). In this associative orientation, human actors and nonhuman actants are bound in a multifarious world of social, cultural, natural, and material singularities – each an expression of the politics of life.

In their study of the food regions of Wales, Tuscany, and California, Morgan, Marsden and Murdoch (2006: 195) argue that the local is never pure. Nevertheless, the local and the space of policy makers encounter one another in the distribution of singularities, in this case the endlessly emergent and contested material manifestations of regional food. These singularities of food territory delineate particular forms of knowledge, organization, politics of affect and environment. In our view, this illustrates the limits of geographic metaphor and institutions, be they the

nation-state or the neoliberal market and its global manifestations. Empirical research places into question the conventions of where and how to situate agrofood studies, spiriting a re-imagination of agriculture and food.

Exploring food territories

We understand the notion of region as a threshold, where assemblages sustain or transform the production, retailing, procurement, and eating of food (e.g., through flavor, taste, and form), the social relations of actors and the biophysical environment. A region is a zone of sensitivity and sensibility, where shared experience and sensations may operate among humans and nonhumans to encounter and organize the different potentialities that inhabit a particular foodworld. A regional perspective provides access to the vibrancy of practice that is located in biophysical space as well as a conjuncture (i.e., the moment or event), where form and content give rise to a body.

As portrayed in an account of industrial salmon farming in Patagonia (Blanco *et al.*, 2015) and the topologies of Avian flu and other biotic diseases (Hinchliff *et al.*, 2012), regions and provisional bodies are in continuous states of coexistence and transformation. Hence, these territories are highly vibrant, contingent, and unpredictable – lying beyond the limits of the global imagination and the imaginaries of institutional society. Food trajectories do not always obey the regulatory rules and norms of the nation-state or the quality demands of a market. This means that any state (country or market) potentially carries the imminent collapse of global processes and reconfiguration of familiar practice. As such, reproduction of the globalization of food is unlikely to continue, and as a result, multiple worlds lay both within and without citizen's control. Not only does this situation place into doubt a state's ability to regulate the market or, more generally, to control what happens within its borders, but moreover, it places into question a state's capacity to cope with the singularities or multiplicities of relationships and materialities associated with agriculture and food.

For the cases presented here, food is a material practice (e.g., production, retailing and consumption) that influences affective global imaginaries (cognition and political practices), where the social and the semantic are interconnected through bodies, politic, political cognition and political affect. Haynes-Conroy and Martin (2010) use identity-based studies to account for the more diffuse forms of social activism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, considering bodies and biology as well as minds and meaning in the mobilization of people and their political participation. This orientation requires moving beyond the consideration of the body as a passive material object upon which externally based influences act. Instead they view the body as an active agent of political engagement and life. This perspective demands a grounded and empirical account of activism as a means of collapsing dualistic representations of reality. It seeks to overcome the separation of mind and body, inside and outside, and internal and external in order to associate how making sense of the world,

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discriminating among values, and public performance take shape through daily process of living and being.

As such, race, gender, and class as well as the notions of tradition and modernity, urban and rural, and lay and scientific are at once situated in multiple embodiments or identifications. This is the case in the tagging of conventional and organic production, smells, flavors, and tastes of domestic and foreign cookery as well as quality in popular and fine cuisine (see Arce, 1993). Through associated activism, people come to feel and make sense of their surroundings. In the process they organize the complexities and chaos of contemporary market penetrations of the state, family and community (see Fisher, 2012). As Hayes-Conroy and Martin (2010) explain, this is not merely an issue of the cognition of educated and progressive activists or foodies, but it also is the product of a bodily kind of resonance activated through *visceral* processes of experience and identification. Rather than universalizing singular moments of sensation, their empirical work on the Slow Food Movement in Canada and the United States leads them to recognize the multiple ways in which minded bodies develop, move, shift and work. In so doing, bodies become both aligned and involved in the (re)creation of conventional and alternative food movements. In summary, their visceral perspective of food represents a provocative challenge to earlier food studies that tend to perpetuate a separation of mind and body. In contrast, Hayes-Conroy and Martin call attention to minded bodies engaged in the politics of affect (Tolia-Kelly, 2006).

