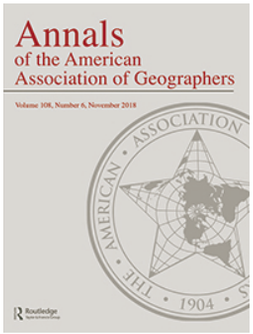

Annals of the American Association of Geographers

ISSN: 2469-4452 (Print) 2469-4460 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/raag21

Mexico's "Sugar Tax": Space, Markets, Resistance

Alistair Fraser

To cite this article: Alistair Fraser (2018) Mexico's "Sugar Tax": Space, Markets, Resistance, Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 108:6, 1700-1714, DOI: 10.1080/24694452.2018.1457429

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1457429

Mexico's "Sugar Tax": Space, Markets, Resistance

Alistair Fraser

Department of Geography, Maynooth University

Sugar consumption recently has become an object of political deliberation in the context of public health concerns about "obesity" and high prevalence rates of type 2 diabetes. Mexico has attracted significant attention in this regard, especially since its government introduced a "sugar tax" in 2013. The sugar tax was widely acclaimed by public health campaigners as a victory amidst an otherwise corporate-run foodscape. In this article, I interrogate the political debate over the tax as it played out in the Mexican Congress in 2013 and 2015. Analysis of political debates has value when it takes seriously the sociospatial constitution of the economy and its unending iterability. Debates illuminate interrelations among space, markets, and resistance; that is, core issues engaged by scholars in geography (and beyond) in the light of the expanding scope and depth of market relations. I argue that the debate sheds light on the concept of "foodscapes of hope," to which geographers have turned to summarize new spatial formations regarding the production and consumption of food. Specifically, I argue that foodscapes of hope emerge via processes of "marketization"—and using the political debate regarding Mexico's sugar tax I demonstrate how geography is drawn on and reproduced when marketization occurs. Space, markets, and resistance are bound up with one another in complex interassociations. Against this backdrop, the frontiers of intellectual deliberation on "alternative" social formations must engage the full significance of market relations, a challenge that geographers are well placed to meet. *Key Words: foodscapes of hope, marketization, Mexico, resistance, sugar.*

晚近的糖分消费，已在"肥胖"与第二型糖尿病的高度盛行率之公共健康考量脉络中，成为政治商议的对象。墨西哥在这方面受到了高度关注，特别是该政府自 2013 年引进"糖税"之后。糖税被公共健康倡议者广泛讚赏为由厂商所决定的粮食地景中的一大胜利。我于本文中，探讨 2013 年与 2015 年中，墨西哥国会上演的有关该税的政治辩论。政治辩论的分析，在认真看待经济的社会空间组成及其不断发生的重复性上具有价值。这些辩论阐述空间、市场与反抗之间的相互关系；亦即地理学者 (及其他) 在面对市场关系不断扩张的范围与深度时涉入的主要议题。我主张，该辩论对于"希望的粮食地景"之概念提出洞见，地理学者已转向概述有关粮食的生产与消费的崭新空间形式。我特别主张，希望的粮食地景通过"市场化"的过程浮现——我并运用墨西哥有关糖税的政治辩论，展现市场化发生时，地理学如何被利用与再生产。空间、市场和反抗——三者以复杂的相互关联性彼此连结。在此般背景之下，对于"另类"社会型构的智识考量之前沿，必须涉入市场关系的全面重要性——一个地理学者具有优势以迎接之挑战。 *关键词：希望的粮食地景，市场化，墨西哥，反抗，糖。*

Recientemente, el consumo de azúcar se ha convertido en objeto de deliberación política en el contexto de las preocupaciones de la salud pública acerca de la "obesidad" y las tasas de alta prevalencia de diabetes tipo 2. A este respecto, México ha atraído considerable atención, especialmente desde que su gobierno introdujo el "impuesto al azúcar" en 2013. Este impuesto fue aclamado ampliamente por los activistas de la salud pública como una victoria en medio de un paisaje alimentario muy diferente controlado por corporaciones. En este artículo interrogo el debate político con referencia al impuesto, según se desarrolló en el Congreso Mexicano entre 2013 y 2015. El análisis de los debates políticos es valioso cuando se toma con seriedad la constitución socioespacial de la economía y su interminable iterabilidad. Los debates iluminan las interrelaciones entre el espacio, los mercados y la resistencia; esto es, asuntos medulares abordados por eruditos de la geografía (y de otros campos) a la luz del alcance y profundidad de las relaciones de mercado en expansión. Sostengo que el debate arroja luz sobre el concepto de "paisajes alimentarios de esperanza," hacia el cual los geógrafos han dirigido sus miradas para resumir nuevas formaciones espaciales relacionadas con la producción y consumo de alimentos. De modo específico, arguyo que los paisajes alimentarios de esperanza surgen a través de los procesos de "mercadización"—y, usando el debate político sobre el impuesto al azúcar en México, demuestro el modo como la geografía es involucrada y reproducida cuando ocurre la mercadización—. El espacio, los mercados y la resistencia son ligados entre sí en complejas inter-asociaciones. Contra este telón de fondo, las fronteras de la deliberación intelectual sobre formaciones sociales "alternativas" deben enfrentar la total significación de las relaciones de mercado, un reto para abocar el cual los geógrafos están bien capacitados. *Palabras clave: azúcar, mercadización, México, paisajes alimentarios de esperanza, resistencia.*

Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 108(6) 2018, pp. 1700–1714 © 2018 by American Association of Geographers
Initial submission, May 2017; revised submissions, January and March 2018; final acceptance, March 2018
Published by Taylor & Francis, LLC.

The place of sugar in the human diet is now debated like never before. Arising from new knowledge regarding forms of ill health associated with "obesity,"[1] which is closely (but not exclusively; Guthman 2015) related to consumption of energy-dense "ultraprocessed" food (Moodie et al. 2013) and drinks such as sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), there has been a worldwide clamor for public agencies to act. The call is to reduce sugar consumption, which could conceivably help to address the prevalence and socioeconomic costs of diseases associated with overweight and obesity, most notably type 2 diabetes (see, e.g., World Health Organization [WHO] 2015b). In play here is the *sugar gap*—the gap between recommended and actual daily rates of sugar consumption. For example, whereas the National Cancer Institute estimates that mean intake of added sugars in the United States was 16.8 teaspoons in 2007 to 2010 (National Cancer Institute 2008, 2015), the American Heart Association (AHA 2009) recommends that adult women and men, respectively, limit their consumption of added sugars to just five and nine teaspoons per day.

While trying to narrow the sugar gap, public health campaigners have been forced to engage in what I refer to here as the sugar wars. On one side there are experts and activists who tend to agree that "sugar consumption the world over needs to fall" (Grover 2015, citing Schoen and Lang 2015). Sugar might help to satisfy cravings in the immediate term but, when consumed in excess, it can generate serious health problems when the human body struggles to produce sufficient quantities of insulin to break it down. For this reason, a "sugar shift" (Richardson 2016) needs to occur globally.

Then, on the other side of the sugar wars there are the producers and refiners of sugar, the manufacturers of sugar-sweetened drinks and ultraprocessed products, and many of the retailers of these lucrative food and drink commodities (Nestle 2015). Because so many "Billionaire Brands" (Moss 2013, 198) owned by food and drinks manufacturers are sugar-rich, these companies are particularly prone to heavily contest efforts that encourage consumers to reduce consumption. Via their own lobbyists, or industry associations such as the American Beverage Association, corporate food and drinks producers have demonstrated their willingness to spend vast sums of money on advertisements and lobbying, as well as by funding grassroots campaigns to oppose sugar taxes, funding research demonstrating the likelihood that taxes will fail to reduce consumption, and going to court to contest the legality of sugar tax legislation (Nestle 2015; see also Glasgow and Schrecker 2015; Studdert 2015).

