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"Disciplining Nature: The Homogenising and Constraining Forces of Anti-Markets on the Food System"

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To understand the changing patterns within agriculture, it is important to look not only at social relations and organisational configurations. Also salient to such an analysis is an examination of how those formations give shape to non-humans. Much attention has been placed recently on the political economy of agriculture when speaking of these emergent patterns. Yet in doing this, the natural environment is all too often relegated to the backdrop; where the agro-economy is viewed as something that manoeuvres within the environment but never through it. The conceptual groundwork for this paper draws from two often unconnected scholars: Michel Foucault and Fernand Braudel. In Foucault, we find a framework, with a little conceptual development, through which to talk about how the economy (of both discipline and capital) enters into nature. Specifically, the argument is made that through the embodiment of discipline, nature too becomes disciplined. Yet in Foucault we find a discursive conception of socio-economic history; where capitalism is discussed, but always as an effect of the discursive structures of power/knowledge. Enter the work of Braudel, to provide us with a materialist counterweight to Foucault's theorising. In Braudel, we find a detailed analysis on the emergence of capitalism, out of which then comes his distinction between markets and anti-markets. In short, when both accounts of history are overlaid, interesting connections between the emergence of Braudelian anti-markets and Foucaultian discipline are revealed. Two brief case studies are then examined to add further depth to the discussion: the first focusing on corn; the second centring on the cow. The paper then concludes speaking on the issue of resistance.

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