Drawing on these traditions, Carolan (2011) emphasizes the need to conceptualize food relationally. Together with the aforementioned authors, Carolan's contributions go beyond Phillips in challenging knowledge, cognition and perception in the tradition of Kantian humanism. In its place rests the lived experience and the affective, sensorial significance of food, as opposed to understanding food as part of a natural order, even if socially constructed. Thus food becomes a multi-sited multiplicity of organisms and things that is integral to (non)human being and becoming. This raises the need for empirical study of the realms of food objects, subjects and contingencies as a window into their multiple existential forms, processes and creativities. Before getting ahead of ourselves, however, we need to introduce our understanding of modernization in food and agriculture and its reflexivity, before returning to our central interest in the contemporary states and territories of food in Latin America.

Modern food and its publics

Although diversely meted out, agricultural modernization in Latin America generally has involved land reform and public policy tied to highly creative and ambitious social innovations (Flora and Flora, 1989) and proliferation of an industrial era of technical transformation (i.e., mechanized tillage, severe genetic manipulation of crop varieties, synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and new methods of food preservation and storage, and the arrival of the supermarket as well as the

invention of foodstuffs) and an increase in business enterprises, investment in communication infrastructure and the provision of financial resources – all aimed at isolating the rural producer, before seeking to integrate him or her into an emerging modern agricultural economy built on purchased inputs and intermediated, urban-based commercial markets. This work has led to the establishment of national research and extension systems in countries across the planet, supported by a network of specialized commodity centers. In Latin America, the International Center for the Improvement of Maize and Wheat (CIMMYT) pioneered a “Green Revolution” largely based on this model, followed by the International Potato Center (CIP) based in Peru and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Colombia.

While results in terms of increasing production per area, providing cheap food for growing urban centers and reducing or eliminating hunger and poverty were diverse and mixed, from a social perspective, agricultural modernization was extraordinarily successful in establishing an unprecedented market-based, state-led technocratic ideological project based on: (1) commodification of rural life (i.e., placing a price tag on time, space, natural resources), (2) introduction of currency and eventually financial systems (as a means of mediating human and human-object interactions), (3) the social and geographic distancing of markets (thereby separating processes of production and consumption), and (4) reliance on expert-based knowledge and technology (thereby creating conditions for dependence). For Sherwood and colleagues (2015), these four phases of modernization provided the foundation for extraordinary growth in productivity, followed by severe socio-environmental decline in agriculture and food in Latin America. As Beck (2001: 271) explains, “it is not rule-breaking but the rules themselves which ‘normalize’ the death of species, rivers, or lakes.” He described the self-destructive feature of modern societies as “organized irresponsibility.”

Environmental decline, pesticide poisoning, and obesity tied to modern food are political issues, because in the current neoliberal climate, health concerns are simplified as primarily economic matters, demanding re-allocation of scarce, highly demanded government resources. Thus, there are professional and financial incentives to consider the unwanted products of modernization as a personal choice or perhaps as self-inflicted action resulting from a combination of a lack of information and capacity and irresponsible behavior. These simplified frames of reference ignore agriculture and food issues as immediate threats to the public economy, health, and the environment. They are also political issues in that they have contributed to increased citizen’s political agency (i.e., agroecology, food sovereignty, economic solidarity movements) to defend and advance certain interests over others. In a democratic society, this dynamic is part of an increasing process of politicization within people’s rights and claims to well-being. The resulting policies have important financial implications for private and public health care, civil rights, and business practices.

Presently, the very issue of citizenship is being actively debated in many parts of Latin America, including in relation to agriculture and food. This is rooted in both

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the development of science and technology and evolving expectations and patterns of governance. Technological advance and the ongoing growth of the consumption society are opening up new spaces for citizen action and democracy, while at the same time conflicts with conventional expert-led development and government institutions are generating heated public debate and reflexivity, calling into question the very categories of government, science, and citizen. This is most clearly illustrated by the ongoing debates between civil society, the scientific community and government over specific agricultural legislation intended to govern the use of land, water, biodiversity and markets as well as agricultural production and conservation.

In addition, special attention is required to human-nonhuman relationships and a need to re-define the “public” as extending beyond the citizen and the consumer. Environmental degradation, mass pesticide poisoning, and overweight/obesity can be seen as unintended effects of the public modernization policy tied to a particular pathway of agricultural development. As we have seen with growing pest outbreaks, decline in bee populations, loss of agrobiodiversity and growing climate variability tied to global warming, the consequences of modernization shape nonhuman worlds in ways that feedback on humans and their enterprises (i.e., the arrival of the anthropocene). As such, we do not view these consequences as “externalities,” but also “internalities” of new forms of modernity. We find that the citizenry as well as policymakers and healthcare experts commonly overlook or neglect the particularities of contemporary, unwanted food products and foodstuffs (i.e., the health consequences of ultra-processed foods), which include intricate relationships between human and nonhuman entities.