In attempting to make sense of the sugar wars, it should be clear that food firms are simply defending their freedom to sell, ideally, from their point of view, without too much regulatory oversight. More broadly, there is a degree of necessity driving sugar's widespread use in capitalist societies. Food is the obvious basis for the social reproduction of labor power, which means that its relative price can alter the horizons for surplus value extraction and, as Moore (2011) put it, "If a sufficient volume of cheap food can be supplied to workers—and cheap food's biophysical costs externalized, for the time being—the rate of surplus value may be augmented in a manner roughly analogous to wage freezes and technical innovations" (27).

Sugar plays a role here because it sweetens other basic or processed food products and boosts the caloric content, without actually providing significant nutritional value. In short, sugar goes a long way toward making food cheap, thereby reducing socially necessary labor time as a whole and boosting the rate of profit (Guthman 2015). The resulting vast range and quantity of ultraprocessed food and SSBs available on supermarket shelves, convenience stores, and vending machines the world over (Monteiro et al. 2013) map neatly onto growth in global sugar production, which increased from around 13 million tons in 1900 (Cohen 2013) to 143 million tons in 2008 and 169 million tons in 2016 (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2016). Whether from subsidized Global North farms or imported from plantations where workers are paid poverty wages, sugar (or other sweeteners, such as high-fructose corn syrup [HFCS]) has been used as a cheap source of calories. It has become a central ingredient in an extensive global complex of food processing and manufacturing practice guided by cardinal rules, such as "When in doubt, add sugar" (Moss 2013).

For geographers interested in understanding how contemporary capitalist society might be reformed or transformed, the sugar wars present a rich arena for investigation and theorization. Herein we find lessons about how civil society, grassroots organizations, politicians, and experts work together, sometimes using novel legal instruments, to create a world that limits the space-producing power of capitalists. Herein, too, are numerous examples of how actors in the corporate sector engage society, enroll allies in the political

sphere, fight their corner, and push to create a world that suits their interests. The debate about sugar's place in the human diet involves public health campaigners with a general interest in seeing (what they believe might be) appropriate public policy that can protect citizens from capitalism's worst excesses. Few issues today unite such a broad range of activists, campaigners, scientists, practitioners, and academics: At stake is the right of food corporations to produce and market whatever sells, versus the possibility that a food industry might operate at scale primarily to satisfy human needs (or at least while taking human needs into fuller consideration). The sugar wars illuminate central tensions emerging from the universality of eating versus the particular interests of a globalized food industry that seems to value profits ahead of the human body's ability to endure ill health.

Mexico and the Sugar Wars

Mexico has become a crucial theater in the sugar wars, especially since joining the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. Mexicans have increased their consumption of ultraprocessed food and SSBs: Mexican per capita consumption of 163 liters of SSBs was the highest in the world in 2011 (Barquera et al. 2010; WHO 2015a). In the same space–time, the Mexican foodscape[2] has changed, via an expansion of chain restaurants, convenience stores, and other venues such as supermarkets, shopping malls, and multiscreen cinemas (Soederberg 2012) where ultraprocessed food and SSBs are sold. Roughly in the same period, then, average body sizes among the Mexican population have increased, which connects with the fact that the average Mexican is also now much more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than he or she was before NAFTA (Colchero et al. 2016). Taking stock of these developments, Mexican public health experts have called on the state to intervene. In response, the Mexican federal government has changed some laws about the advertising and marketing of certain food and drink products, and some Mexican states have intervened to limit the availability of certain food and drink products near schools, also increasing the availability of drinking water in public spaces (Barquera et al. 2013).

By far its boldest move, however, occurred in late 2013 when the Mexican government introduced a sugar tax, an excise tax of one peso per liter on SSBs, as well as an 8 percent tax on some ultraprocessed food products. Against the backdrop of a violent "narco-economy" and atrocities by governing forces, most notably in Ayotzinapa in 2014 (Jimenez 2016), the Mexican government received significant international acclaim for its sugar tax, including a gushing op-ed in the *New York Times* by food activist and journalist Mark Bittman (2013). One reason for celebrating the tax was that it was introduced despite vigorous opposition from food and drinks corporations (Donaldson 2015). The tax has challenged corporate dominance of the Mexican foodscape. Crucially, moreover, the tax received relatively high-profile support from an innovative and imaginative coalition of civil society groups, most notably *Alianza por Salud* (Alliance for Health), which consistently argued that it was a necessary instrument to begin tackling corporate dominance of the Mexican food economy (Donaldson 2015).

One outcome of the Mexican sugar tax, then, is that it has raised hopes among critical subjects that legislation could begin to unravel central facets of corporate domination. In this regard, the Mexican case speaks to scholarship on "foodscapes of hope" (Morgan 2015a). The focal points in work on foodscapes of hope are signposts toward possibilities for individuals, households, and communities to work with social enterprises, nongovernmental organizations, charities, cooperatives, and farmers to create new food spaces. In the postindustrial city, for example, it might be that forms of "civic engagement" or "municipal activism" have coalesced into practices such as Britain's Food for Life Partnership that seeks to deliver "good food for all" (Morgan 2015a, 296). Other signposts include the cases of smallholders engaged in seed exchanges (Bezner-Kerr 2010); cross-border partnerships between rural producers in Global South contexts and urban food justice activists in the Global North (Friedmann and McNair 2008); or research-activism that calls into question dominant narratives about the relationship between food and the city (Tornaghi 2017). In diverse settings, scholars are revealing numerous insights about how individuals, communities, and various forms of institutions are "making hope practical" (Morgan 2015a, 296, citing Williams 1983) and, in the process, generating new foodscapes of hope.

Mexico is an ideal place in which to assess the possibilities and meanings of creating new foodscapes of hope. The sugar tax at issue in this article does not simply reflect a top-down policy but rather offers evidence of successful bottom-up organizing that seeks to create foodscapes of hope by challenging and presenting alternatives to mainstream practices. The tax—

and the debate around it—has altered the foodscape, if in no other way than by giving hope to public health experts, activists, and campaigners that the state might begin to take the citizenry's health into fuller consideration when it designs food-related policy. The perceived (albeit, partial) victory over the food industry is a prominent example of activists and politicians "making hope practical," even if the expected health gains do not materialize, as seems highly possible. The sugar tax also alters the Mexican foodscape by converting the country's relative location within debates about public health and corporate power. Previously, Mexico was a test case for what happens when a society is heavily exposed to key features of neoliberal practice, such as free trade and widening material inequality. Now, and in the light of recent contributions to geographical theory about the relationship between the so-called Global North and Global South (e.g., Robinson 2002; Roy 2009), Mexico is not an odd exception to a Global North norm or a point "in transition" to Global North standards but rather a setting in which imaginative and original social changes are occurring. Mexico complicates numerous global knowledges because its initiative in introducing a national tax set the pace for some other Global North countries to follow, such as Britain (where a sugar tax was legislated with reference to Mexico's purported successes; Ruddick 2016) and the United States (where sugar taxes have been introduced but not nationwide; Sanger-Katz 2016). In short, Mexico's sugar tax suggests that other Global South locations might be the place to find pioneering public health actions in the twenty-first century. The so-called advanced capitalist countries in the Global North might once have taken the lead in developing public health policy, but the Mexican drive to alter sugar's place in the human diet (and Brazilian initiatives regarding food policy more generally; Monteiro et al. 2015) raises the prospect of Global North societies now beginning to play catch-up.

Conceptualizing the Mexican Sugar Tax

I argue that conceptualizing Mexico's sugar tax requires locating this particular instrument relative to the other major alternative approach to altering patterns of food consumption. Assuming that the connection between consumption and body size is much more direct than it actually is (Guthman 2015), a government interested in reducing obesity levels could pursue extensive regulation of the food industry, even to the point where manufacturers are compelled to stop production of certain sugar-rich products. Such a vision emerges in the ambitious and innovative research and praxis that has generated Brazilian nutrition policy (Monteiro et al. 2015), which makes the case for bottom-up action that might, in turn, produce extensive regulation. There is precedence for such levels of intervention, including laws that prevent the cosmetic industry from testing products on animals or state regulation of industry that goes so far as to completely overhaul manufacturing practice, as the case of the East Asian developmental state goes to show (Amsden 1989). If a government was serious about placing the health of its citizens over corporate profits, extensive intervention and regulation could go a long way.