If not dealt with immediately, the social and policy weight of agriculture and food quality will be borne by future generations. In this regard, food quality is comparable to pollution and global warming. Nevertheless, modern food, as part of an increasing politicization at the grassroots level, offers a critical window into the uncomfortable realities of daily life and raises awareness of the dichotomous nature of progress and modernities. This is manifested, for example, in the growth and influence of food movements in Latin America organized for the purpose of uprooting established regimes of practice as well as claiming access to heritage, healthy, equitable and sustainable living, and demonstrating a viable alternative to the dominant discourse that there is only one acceptable modernity in the region (Arce and Long 2000). In this manner, the political dimensions of agriculture and food are central to rethink food policy. They tend to be associated with the potentials generated by reflexive modernities, in which technocratic and expert-based “systems” appear to be collapsing into the complex pragmatic of daily living and being.

In light of this analysis, we find the need for new thinking in citizenry and public administration that today continue to center on how to bring the public into line with techno-administrative decision-making, thereby neglecting or denying the roles that people already play in the enactment of agriculture and food policy. Here, we ask whether the very nature of the public needs to be re-defined

to include both human and nonhuman entities. In order to overcome the harmful consequences of modernization, emphasis needs to be placed where it belongs: strengthening new forms of democracy where people's rights, roles and obligations, imaginations, and capacities indeed steer the course of change of public institutions to multiple shared visions of the future, but also human-nonhuman relationships. This view of citizens as authors re-positions people in the center of their new experiences of what is a family, neighborhood and community today, where they are at the same time objects of government, but also central subjective agents of government and governance. Addressing the modern multiplicities in Latin America ultimately requires attention to a form of democracy that makes transparent and meaningful the very purposes of citizenry, public spaces, and government.

Nation-state, market and techno-governance

In this book we view the social sciences in the development of agriculture and food as a field of collusion, collision and competition among the entities dedicated to the fostering of narratives. Currently, both the voices that support and criticize capitalism and neoliberalism have come to naturalize capital, the free market, and the state, understanding each as a driving force of a single vision of necessary modernity.

As Bruce Braun (2015: 1) summarizes, "At a moment when capital presents itself as coexistent with social, political and ecological life, we are reminded of a crucial point: capital is not the source of life, but parasitic on it." We agree with Braun that the conceptual work carried out by capitalist thinkers and their imagination has a radical significance that goes beyond just economics. Capitalism has come to shape imaginations and policy and inform how people think about and experience life, the social realm, and existence. In other words, capital is an entity that is so important that it surpasses ideology, even of its own grave diggers.

Similarly, there is another vision that is also relevant in social sciences literature that highlights the importance of "resistance" and displacement of capital. The advocates of this position have fallen, however, into the trap of trying to provide solutions to the problems of neoliberalism through institutional means. These solutions are generally based on a single unquestioned premise of the centrality of capital, technology and the nation-state to social change, ignoring the fact that said changes are fundamentally contingent and even accidental. For them, the issue is not just the "lack" of policy imperatives, but the way in which actors gain (or not) access to entities of change.

These visions present us with capitalism and neoliberalism as overwhelmingly social forms, and hinder reflection on the importance of criticism on the underlying sources of social justice and the undermining of the environment and natural resources. Nowadays, progressive social sciences in the field of agriculture and food in Latin America are dominated by the rationality of political economy in its different variations. These studies generally explain the notion of poverty as

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a result of the persistent and growing wave of neoliberal capitalism that plagues the region. This literature is generally inspired by the failures of neoliberalism, in particular, the aim of organizing human activity around the privatization of the social, market deregulation, the reduction of public investment and the prevalence of the free market, leading to the popular belief that these “lacks” cause the growing socio-political marginalization, and environmental degradation in Latin America.