Instead of extensive regulation, however, sugar taxes have grown in prominence in the contemporary period. As the Mexico case illustrates, their introduction is often celebrated by campaigners as a significant victory. On one level, such celebrations might be justified. As I have noted, efforts to close the sugar gap via sugar taxes are about an array of social forces challenging some of the key tenets of neoliberal society, including the dominance of transnational corporations (Nestle 2015; see also Glasgow and Schrecker 2015; Studdert 2015). Even achieving minor victories entails confronting food and drinks manufacturers and the practices, ideas, and discourses they use to oppose regulations or restrictions on their freedom to produce, move, and sell (Moodie et al. 2013). The mere introduction of a sugar tax in the face of stiff (and well-funded) opposition from the corporate sector will give many campaigners good reasons to cheer.

On another level, though, the case for sugar taxes brings to a light a striking paradox: Taxing sugar-rich food and drinks products might be a victory for those who oppose corporate dominance of the foodscape, but it is a victory that cements the everydayness (the pervasiveness, the inescapability) of market relations. This victory has been achieved by creating a new market instrument. In this case, therefore, and others like it, supporters of sugar taxes, such as those working for Alianza por Salud, or other critical subjects who celebrated this type of intervention, have accepted that resistance is pragmatic when new ideas explicitly look to embrace, rather than only abandon or move beyond, the market. In the shadow of neoliberalism, this case suggests that resistance might be more sustainable, more viable, when campaigners propose market instruments. This paradox is noteworthy given the

extent to which scholars across the social sciences have been puzzled by the continued prevalence of neoliberalism despite the evident injustices and crises it produces (see, e.g., Wilson and Swyngedouw 2015). The development and celebration of Mexico's sugar tax suggests that part of neoliberalism's continued vitality could stem from prominent forms of resistance to ostensibly neoliberal realities proposing (albeit partial) fixes by means of adjusting the market. There might be resistance against and opposition to neoliberalism today, but there is evidently also relatively strong support for market relations in general, even though market "solutions" such as privatization (of national utilities) and deregulation (of banking or finance) have frequently delivered poor results.

A way to understand this complex relationship between resistance and the market is offered by recent scholarship regarding performativity. For Butler (2010), a key feature of performativity is that it "operates in part through dividing the spheres of the economic and the political" (154). As she pointed out, though, this separation "not only fails [but] *depends* on failure" (159, italics added), because "performativity never fully achieves its effect, and so in this sense 'fails' all the time; its failure is what necessitates its reiterative temporality, and we cannot think iterability without failure" (153). As Callon (2010) argued, then, the inevitability of failure in performativity suggests scope to dwell on the mutual organization of the economic and the political. He specifically argued that "markets that work satisfactorily are markets that comply with the terms of reference imposed on them (in terms of efficiency, equity, etc.) and simultaneously leave it up to the political debate to explicitly address the issues resulting from the misfires and overflowings generated by their enactment" (166). Political action—acts of resistance, proposals for change—entails a "performative dimension" (Callon 2010, 168) when actors (implicitly or explicitly) model, project, or run tests and experiments about distributions, flows, alternative scenarios, or outcomes. Because this "performativity of economics" (Callon 2010, 168) depends on failure (Butler 2010), the political is always anticipated and then reenrolled when market or economic failures inevitably occur.

According to Çalışkan and Callon (2010), recognizing that we are performing the economy when we act politically calls attention to "marketization," the process via which markets are established "as institutions that favor the creation of values by organizing competition between autonomous and independent agents" (3). One component of this process is the performative moment when economists, for example, design markets in response to, and in accordance with, political debate. As such, political thought, political theorizing, and the normative more generally are caught up with marketization and vice versa. Diverse forms of experimentation or modeling, conducted in cooperation with a "multiplicity of actors" (Çalişkan and Callon 2010, 20), lend a "thoroughly political" (Çalişkan and Callon 2010, 20) slant to this design stage of marketization. Beyond design, marketization also involves maintenance via operations and devices that involve "emotional, corporal, textual and technical elements" (Çalişkan and Callon 2010, 21), which might maintain markets or generate instability therein and which potentially creates the "misfires and overflowings" that generate political debate.

Marketization occurs, therefore, via the mutual organization of the economic and the political and by a multiplicity of actors—economists, firms, and traders, as well as consumers, scientists, or governments—performing the economy in an ongoing, iterative process. It follows that resistance involves performing the economy, that resistance implicitly contributes to marketization when arguments about distributions or flows of materials figure in political debates and explicitly contributes to marketization when purported solutions seek to alter extant market arrangements. Explicitly emphasizing how resistance might fit with respect to this ongoing process of marketization—which today is underpinned by a set of neoliberal devices and operations—is pragmatic and can be aimed at countering the effects of corporate dominance, such as the production and unfettered sale of unhealthy commodities, when it involves an embrace of the market.

With respect to sugar taxes, this pragmatism arises in two ways. In the first place, proposals for new instruments such as a sugar tax require modeling, imagining, or anticipating emergent market effects. Resistance can seek to address misfires and overflowings and it will have particular purchase, I argue, when new ideas can be modeled and essentially "plugged in" to broader calculations of what will change individual and corporate behavior. As noted by Reubi (2013, 2016), the case for sin taxes receives support today because it developed in the same time–space in which neoliberal structural adjustment programs cut state spending on public health around the world and worked to undermine the case for state interventions as a whole (Reubi 2013, 2016). It was a broadly neoliberal economic

interpretation of public health that emerged to offer states intellectual justification to introduce sin taxes. Neoliberal reason has presented a vehicle for states to limit corporate power by enacting legislation that aims to reduce the consumption of some of the key commodities driving the spread of noncommunicable diseases, especially tobacco (and now increasingly sugar-rich food and drinks products). Sugar taxes therefore fit with respect to a dominant neoliberal understanding of the world in general and of how market rationalities can govern health in particular. The extent to which sugar taxes are amenable to econometric modeling facilitates their supporters to effectively pursue resistance while also performing the economy. Arguments for sugar taxes acquire political purchase with respect to broader patterns of fiscal decision making that view taxes (especially regressive taxes on spending) as more viable instruments than strict (and therefore, conceivably, messier and much more prone to political capture) regulation of the food and drinks industry.

Second, sugar taxes have the added advantage of operating with an almost taken-for-granted neoliberal representation of what causes "obesity": not just the notion that bodily size stems from patterns of food and drink consumption but also that the "obese" individual is a failure whose best chances of health hinge on market-driven interventions that raise the price of unhealthy commodities. Bioeconomic and biopolitical policy instruments such as sugar taxes isolate and prioritize actions intended to alter patterns of food and drinks consumption, while failing to bear in mind the broader array of influences that might shape bodily size, such as sleep patterns, shift work, stress and exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals in everyday products such as household cleaners or cosmetics that alter the metabolism and encourage adiposity (Mansfield and Guthman 2015). "Obesity" cannot, in fact, be separated from broader societal factors such as poverty and segregation or from the institutional apparatus that shapes health governance (Parker 2014). As I emphasized earlier, capitalist political economy has its part to play in explaining why body sizes have grown over the last few decades insofar as food corporations "rework bodily processes and spaces in ways conducive to ongoing accumulation" (Guthman 2015, 2522). Structural conditions that point toward a corporate-dominated foodscape are certainly invoked by supporters of instruments such as sugar taxes, but by highlighting and isolating food and drink consumption, sugar tax advocates implicitly ignore this wider array of forces working through the human body and instead point the finger at the individual consumer. From this sort of view, even if the state can use "punitive sanctions" (Parker 2014, 104) or other tactics, strategies, and programs to guide daily practices in ways that lead individuals to (try to) take better care of their own health, health should be a matter of "personal and moral responsibility" (Parker 2014, 105). Sugar taxes have as their basis an implausible and discriminatory narrative that an overweight or obese body is necessarily an ill body. A core aim of sugar taxes is to cure a supposedly disgusting, shameful social problem caused by individuals losing control and ultimately failing to take responsibility for their own health. They unfold within a broader "regime of responsibilization" (Shamir 2008; Brown 2015), which posits that individuals deserve the blame for their poor choices, which ultimately culminates in the formation of an "Obesity Clinic"; that is, a "biopolitical project to discipline the masses and develop productive neoliberal biocitizens" (Rail 2012, 243). This "clinic without borders" (Rail 2012, 240) territorializes numerous and diverse spaces; that is, it territorializes foodscapes such as "our living and dining rooms, our houses, our physical education classes, our schools and school yards, our own departments within universities, our sports fields, our media" (Rail 2012, 240). It marks unruly obese bodies as requiring help, advice, and monitoring and thereby reinforces neoliberal mentalities about health, because it emphasizes self-regulation and self-investment as a mode of governing the obese person and invites "certain types of behaviour" (Rail 2012, 241):