Meanwhile Boas and Gans-Morse (2009) explain that there is no clear definition regarding the conceptual meaning of neoliberalism. Some consider it an economic doctrine, but in light of the diverse violent geopolitical events in Latin America, the ideological element also is important to consider. In the second half of the twentieth century, political developments such as the coup d'état against the Guatemalan government (1954), the Cuban Revolution (1959) and the coup in Chile (1973) caused implosions and explosions – in terms of human rights, democracy, and social, cultural and economic inequalities – that generated considerable criticism of the ensuing wave of neoliberalism in Latin America. More recently, in places such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela, the region has experienced the replacement of conservative patriarchs with democratically elected popular authoritarian leaders or *caudillos*. At the time of this publication in 2016, Brazil was experiencing the region's first democratic coup, challenging people's commitment to state representation as well as to its very institutions.

Today, voices of dissent challenge ideological influence within nation-state institutions, especially with regards to decision-making on public policy. This raises questions around public-private partnerships, but above all, around the interests of large companies, which undermine the redistribution of resources and the control of competitiveness between national economic entities, the public definition of efficiency, and regulations on capital flows. In this way, political economy, which in part arises from the moral philosophy of the eighteenth century, is also rooted in Latin American Dependence Theory of the 1960s (Arce, 2015).

More recently, the field of political economy has been revised and influenced by “the Third Way” of technocracy (Giddens, 1998), which has contributed to the belief that coexistence between the state planner (social democracy) and free market operations (classical liberalism) is possible. Accordingly, capital is not necessarily considered at odds with social purposes; capitalism is understood as a process that, without being perfect, is all that there is. Therefore, it is argued widely that what is needed is the institutionalization, regulation, and modernization of capitalism, for example through new technologies and incentives promoted by the market. In this view, the role of the state in the social sphere is to promote personal responsibility and foster employment rather than dependency on social welfare. Although social inequalities are immanent to capitalism, the state seeks to promote equal opportunity. The economic objective is not to redistribute income but to increase income for everyone.

Presently, states such as Chile, Ecuador, Argentina and Mexico have organized around this neoliberal project to assure further integration with financial systems

through electronic debit and credit in the name of efficiency and transparency. This political and economic project depends on a modernized public-private bureaucracy that is capable of combining monetary policy, taxes, and investments in order to achieve new degrees of economic growth, while generating tax revenues for public investment. The Third Way represents a conceptual and technocratic model that attempts to depoliticize the social in order to coordinate with private interests in service of the growing aspirations of an urban-based collective that is increasingly organized around a public parade of objects. In this model of consumer sovereignty, economic expansion is seen as a socio-political process outsourced to modernized private companies that, when coordinated institutionally with the needs of state welfare and bureaucracy, resolves the contradictions and conflicts between public and private. This naturalization of political and social, achieved through administrative capacity and ability of elite social democratic reformers that represent the interests of diverse social groups and their managing contradictions, dominates the socio-political objectives of today's cutting edge food policy.

Followers of the Third Way often prioritize the need for a socially oriented market, and they suggest democratic management for enhanced public consultation and participation as the political manner of dealing with the scarcity and degradation of natural resources and social services. This orientation is geared to favor continuous and sustainable economic growth based on science and technology, but also innovative investments, such as renewable energy and the introduction of biotechnology. In other words, they rely on greater degrees of capitalism and technology as entities that can finally resolve the problem of poverty and cyclical crises. The establishment of public service management that prioritizes the interests of the nation-state through efficient implementation and citizen-led policies with a "human face" is seen as a fundamental requisite for socio-natural and economic development. The basis for this orientation is founded in the criticism of the "traditional" interventions and decision-making processes and non-participatory deliberation of nation-states during the period of neoliberal modernization. Additionally, they protest against the policy of public multinationals, such as the agencies of the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Labor Organization, as they attempt to establish or correct them.

Ultimately, the Third Way is a state-nationalist stance. The topics that dominate this orientation emphasize the centrality of the nation-state in social life, the importance of regulating economic sectors, controlling monopolies, protecting markets, promoting transparency, citizen participation, and controlling corruption in the public sector. The goal is to facilitate social distribution of wealth and civic responsibilities beyond the benefits for the elite. Latin American social scientists commonly own this view of political economy, especially in reference to the notion of dominant global economic, productive and technological regimes, such as the global financial reality, the industrial food complex and the green technology revolution. As per this thinking, different assemblages influence and are influenced

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by the organization of capital, resources, space and access, but also by the organization of the workforce.