> The Obesity Clinic is thus a system where individuals willingly and proactively reproduce their own capture. It serves as a self-surveillance medium that presses individuals toward monitoring themselves. Being overweight or obese is marked as a failure while the thin body is given recognition as reflecting the control, virtue, goodness, rationality, and self-discipline of perfect neoliberal subjects. (Rail 2012, 241)

As such, sugar taxes are a "technology of responsibilization" (Parker 2014, 104) dispensed within the Obesity Clinic that permits supporters to resist corporate dominance of the foodscape while also performing the economy and contributing to ongoing processes of marketization. They add value to the view that the good (neoliberal) subject eats well, exercises, and stays thin (Guthman and Dupuis 2006; Guthman 2012), whereas the problematic obese individual deserves to be targeted by punitive projects, such as sugar taxes,

that economize social life and place a monetary value on health care, products, and services. They have purchase because they work alongside other biopolitical strategies that give individuals a sense of their own worth and value in relation to the market. Matters such as the prevalence of "obesity" or type 2 diabetes can be constructed as prime examples of the "misfires and overflowings" that create opportunities for political debate about how the food economy is defined or altered. The mutual organization of the economic and the political is evident in arguments for using the market to adjust social life. Using sugar taxes as a vehicle to construct foodscapes of hope entails a pragmatic engagement with market relations.

Probing the Spatiality of Marketization in Political Debates Regarding Mexico's Sugar Tax

If a move such as Mexico's sugar tax engenders foodscapes of hope—a decision that creates a new market instrument intended to alter how individuals consume food and drink products, ostensibly even as a vehicle to undermine the dominance of market actors in the Mexican food economy—it is also a case of performativity that cements and deepens market relations in society. Has space mattered at all here, though? Market design or maintenance entails the formation of effects that appear and have meaning for variegated actors operating amidst networks and arrangements of social relations that are constituted *spatially*. A new market instrument or device alters extant relations. "Misfires and overflowings" might compel politics to examine economics and economies, but such an inquiry occurs in the context of geographically uneven development, place specificities, and a politics of the city, the rural, the region, or scale. Neither Butler (2010) nor Callon (2010) tackled this issue, preferring instead to treat the back-and-forth of misfires and overflowings, economic and political, as if they can occur without consideration of any one of a wide range of ways that society and space blend to become the *sociospatial* (Sheppard 2016). We might expect that geography matters in the interaction and iterability of performativity, but we have not seen sufficient literature that seeks to shed light on the way geography matters in processes of marketization. Only Morris (2016) presented some clues via research on the "lively practices," which characterize the Bank of England's economic announcements.

In the light of this shortcoming, therefore, I use an analysis of central dynamics in the Mexican case to probe the spatiality of marketization, which comes to light when the effects of the sugar tax on sugar-producing regions, the city, international trade relations, or a country's global reputation flow into, interact, and emerge in *political debate*. The methodological upshot here is that analyzing the geographical dimensions of misfires and overflowings requires paying attention to political debates about marketization. Hitherto, however, this methodological challenge has been sidestepped in the foodscapes literature. Although foodscapes scholars recognize the importance and indeed the possibility of producing public policy that can alter how food is produced, distributed, and consumed (e.g., Sonnino 2016), the utterances and contexts drawn into political debate in democratic chambers have not been given sufficient attention. One possible reason could be methodological skepticism, a belief that these utterances are scripted, staged, and therefore somehow too partial or opaque, thereby reducing the value (or potential) of research on the political sphere. Alternatively, there is undoubtedly a methodological preference today for analyses that take seriously the voices of grounded, grassroots, or subaltern respondents, which in turn makes the voice of a politician seem less authentic. Irrespective of the specific reasons, refusing to dwell on the words, narratives, themes, and spatial references in political debates is a missed opportunity for researchers trying to understand how new progressive or at least less oppressive sociospatial formations might take shape. In response, therefore, the core empirical part of this article analyzes the political debate over Mexico's sugar tax. I argue that debates in the public political sphere provide evidence of action "staged at the front of house" (Morris 2016, 249), with that action pointing toward some of the deliberation obscured to us because it took place behind the scenes. The crucial point here is that policymakers must take into consideration the anticipated effects—unevenly distributed—of new market instruments. Geography spills into and mixes with the range of reasons for enacting, or indeed refusing to make, a decision. Of course, political debates will not necessarily highlight every aspect that was considered in the making of public policy—that is, when marketization occurs—but they can reveal enough to justify their analysis. I use an analysis of utterances, claims, and counterclaims in political debates to shed light on the nuances and dynamics of producing foodscapes of hope. Passing legislation can be germane

to "making hope practical," and when such public policy is at issue, research on the construction of foodscapes of hope can advance by analyzing and trying to understand the geographies provoked, prompted, and projected into political debates.

Geography and the Political Debate Regarding Mexico's Sugar Tax

The following discussion is divided in two. In the first part, I focus on how the sugar tax was debated when it was introduced as part of a broader fiscal package in late 2013. I narrow in on opponents of the tax and dwell on how they objected to it. Per Çalışkan and Callon (2010), at issue was the design component of marketization. In the second part of the following discussion, I then turn to debates in 2015 when the government tried to roll back certain aspects of the tax, a move that compelled supporters to speak up and defend it in ways conversant with a foodscapes of hope framework.

The 2013 Debate

For Mexico's sugar tax to be imagined as part of a viable pathway toward altering how its citizens relate with food, it had to be brought into existence via an approving vote in the Mexican Congress in October 2013. The governing party, *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI; the Institutional Revolutionary Party), and the *Partido de la Revolución Democrática* (PRD; the Party of the Democratic Revolution), a smaller left-of-center party, agreed to introduce the tax as part of a wider package of fiscal reforms. The government had a substantial majority of representatives (hereafter, *Diputados*) in favor of the overall fiscal package. Opponents therefore spoke only for the sake of registering their stance and not because they hoped to change the direction of policy. Even so, the actual debate was illuminating because Diputados revealed at least some of the matters that must have been on the minds of policymakers when they designed and agreed to institute the sugar tax.

In October 2013, in the run-up to the announcement in Congress, and demonstrating the validity of imagining foodscapes as corporate-dominated, the Mexican corporate sector heavily criticized the proposed tax, especially via advertisements in newspapers (Donaldson 2015). Companies such as Femsa and Bimbo, the main bottler and distributor of Coca-Cola products and a Mexican transnational food producer with a vast line of ultraprocessed foodstuffs, respectively, most likely also dedicated resources to lobbying the government, although it is impossible to provide details of such behind-the-scenes activity. Crucially, however, the stance of Mexico's food and drinks industry was not raised in Congress. Instead, diputados from across the main political parties registered their opposition to the sugar tax by focusing on what they claimed would be its impact on the country's sugar cane producers. Diputados from Veracruz, the largest sugarcane region in the country (Aguilar-Rivera et al. 2012), were especially vocal critics of the tax.