Often the concepts used in Marxist critiques of capital, capitalism and neoliberalism are based on academic neo-Marxist movements, which have concentrated their social relevance in fields of study related to development and underdevelopment. These analyses often reduce human experience to a class conflict and the effect of adaptation to social change. The outcome of these conflicts of interest and adaptation to the differences between social classes has led to highlighting the processes of resistance of subordinate social groups, such as farmers, that according to the thesis of the Third Way, mobilize against the socio-political sectors of the ruling regime or system. In the populist version, farmers, and more recently ethnic groups, are understood as historical subjects that have not been absorbed by capitalism, thus representing the existence of the experience of social classes that fight for liberation and the strengthening of different worlds.

Faced by this situation, the implicit position of the Third Way is to establish the existence of a coherent, cohesive society. The answer rests in improving what adherents view as natural functions and roles of citizen groups, dissolving hierarchies and lessening the differences between social classes and developing forms of cooperation and competition with aggressive economies (particularly the United States, Europe and China) and international corporations (e.g. Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Monsanto, and pharmaceutical, mining and petroleum companies) that attempt to achieve a productive homogenization of consumption and regulation across the planet.

Following a half-century of public attention geared at reforming the agricultural sector with technical assistance and modernization of production, food and markets, it would be a mistake to forget that today's agriculture and food crises have continued and deepened. Hence, we are concerned not only with the problems of the past (e.g., how to feed the public and how to integrate the traditionally marginalized sectors with the benefits of modern society), but also with pressing issues of the present. In particular, champions of the Third Way must reflect on how to organize social and environmental responses that are both scientifically informed and publicly sponsored.

More recently, the focus of political ecology has retained the notion of the primacy of the market and its social orientation, while conserving the importance of a strong state, attempting to politicize contemporary environmental concerns, socio-climatic events, the extraction of resources and the importance of promoting the distribution of power, especially with regards to access and conservation of natural resources. Much of this orientation informs the thinking in "alternative food movements" (Brenni, 2015). The concern lies in the main political or sustainable coexistence between human and biological/ecological configurations. In particular, Brenni studies the possibility of changing the incentives of the market economy. He is especially interested in replacing the notion of maximizing financial return with new values that arise from the importance of environmental and socio-cultural services, and even recovering the spiritual and symbolic beliefs,

to thereby establishing different forms of political action and production and consumption practices.

In short, political ecology prioritizes socio-environmental issues, such as the need to address social exclusion and anthropocentric degradation, mediate in environmental conflicts. It emphasizes the control and conservation of nature, ‘environmental rights,’ and social movements as fundamental aspects of a contemporary socio-political agenda. In this book food brings to bear a sociological understanding on questions of management and access to natural resources, the implementation of agroecology, and the defense of food sovereignty.

A critical reflection leads us to conclude that many of the solutions implemented so far, in terms of public policy, have not resulted in the promised changes. In a paradoxical situation, it appears that public policies have played a central role in generating new problems that are often worse than the original problems that were meant to solve. Well-known examples in the region include: large scale degradation of resources, soil and water, the erosion and loss of genetic resources, the proliferation of pests, the loss of competitiveness of local and regional food markets, plus some previously unimaginable consequences, such as poisoning and diseases of entire populations due to the effect of pesticides, global warming, and obesity. Our studies show that we are witnessing the development of a new agrofood crisis (Sherwood *et al.*, 2013). In other words, the socio-environmental crises that publics are experiencing in Latin America are not caused by government or scientific neglect or deficient public policy. On the contrary, they commonly are the direct result of the “success” of modernization in agriculture and food.

Empirical studies of contemporary food, agriculture, and social change in Latin America

Throughout Latin America, agroecology, food sovereignty and responsible consumption movements have demanded citizen rights from the state, while at the same time demanding degrees of autonomy from it. In essentially all cases they have lost miserably, as proposals have been rendered technical and hopeless bureaucratized by actors in the state. For our colleagues in Latin America as elsewhere, in this book we ask: how can a conceptual debate be opened up based on the contribution of social sciences to the empirical realities of food and agriculture?

Building on Csordas’ (1994) seminal work on embodiment and experience, the book’s questioning of the nation-state and the market is based on an understanding of development in food and agriculture as fundamentally about being and becoming. The territory of what has become a highly fluid state is not limited to geography or institutional structure, but rather to the dynamic situations and boundaries of objects, subjects, and multiplicities in continual interaction (Umans, 2016; Umans and Arce, 2014).