Two Veracruzano diputados from the center-right *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN; in English, National Action Party), Juan Bueno Torio and Víctor Serralde Martínez, and then Yazmin de los Angeles Copete Zapot from the PRD, raised objections. Their narratives first of all converged around claims that they were defending *cañeros* (sugarcane producers) from efforts to "demonize" and "stigmatize" sugar.[3] In fact, Bueno Torio claimed, "Sugar is a good food; it is a carbohydrate like many others: like corn, and wheat, and others" (Camara de Diputados [CD] 2013). SSBs, meanwhile, "fulfill a function, which is precisely to quench the thirst and to energize those who consume it" (CD 2013). The diputados also disputed the utility of the sugar tax given that sugar "is not the only factor or the only carbohydrate that causes obesity in our population" (CD 2013), a truth about the instability of "obesity epidemic" (Gard 2010) discourses that was enrolled to oppose the tax and undermine the notion that foodscapes of hope pivoted in Mexico on instituting new taxes. Then there were related claims that the sugar tax was emblematic of the Mexican state's propensity to use taxes to address social problems:

> Listen good. The real public enemy today is no longer Chapo Guzman; it's Mexican sugar. And the news that will go around the world from this day, is that health problems in Mexico are not solved with drugs. The news instead is that in Mexico we solve health problems by imposing taxes. It turns out the President wants to combat obesity by imposing taxes on soft drinks. How he will solve the cholesterol problem? Taxing eggs? How will he solve the issue of uric acid or triglycerides? Are you going to tax pork? I wonder how he will solve the problem of overpopulation? Will you put taxes on the *mañanero* [sex in the morning]? (CD 2013)

A second and more striking theme connected the tax to *restructuring* in the sugarcane sector. The backdrop is that Mexico's sugarcane sector "forms an integral

part of the rural economy" (Aguilar-Rivera et al. 2012, 207) and provides an economic basis for around 4 million people. It had expanded over the course of the twentieth century to meet domestic demand and had become the second largest agricultural sector, after maize. In turn, cañeros became a prominent constituency within a broader *campesino* (peasant) sector that played a key role in shaping Mexican politics (Boyer 2003); the Mexican foodscape is a product of corporate interests coalescing with rural constituencies, not least cañeros. Since the 1980s, however, Mexican government policy has sought to roll back supports such as "crop subsidies, state marketing boards, agricultural credit agencies, and commodity price support programs" (Popke and Torres 2013, 218), a shift intended to "promote entrepreneurialism over paternalism in the rural sector, and to shift government resources toward competitive producers and away from 'inefficient' peasant smallholders" (Popke and Torres 2013, 218). In addition to these changes, which have produced "greater price instability, uncertain markets, and increased risk" for producers (Popke and Torres 2013, 218), problems in some sectors have been amplified by the "new economic geography" (Galvan-Miyoshi, Walker, and Warf 2015, 755) emerging from Mexico's membership in NAFTA. In short, a new neoliberal foodscape has emerged, albeit one "engineered by public-sector intervention" (Eakin, Bausch, and Sweeney 2014, 47). Some agrarian sectors have done well in this context, especially Sinaloan maize farmers (Eakin, Bausch, and Sweeney 2014), who form part of an emerging maize–cattle complex supplying the domestic and U.S. market. In contrast, many cañeros have suffered from declining government support and the compounding effect of significant growth in imports of HFCS from the United States, which many Mexican food and drinks producers purchase instead of domestic cane sugar (Chollett 2009). Some cañeros have therefore shifted to production of berries or other crops for the domestic market.

The result of these developments is that trying to close the sugar gap in Mexico has required confronting this particular dimension of agrarian change. Against this backdrop, any proposal to create a tax that might harm cañeros was bound to be controversial. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that cañeros joined companies such as Femsa in publishing press releases and paying for political advertisements in prominent newspapers to decry the tax (Donaldson 2015) or that the sugar tax gave diputados from sugar-producing regions a reason to enter into the debate. Thus, as Bueno Torio (CD 2013) claimed:

> Due to overproduction of sugar, producers are suffering serious problems today. [. . .] When a market is over-tendered and a tax on consumption is imposed, the only thing that can happen is that the tax goes directly to the cost. That cost will affect the interests and will harm the economies of hundreds of thousands of families in fifteen states of the Mexican Republic. It's not fair that, when a sector is trying hard to improve its productivity and competitiveness, as has the cane sector in recent years, that this productivity and that spirit is punished with a tax.

For Copete Zapot, moreover, the sector's problems had to be seen in relation to Mexico's relation with the United States. She raised the possibility that, if HFCS turns out to be a bigger contributor to "obesity" than sugar, the Mexican government "would struggle because it would implicate our neighboring country, the United States, which imports it" (CD 2013). In effect, therefore, Copete Zapot tried to wave a nationalist flag in defense of cañeros, an understandable tactic given the extent to which membership of NAFTA has bruised a Mexican identity that is otherwise proud of its revolutionary and anti-imperial heritage, a country that stood up to U.S. capital and U.S. government interference during its revolution (1910–1917) and subsequent process of state building. In tapping into national sentiment about HFCS and NAFTA, Copete Zapot reminded Congress of Mexico's acquiescence to U.S. capital; in short, of compounding the country's failure by introducing a new market instrument that would hurt cañeros. Then, for Serralde Martínez, the tax was yet another example of U.S. interference because, as he pointed out, the most prominent proponent of the tax, Alianza por Salud, had received significant funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the charitable foundation established by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. As such, Serralde Martínez criticized the tax as an example of Bloomberg's "war on sugar" (CD 2013). In this guise, the tax was not about helping a weak and vulnerable Mexico but was instead simply a new attack, one imagined by a wealthy foreign philanthropist from north of the Rio Grande. The task of constructing new foodscapes of hope in Mexico was animated and, via these attacks in Congress it was also potentially weakened, by transnational concerns.

These dynamics fed into a third spatial component of the debate: rural–urban tensions. The case for the sugar tax was heavily promoted in Mexico City where

Alianza por Salud was active; for example, by hiring the public relations agency Polithink to put pressure on lawmakers (Donaldson 2015). Politicians from Mexico City emphasized in the debate how the city was desperate for change, with Zárate Salgado, a PRD *diputado* from Mexico City, arguing that action had to be taken given that "three out of four beds in hospitals [in the city are] used to service and care for diseases related to obesity." In line with Morgan's (2015b) comment that the urban question in the Global North has been shaped by city governments "invoking their public health mandate to fashion healthier urban foodscapes" (1386), Mexico City's government had already made some minor moves, such as installing drinking water fountains in public spaces and developing new partnerships between urban consumption and rural production in rural areas within the city's boundaries, such as *mercados de trueques* (barter markets) where citizens can exchange their recycled goods for organic food produced in the city's rural hinterland.[4] Reflecting an "iterative governance relationship" (Morgan 2015b, 1389), though, these efforts by Mexico City have to be understood in the light of what has been happening in other cities around the world. U.S. cities, such as Philadelphia (Sanger-Katz 2016), have been able to introduce their own sugar taxes by virtue of a federal system in the United States that gives subnational governments concurrent tax-raising powers. In contrast, tax-raising powers are not concurrent in Mexico; hence, Mexico City cannot use local taxes to increase the sale price of SSBs or ultraprocessed food (Serna de la Garza n.d.). Just as Morgan (2015b) pointed out with respect to Global North contexts, cities such as Mexico City have heavily circumscribed powers to create a healthier foodscape. Closing the sugar gap to construct foodscapes of hope in Mexico City required its politicians to achieve nationwide change. Notably, therefore, when the PRD cosponsored the sugar tax in 2013, twenty-four of its sixty diputados were from Mexico City. Yet, support for the tax from PRD diputados clashed with those representing rural areas, who could claim that urban politicians were guilty of advancing a tax measure that imperiled rural life. As Serralde-Martinez (CD 2013) noted:

> Behind this tax there is no intention to remedy a health problem. What is the point of raising 12.5 billion pesos at the expense of [. . .] agricultural producers, representing [. . .] more than 170,000 families in 15 states, including Veracruz, Jalisco, San Luis Potosi, Morelos, Nayarit and Oaxaca, among others. I invite the PRD not to be accomplices to this act of betrayal of the peasants. I invite Deputy Fernando Zarate, PRD deputy, to stop proposing that the tax on sugar should be doubled. *You do not know the rural world*; you do not even plant a cucumber in your garden. (italics added)

In summary, then, analysis of the initial political debate over Mexico's sugar tax demonstrates how marketization occurs spatially. Increasing the sale price of SSBs was designed (and modeled) to reach into the country as a whole; it was intended to alter and then create a new national market. Marketization, performing the economy, ultimately had this geography in mind. The sugar tax was never only going to be a national matter, however, because Mexico has sugar-producing regions that might conceivably (and as argued by some diputados) suffer. Moreover, efforts to adjust the national market were affected by Mexico's external relations, not least with the United States. As such, the political debate reveals how marketization can alter the flow and relative locations of economic actions in regions or places. The character of the debate—the utterances, their spatial nuances—suggests that marketization necessarily creates contingent "pulses" of activity within the spatially constituted economy, pulses that have potential to spill over, misfire, or fail and therefore create new effects. Trying to create new foodscapes of hope using public policy requires confronting and navigating these pulses. Political debates might not reveal every crucial detail shaping the construction of public policy, but they do call attention to the spatiality—arranged or performed in contingent ways—of marketization.