Not only is this territory an *objectivization* of biophysical and social singularity, but it also is a *inter-subjectivisation* of space determined and acted upon through a plurality of common sensitivities and sensibilities. We understand this region or

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space of agrofood encounter and development as a singular-plurality or *multiplicity* composed of lifeworlds that are simultaneously local-global, material-liquid, transient, made up of endlessly nuanced and fragmented boundaries in different states in (dis)solution or being and becoming. As per the material presented here, multiplicities can be found in crops as both a source of food and craft and cultural identity, and pesticides as both a solution to pest problems and a source of death or GMOs as a means of controlling nature as well as the creation of new, uncontrollable natures.

In this book, 27 authors working on 14 case studies in seven Latin American countries aim to capture and explore the situated complexity of politics and practices of food (see specific locations in the map, Figure 0.1). This experience is presented through the focal point of diverse forms of modern participation and social activism in civic and political life – all witnessed in real time during different phases of hope and aspiration – to transform and displace agricultural modernization and modern food. While the different contributions address a diversity of themes and conceptual material that defy simple categorization, we have roughly organized the resulting 14 chapters by what we see as largely unexplored regions of critical food studies: food embodiments, corporealities, and assemblages and multiplicities.

The book begins with a series of chapters that present different modern food embodiments. Eleanor Fisher and colleagues' study a Chili Cook-Off in Ajijic, Mexico to reveal how organoleptic qualities can give expression to people's changing relations with food, thereby generating new "food lifeways" – namely, ways of being in the world that focus on the interactions between people and things through the medium of food. Their research explores how bodies and material things align with people's sense of dwelling in a locality and their commitment to charitable aims through a public event. A subsequent chapter involves Joan Gross and colleagues' work in constructing a "history of the present" of post-modernization dietary transition in Carchi, Ecuador. This study explores how new materialities, such as ultra-processed food and agrochemicals (as well as roads and vehicles), shape relationships between human bodies and the substances and activities that biologically create them. Camilo Torres and Gerard Verschoor present a provocative, if worrisome case of encounter between traditional Andoque communities in the Colombian Amazon and the mining industry, leading to struggles – physical, ontological and otherwise – over living in abundance and the pursuit of accumulation through the utilization of gold as a precious metal and commodity. This work is followed by Andrew Ofstehage's deep empirical study of North American family farmers that migrated to Brazil's vast *Cerrado* region to become transnational soya producers to reveal the agency, plans, and improvisations that give life to such transformations.

A subsequent collection of chapters begins to address questions of corporeality, involving greater attention to the body and the material world as distributed across materialities, where agencies emerge through practice that acts on daily intentions as well as contingency. Horacio Narváez's research in northern Ecuador explores



FIGURE 0.1 Case study locations

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the daily battle and resulting creativity in bringing to bear the object-subject of water on agriculture and food, leading to the transformation of “a desert into an oasis.” His work identifies how the preoccupation of present-day development projects with the materiality of irrigation effectively blinds technicians to people’s affectivity and underlying socio-biological-material relationships, thereby limiting the potential of development interventions. Meanwhile, Nicolas Vasconcellos shares his work on the tropical region of Santo Domingo, Ecuador on how the arrival of state-supported milking technology intended to improve the efficiency and hygiene of milk production. His study leads to an exploration of how technological intervention, where animals, machines, peasant-farmers and experts encounter one another, ultimately leads to unexpected intersubjective relationships of affect, threatening to turn the tables on the predominance of expert knowledge in rural development. Oscar Reyna presents a multi-species study of the Wirikuta Indians in northern Mexico and the Peyote cactus. His work exposes how a cactus’ genetic properties have triggered affections and invited humans to become interested in preserving the dessert from extraction, leading to an engagement in new forms of biopower, as expressed in nomadism and affirmative politics. Together, this work uniquely explores connections between human and nonhuman realms and calls attention to the intersubjectivity of agriculture and food as well as changing notions of space, territory and time. Meanwhile, Christine Franke and colleagues arrive on the Island of San Cristóbal in the Galapagos to examine the social construction of paradise vis-à-vis the daily agriculture and food activity of colonists. Despite the common criticism of colonists, their analytical attention to the corporeality of contemporary practice sheds light on the potentiality of existing means and processes of farming and marketing by colonists as a hidden resource for addressing pressing livelihood and conservation interests, ultimately leading to a questioning of the notion of “green citizenship” and a call for an ontological shift towards “corporeal citizenship.”