Defending the Tax in 2015

If designing the market to create foodscapes of hope creates contingent pulses to be confronted and navigated, the next stage, market maintenance, also takes shape spatially via the use of what I refer to as *enrolling moves*, whereby speakers in political debates spot, clamp, and capitalize on sociospatial relations that can be used to advance their arguments. To elaborate, I turn now to the political debate in 2015, when it emerged that the government intended to alter the tax regulation such that products with less than five grams of sugar per 100 milliliters would only be taxed at half the full rate (Agren 2015). In two sessions in Congress and one session in the Senate, numerous lawmakers intervened to attack the government's revised position. They were successful: The government was defeated in the Senate and the sugar tax was

retained in its original form. Next I focus on three enrolling moves used by supporters of the tax.

The first concerned the construction of a binary between the citizenry and business, whereby the Mexican body was imagined as an "injured subject of justice" (Booth 2011, 760). There were, for example, claims that the government was "still privileging big business"; calls for lawmakers to eschew "alliances with the drinks industry" in favor of supporting "the preservation of the health of all those who placed trust" in Congress; and that politicians should enshrine their "promise to citizens, not the drinks industry" (CD 2015). In short, the tax was evidence of the state standing up to the food and drinks manufacturers; these statements were, therefore, efforts to put Mexican citizens as a whole, nationwide, before sectoral and indeed regional interests. Resistance to Mexico's corporate-dominated foodscape was, in this instance, about looking to the market. Putting Mexicans before "big business" entailed a national market-based project, an enrolling move that had purchase in the context of events in Ayotzinapa in September 2014, when forty-three students from the *Escuela Normal Rural de Ayotzinapa* disappeared, with widely held suspicion that the state was involved (Jimenez 2016). In 2015, lawmakers had an opportunity to defend a market adjustment (that they could argue was) intended to protect the nation and its injured citizens, in this case from the unhealthy commodities sector.

A second enrolling move drew on new evidence collected by Mexico's National Institute of Public Health, which demonstrated that the tax had led to reduced consumption of SSBs, especially among poorer households. As Senator Robles Montoya (Senado de la República 2015) argued, "Since 2014, consumption of SSBs has fallen 6 per cent while consumption of bottled water has increased by 5 per cent."[5] He therefore called for the one peso per liter tax to be increased to two pesos per liter. Undermining the tax was unacceptable. As Calderón Torreblanca (CD 2015) argued:

> How will those who vote for this proposal [to roll back the tax reform] be able to look at their children and their family members suffering health problems resulting from excessive consumption of SSBs? It is regrettable that those we love most, our children, are being used as political hostages.

The world beyond Mexico was also a factor here. Critics of the rollback drew some inspiration from statements made by prominent experts in the field of public health. For example, Boyd Swinburn (2015), Chair for Policy and Prevention of the World Obesity Foundation, had written publicly that Mexico was a

> world leader … when it introduced its tax on sugar-sweetened beverages and unhealthy snack food [and that the] public health gains for the Mexican people and the political leadership [the government has] shown to the world are now under threat [if] the government cannot withstand the pressure from the multinational companies and its pioneering public health policies are reversed.

Mexican lawmakers stood in front of a global audience; the place of Mexico in relation to the sugar wars globally was part of the political debate in Congress; and the scope to construct foodscapes of hope in Mexico was tied into its defenders understanding these sociospatial relations and capitalizing on them by locating the tax with respect to national and global realities and capitalized accordingly.

A third and final enrolling move arose in one specific way in which lawmakers brought the global context into the political sphere. In a striking development in 2015, senators and diputados introduced elements of a human rights framework of justice to claim the government had an obligation to protect the tax. Ramirez Nachis (CD 2015), for example, noted that "from the point of view of the state's obligations, health is a basic right, as set down by the Human Rights Law." Calderón Torreblanca then added to Ramirez Nachis's stance by referring to Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Mexico ratified in 1981 and which accords everyone within a state's jurisdiction the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. He claimed that "[t]he right to health establishes the responsibilities of the State to … enforce this right to the entire population." Further, because "Article 4 of the Constitution of the United Mexican States establishes the right of everyone to the protection of health," he argued that "the State shall be failing to respect, protect and fulfill the universal right to health" (CD 2015) if the sugar tax was rolled back.

This new angle in the debate reflected a broader international shift toward using a rights-based approach and human rights law as a tool to limit the availability and marketing of unhealthy commodities (see Reubi 2012, 2016; Morgan 2015b; for a critique, see O'Hara and Gregg 2012). Tobacco control advocates have been particularly astute in using human rights–based approaches to "tap into the powerful, judicial monitoring and enforceability mechanisms that make up international human rights" (Reubi 2012, 8). Via official

and shadow reports from civil society groups to treaty bodies such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Calderón Torreblanca cited in his intervention in the Mexican Congress, states can be pressured to take action on tobacco control, including via litigation. By connecting efforts to close the sugar gap in Mexico to a broader international project of achieving tobacco control via human rights–based approaches, diputados drew on and effectively created a new relationship between the country's contested sugar tax and the case for states to protect and promote public health, even at the expense of particular industrial sectors.

These enrolling moves illuminate how marketization can emerge via resistance. The human rights case for the sugar tax sought to undermine corporate power by advancing a particular normative imaginary of how Mexican citizens should be "defended." Using a human rights framework is unlikely to go far enough, though, to tackle deep-seated problems in any society without additional far-reaching changes because overarching neoliberal principles governing contemporary societies mean that the human rights obligations of states will only ever lead to "cost-effective" forms of enforcement (Odysseos 2010). As such, calls for sugar taxes might originate from individuals and groups with a strong commitment to social justice, but they must be advanced via marketization. The enrolling moves used by Mexican politicians argued that drinks producers such as Coca-Cola were, as Ramirez Nachis (CD 2015) noted, "becoming richer every day while the people of Mexico suffer"—but their participation in processes of marketization meant their proposals for altering the Mexican foodscape were aligned with the overarching mentalities of a neoliberalizing society.

Conclusion

Some "foodscapes of hope" (Morgan 2015a) will emerge via grassroots action beyond the state. Others, however, take shape via forms of debate and deliberation in the political sphere, especially when they explicitly seek to alter extant market arrangements. As the Mexican case demonstrates, then, introducing a new sin tax can yield foodscapes of hope because it occurs despite significant corporate opposition and suggests that governments might begin to place a higher value on the health of citizens. A key dynamic in this crucial theater in the sugar wars, however, has involved performing the economy amidst ongoing processes of marketization. In this instance, therefore, an effect of "resistance" has been to make the market. Moreover, as demonstrated by the preceding analysis of the political debates "staged at the front of house" (Morris 2016, 249), this instance of marketization has required navigating the spatial constitution of the economy. The "mutual organization" (Callon 2010) of the economic and the political lends processes of marketization a geographical character that deserves critical scrutiny: Butler and Callon's (implicitly) underspatialized theory of performativity downplays the forces and interests in play. Adjusting the market necessarily produces new spatial effects, which political debates illuminate when speakers give voice to the contingent pulses emerging from the design or use enrolling moves to maintain the market. In other words, the "iterability" (Butler 2010) and performativity embedded in processes of marketization is inherently spatialized.