A final series of chapters explores the unfolding agrofood assemblages and multiplicities tied to state-civil society institutional encounters over agricultural production, artisanship, and markets as well as the social viscosity of food sensations. Flavia Charao-Márques and colleagues’ long-term study examines the unfolding agencies involved in giving rise to agroecology networks in Brazil. Their contribution investigates how critical and practical action against dominant modes of agriculture and food consumption has fostered creative associations between practices, agencies, and materialities, giving birth to creative forms of activism and association that over time have become highly influential in championing agroecology vis-à-vis science-, state-, and industry-led development in Brazil. Their work highlights the multiplicity of materials and socials involved in social change and development as well as the endless potential for creative, transformative relational flows in agriculture and food. Meanwhile, Laura Viteri presents the affective interactions between humans and other materialities (e.g., milk, machines, factories and centers for the retired) during a public procurement experience that led to an employee takeover of the New Dawn Milk Cooperative

in Mar del Plata, Argentina. By means of ethnographic travel through dairy production and delivery to retirement community centers, the research explores how a public procurement contract emerged from the cooperative's private need to sell and a public official's need to demonstrate equitable and sovereign policy, leading to a reflection on the importance of affects and intersubjectivities in transforming collaborative associations.

In their study of wheat in Bio-Bio, Chile, Paola Silva and colleagues explore wheat as a socio-material "public" assemblage that reveals how things acquire agency in a territory. Beyond conventional interests of wheat breeding programs that primarily focus on production for flour, their research finds families involved in the maintenance of traditional varieties, leading them to highlight the neglected, "imperceptible" outputs of wheat that are often uncertain due to the randomness of the forces of nature (i.e., earthquakes) and site (straw handicrafts) that are central to territorial development as well as potential for change. The authors find that grounded people-wheat associations and specificities (practices), multiplicities (alliances between humans and nonhumans) and resulting assemblages fundamentally involve relationships and relationship-making, such as those involved in handicraft and food. They argue that such associations, assemblages and relationships are central to the actualities and potentialities of rural life and livelihood.

Charlyne Curiel in Oaxaca, Mexico and Gustavo Blanco and colleagues in Valdivia, Chile present respective studies based on their experience as participants in urban-based efforts organized around ideals of responsible consumption. Curiel's work is on the transformative experience of taking part in a joint food production-purchasing group, the *Tenate Básico*. Inspired by the principles of biointensive farming, the study follows a series of encounters to reveal the effects and affects of the participants' intensified food activity, leading to new relational forms among the social, the natural, and the material and ensuing potentialities. Meanwhile, Blanco *et al.* highlight the centrality of affects in the process of creating a new subject (the responsible consumer) and new objects (the food cooperative and fair food), leading to a call for moving beyond structural and materialist understanding of an assemblage. The authors find that La Manzana, as a food assemblage, generates an intrinsic value of intensifying existence, as it thrives on creative and novel associations between heterogeneous elements that open new ways of imagining, producing, and experiencing food-related worlds.

While Sherwood and colleagues also engage responsible consumption, they take a different tack: the "sensation" of food movements. Through reflective study as researchers-food activists, they document the activity of Ecuador's Agroecology Collective (*Colectivo*) and the Movement for Economic and Social Solidarity (MESSE). In so doing, they adopt the view that food is part of an endless process of socio-material embodiment that is best explained through people's feelings, practices, and performances. In particular, their research focuses on the joint Colectivo-MESSE "250 Thousand Families" campaign – an ambitious effort to recruit a critical mass to invest in responsible consumption as a vehicle for

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agroecology. Through ethnography and reflective practice as participants in a series of sensorial workshops, they find that flavor becomes a transformative moment and taste a transformative space, working in solution and precipitating in practice seeming binaries of conception/action, theory/practice, mind/body.

Taken together, the experiences invite a re-thinking of the notion of the public as well as agriculture and food as an object and commodity. In the conclusion, we draw on the insights of the chapters to provide a remedy to what we see as pressing theoretical, normative, and methodological agenda for a more empirical and critical food studies.

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