Space, markets, and resistance are bound up with one another in complex interassociations. Much as critical social theorists today might like to move beyond the market and discover "alternative" social formations (Gibson-Graham 2006), the "mutual organization" of the economic and the political engenders a performative "iterability" that seems to make escape unlikely. In fact, the Gordian knot of contemporary society is that neoliberal ideas and practices are so deeply embedded that notions of escape are utopian. Without dramatic ruptures, which cannot be ruled out given the geopolitical instability we currently encounter, it seems hard to avoid the conclusion not only that an effect of resistance today can be to make the market but also that resistance (against corporate dominance of the foodscape, say, or against financialization of the city) will need to continue embracing the market. This could be an unsettling conclusion with significance for geographical research on "resistance," which is undoubtedly one of the core concerns among "critical" scholars in the discipline. When altering the market is considered to be the most viable (or pragmatic) option to address social ills, resistance that explicitly looks to adjust the market, rather than only imagining life beyond it, enrolls activists and campaigners in processes of marketization. Perhaps one underlying reason why neoliberalism thrives, albeit in its crisis-prone state, is precisely because resistance makes the market. Political action always articulates and is realigned with respect to a disorderly, contested, contradictory social field (Clarke 2008). The "turbulence of the social" (Clarke 2008, 143) affords the same market relations promoted by the neoliberal project an ability to align or fit with respect to a vast

array of social questions, which enables neoliberal ideas to coexist with other ways of understanding society. In turn, perhaps the frontiers of intellectual deliberation on alternative social formations should engage explicitly the full significance and possibly even the potential of market relations. This possibility raises an analytical task that critical geographers are well placed to meet. At issue is the need to learn more about how the economy is performed spatially via marketization (including marketization emerging from "resistance"), while trying to retain a critical stance on society; for example, by trying to identify openings or shortcuts in and from which actors might create life beyond the market.

Acknowledgments

The bulk of this research was conducted during a sabbatical spell in Mexico. I give special thanks to Álvaro López López and María del Carmen Juárez Gutiérrez for their support during that time and for offering me space to write in the Instituto de Geografía, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. I also thank Vicente Ugalde and Veronica Crossa for research support and advice during that time and extend thanks to Nik Heynen and the anonymous reviewers for providing suggestions to strengthen this article. Finally, I thank Nancy Ettlinger for making critical but helpful suggestions early on in this process. Of course, any errors in this article are my responsibility.

Notes

1. Although commonly viewed as a clearly defined medical term, I retain inverted commas around "obesity" throughout this article to denote its contested, politicized nature (e.g., see Guthman 2012).
2. I use the term *foodscapes* as a way to imagine the places and spaces produced and connected together with diverse subjects to make food consumption possible. Elsewhere in geography, scholars have argued that foodscapes are constituted by "processes, politics, spaces, and places ... produced in and through the provisioning of food" (Goodman et al. 2010, 1783) or that foodscapes are "a social construction that captures and constitutes cultural ideals of how food relates to specific places, people and food systems [which can] variously capture or obscure the ecological sites and social relations of food production, consumption, and distribution" (Johnston, Biro, and MacKendrick 2009, 512–13).
3. Although I occasionally requested some assistance from a native Spanish speaker, I completed translations of the following statements from the Spanish language to English and I accept responsibility for any errors.
4. Much like other urban governments tackling societal problems only when they appear, because they cannot tackle their causes, Mexico City resembles a "responsibilized city": a city trying to assume responsibility for something it is ultimately unlikely to influence, much as has been the critique of schools trying in vain to take responsibility for "obesity" programs (Gibson and Dempsey 2015).
5. Other evidence available at the time suggested that the tax had contributed to a drop in consumption of certain food and drinks products by up to 8 percent (Colchero et al. 2015).

References

Agren, D. 2015. Mexico's congress accused of caving to soda pop industry in tax cut plan. *The Guardian*, October 19. Accessed May 12, 2016. http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/oct/19/mexico-soda-tax-cut-pop-fizzy-drinks.

Aguilar-Rivera, N., D. A. Rodriguez, V. Enriquez, A. Castillo, A. Herrera. 2012. The Mexican sugarcane industry: Overview, constraints, current status and long-term trends. *Sugar Tech* 14 (3):207–22.

American Heart Association. 2009. Dietary sugars intake and cardiovascular health: A scientific statement from the American Heart Association. Accessed January 22, 2016. http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/reprint/CIRCULATIONAHA.109.192627.

Amsden, A. H. 1989. *Asia's next giant: South Korea and late industrialization*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Barquera, S., F. Campirano, A. Bonvecchio, L. Hernandez-Barrera, J. A. Rivera, and B. M. Popkin. 2010. Caloric beverage consumption patterns in Mexican children. *Nutrition Journal* 9:47.

Barquera, S., I. Campos-Nonato, C. Aguilar-Salinas, R. Lopez-Ridaura, A. Arrendondo, and J. Rivera-Dommarco. 2013. Diabetes in Mexico: Cost and management of diabetes and its complications and challenges for health policy. *Globalization & Health* 9:3.

Bezner-Kerr, R. 2010. Unearthing the cultural & material struggles over seed in Malawi. In *Food sovereignty: Reconnecting food, nature & community*, ed. H. Wittman, A. A. Desmarais, and N. Wiebe, 134–51. Oxford, UK: Pambazuka.

Bittman, M. 2013. AViva México! *New York Times*, November 29. Accessed May 17, 2017. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/30/opinion/sunday/bittman-viva-mexico.html.

Booth, W. J. 2011. "From this far place": On justice and absence. *American Political Science Review* 105:750–64.

Brown, W. 2015. *Undoing the demos*. New York: Zone Books.

Butler, J. 2010. Performative agency. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 3 (2):147–61.

Çalışkan, K., and M. Callon. 2010. Economization, part 2: A research programme for the study of markets. *Economy and Society* 39 (1):1–32.

Callon, M. 2010. Performativity, misfires and politics. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 3 (2):163–69.

Camara de Diputados [Chamber of Deputies]. 2013. Diario de los debates [Diary of the debates]. October 17. Accessed June 17, 2016. http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/DDebates/62/2do/1P/Ord/oct/01L62A2P123.html.

———. 2015. Diario de los debates [Diary of the debates]. October 19. Accessed June 17, 2016. http://cronica.diputados.gob.mx/DDebates/63/1er/1P/Ord/oct/01L63A1P117.html.

Chollett, D. L. 2009. From sugar to blackberries restructuring agro-export production in Michoacán, Mexico. *Latin American Perspectives* 36 (3):79–92.

Clarke, J. 2008. Living with/in and without neo-liberalism. *Focaal* 51:135–47.

Cohen, R. 2013. Sugar love (a not so sweet story). *National Geographic*, August. Accessed May 6, 2016. http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/08/sugar/cohen-text.

Colchero, M. A., B. M. Popkin, J. A. Rivera, and S. W. Ng. 2016. Beverage purchases from stores in Mexico under the excise tax on sugar sweetened beverages: Observational study. *BMJ* 352.

Colchero, M. A., J. C. Salgado, M. Unar-Munguía, M. Molina, S. Ng, and J. A. Rivera-Dommarco. 2015. Changes in prices after an excise tax to sugar sweetened beverages was implemented in Mexico: Evidence from urban areas. *PLoS ONE* 10 (2):e0144408.

Donaldson, E. 2015. *Advocating for a sugar-sweetened beverage tax: A case study of Mexico*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Eakin, H., J. C. Bausch, and S. Sweeney. 2014. Agrarian winners of neoliberal reform: The "maize boom" of Sinaloa, Mexico. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 14 (1):26–51.

Friedmann, H., and A. McNair. 2008. Whose rules rule? Contested projects to certify "local production for distant consumers." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8 (2–3):408–34.

Galvan-Miyoshi, Y., R. Walker, and B. Warf. 2015. Land change regimes and the evolution of the maize–cattle complex in neoliberal Mexico. *Land* 4 (3):754–77.

Gibson, K. E., and S. E. Dempsey. 2015. Make good choices, kid: Biopolitics of children's bodies and school lunch reform in Jamie Oliver's food revolution. *Children's Geographies* 13 (1):44–58.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2006. *A postcapitalist politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Glasgow, S., and T. Schrecker. 2015. The double burden of neoliberalism? Noncommunicable disease policies and the global political economy of risk. *Health & Place* 34:279–86.

Goodman, M. K., D. Maye, and L. Holloway. 2010. Ethical foodscapes?: Premises, promises, and possibilities. *Environment and Planning A* 42:1782–96.

Grover, E. 2015. UK must act on global sugar trade problems after EU policy change, new report claims. Accessed May 17, 2017. http://www.city.ac.uk/news/2015/june/food-research-collaboration-sugar-report.

Guthman, J. 2012. Opening up the black box of the body in geographical obesity research: Toward a critical political ecology of fat. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102 (5):951–57.

———. 2015. Binging and purging: Agrofood capitalism and the body as socioecological fix. *Environment and Planning A* 47:2522–36.

Guthman, J., and M. DuPuis. 2006. Embodying neoliberalism: Economy, culture, and the politics of fat. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (3):427–48.

Jimenez, M. A. 2016. Ayotzinapa 43: The criminal corruption of the Mexican state. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 48 (2):119–22.

Johnston, J., A. Biro, and N. MacKendrick. 2009. Lost in the supermarket: The corporate-organic foodscape and the struggle for food democracy. *Antipode* 41:509–32.

Mansfield, B., and J. Guthman. 2015. Epigenetic life: Biological plasticity, abnormality, and new configurations of race and reproduction. *Cultural Geographies* 22 (1):3–20.

Monteiro, C. A., G. Cannon, J. C. Moubarac, A. P. Martins, J. Garzillo, D. S. Canella, L. G. Baraldi, et al. 2015. Dietary guidelines to nourish humanity and the planet in the twenty-first century: A blueprint from Brazil. *Public Health Nutrition* 18 (13):2311–22.

Monteiro, C. A., J. C. Moubarac, G. Cannon, S. W. Ng, and B. Popkin. 2013. Ultra-processed products are becoming dominant in the global food system. *Obesity Reviews* 14 (Suppl. 2):21–28.

Moodie, R., D. Stuckler, C. Monteiro, N. Sheron, B. Neal, T. Thamarangsi, P. Lincoln, and S. Casswell. 2013. Profits and pandemics: Prevention of harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol, and ultra-processed food and drink industries. *Lancet* 381:670–79.

Moore, J. W. 2011. Transcending the metabolic rift: A theory of crises in the capitalist world ecology. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (1):1–46.

Morgan, K. 2015a. The moral economy of food. *Geoforum* 65:294–96.

———. 2015b. Nourishing the city: The rise of the urban food question in the Global North. *Urban Studies* 52 (8):1379–94.

Morris, J. H. 2016. The performativity, performance and lively practices in financial stability press conferences. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 9 (3):245–60.

Moss, M. 2013. *Salt, sugar, fat: How the food giants hooked us*. London: W. H. Allen.

National Cancer Institute. 2008. Usual dietary intakes: Food intakes, U.S. population, 2001–04. Accessed April 25, 2016. http://epi.grants.cancer.gov/diet/usualintakes/pop/2001-04/.

———. 2015. Usual dietary intakes: Food intakes, U.S. population, 2007–10. Accessed April 25, 2016. http://epi.grants.cancer.gov/diet/usualintakes/pop/2007-10/.

Nestle, M. 2015. *Soda politics*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Odysseos, L. 2010. Human rights, liberal ontogenesis and freedom: Producing a subject for neoliberalism? *Millennium* 38 (3):747–72.

O'Hara, L., and J. Gregg. 2012. Human rights casualties from the "war on obesity": Why focusing on body weight is inconsistent with a human rights approach to health. *Fat Studies* 1 (1):32–46.

Parker, G. 2014. Mothers at large: Responsibilizing the pregnant self for the "obesity epidemic." *Fat Studies* 3 (2):101–18.
Popke, J., and R. M. Torres. 2013. Neoliberalization, transnational migration, and the varied landscape of economic subjectivity in the Totonacapan region of Veracruz. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 103 (1):211–29.
Rail, G. 2012. The birth of the obesity clinic: Confessions of the flesh, biopedagogies and physical culture. *Sociology of Sport Medicine* 29:227–53.
Reubi, D. 2012. Making a human right to tobacco control: Expert and advocacy networks, framing and the right to health. *Global Public Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice* 7 (Suppl. 2): S176–90.
———. 2013. Health economists, tobacco control and international development: On the economisation of global health beyond neoliberal structural adjustment policies. *BioSocieties* 8:205–28.
———. 2016. Modernisation, smoking and chronic disease: Of temporality and spatiality in global health. *Health & Place* 39:188–95.
Richardson, B. 2016. Sugar shift: Six ideas for a healthier and fairer food system. Accessed May 4, 2017. http://foodresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Ben-Richardson-Sugar-Shift-briefing-paper-FRC.pdf.
Robinson, J. 2002. Global and world cities: A view from off the map. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26 (3):531–44.
Roy, A. 2009. The 21st-century metropolis: New geographies of theory. *Regional Studies* 43 (6):819–30.
Ruddick, G. 2016. Drinks makers consider legal action against sugar tax. *The Guardian*, March 20. Accessed May 5, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/mar/20/drinks-makers-consider-legal-action-against-sugar-tax-budget.
Sanger-Katz, M. 2016. Soda tax passes in Philadelphia. Advocates ask: Who's next? *New York Times*, June 16. Accessed June 17, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/17/upshot/soda-tax-passes-in-philadelphia-advocates-ask-whos-next.html?_r = 0.
Schoen, V., and T. Lang. 2015. Should the UK be concerned about sugar? Accessed May 17, 2017. http://foodresearch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Sugar-policy.pdf.
Senado de la República [Senate of the Republic]. 2015. Versión estenográfica [Stenographic version]. October 28. Accessed June 17, 2016. http://infosen.senado.gob.mx/documentos/estenografias/vi/63/1/PPO/Version_No22_SO_28_Oct_2015.pdf.
Shamir, R. 2008. The age of responsibilization: On market embedded morality. *Economy and Society* 37 (1):1–19.
Sheppard, E. 2016. *Limits to globalization*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Soederberg, S. 2012. The Mexican debtfare state: Dispossession, micro-lending, and the surplus population. *Globalizations* 9 (4):561–75.
Sonnino, R. 2016. The new geography of food security: Exploring the potential of urban food strategies. *The Geographical Journal* 182:190–200.
Studdert, D. M., J. Flanders, and M. M. Mello. 2015. Searching for public health law's sweet spot: The regulation of sugar-sweetened beverages. *PLoS Med* 12 (7):e1001848.
Swinburn, B. 2015. Letter to Mexican senators. Accessed May 5, 2016. http://www.worldobesity.org/site_media/uploads/World_Obesity_letter_Mexico_final2.pdf.
Tornaghi, C. 2017. Urban agriculture in the food-disabling city: (Re)defining urban food justice, reimagining a politics of empowerment. *Antipode* 49 (3):781–801.
U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2016. *Sugar and sweeteners yearbook tables*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture. Accessed May 17, 2017. https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/sugar-and-sweeteners-yearbook-tables/sugar-and-sweeteners-yearbook-tables/.
Williams, R. 1983. *Towards 2000*. London: Chatto and Windus.
Wilson, J., and E. Swyngedouw. eds. 2015. *The post-political and its discontents*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.
World Health Organization. 2015a. Consumption of ultra-processed food and drink products in Latin America: Trends, impact on obesity, and policy implications. Accessed April 25, 2016. http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11180%3Aultraprocessedfoods&Itemid=1926&lang=en.
———. 2015b. Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children. Accessed April 25, 2016. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/149782/1/9789241549028_eng.pdf?ua=1.

ALISTAIR FRASER is a Lecturer in the Department of Geography, Maynooth University, Maynooth, Ireland. E-mail: alistair.fraser@mu.ie. His research, which cuts across political, economic, and cultural geography, includes the struggle for land in South Africa, rural change generally, and foodscapes.