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The Contradictions of Neoliberal Agri-Food: Corporations, Resistance, and Disasters in Japan, by **Kae Sekine** and **Alessandro Bonanno**. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2016. 240 pp. \$32.99 paper. ISBN: 9781943665198.

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Kae Sekine and Alessandro Bonanno's *The Contradictions of Neoliberal Agri-Food: Corporations, Resistance, and Disasters in Japan* offers a sociological analysis of contemporary agri-food system change across Japan. Such a national portrait of agri-food system change is a welcome intervention in the English-medium literature on Japan and in agriculture and food studies more generally. More country-based case studies of system-wide change like this book would contribute to our understanding of neoliberalism and the global food system. And this book has the added advantage of being designed as a teaching resource: Many of the short chapters stand alone analytically and would be fitting for undergraduate coursework on neoliberalism, agriculture and food, and area studies (East Asia).

The Contradictions of Neoliberal Agri-Food offers a long view of processes of neoliberalization, detailing two important shifts in the agri-food sector in Japan. The first shift was from what the authors refer to as post-Second World War High Fordism to neoliberalism (beginning roughly in the 1970s). The second shift was from neoliberalism to the post-2011 East Japan Disaster reconstruction era.

In many ways, the first epochal shift is a familiar story of agri-food restructuring in the industrialized world, if not throughout many parts of the indebted world, since the 1970s. The Fordist era was one of rapid industrialization and economic growth fueled by family farms producing food for urban centers (via land reforms) and rural areas supplying a low-wage industrial labor force (via rural outmigration). Under processes of neoliberalization, family farming was greatly undermined: the number of farms declined from 3.8 million in 1990 to 2.5 million in 2010 (p. 56), and, concomitantly, farmland was consolidated, with the top 1 percent of all farms occupying 26.2 percent of total farmland in 2010 (p. 60). The presence of corporations in the agri-food sector grew: for example, corporations directly investing in farmland rose from 71 in 2004 to 436 in 2010 (p. 61). Of the family farms that have remained, a growing number have become part-time farms; and the farming population has aged, as "inadequate and declining farm income pushed farmers out of the sector" (p. 56). Coastal fishing remains in the hands of family-owned operations, but corporations now dominate deep-sea fishing.

The policy response to the East Japan Disaster of 2011 deepened and accelerated the privatization and liberalization of farming and fishing. Neoliberal proponents and their corporate partners (Japanese and TNCs) implemented the Shock Doctrine (Klein 2007) in the wake of the crisis. When communities and local institutions devastated by the disaster were least prepared to defend their rights to land, fisheries, and other resources, the central government passed the Basic Act on Reconstruction and a new act concerning the establishment of SZRs, or areas designed for corporate investment (similar to special economic zones). Both these policies had the intent and effect of increasing the corporate market share in agriculture and food.

Case studies of corporate actors and communities offered throughout the book are useful for illustrating processes of neoliberalization in agriculture and food. The case studies of four corporations (in Chapters 4 and 5) complicate the picture of corporations' entry

into the agri-food sector. Corporations didn't just gain leasehold rights over farmland, but entered the sector through contracting arrangements with farmers. As the case study of Dole Japan shows (in Chapter 5), the hypermobility of capital led to rapid construction and destruction (i.e., the setting up and closing of farms); and the corporate model relied on a part-time, contingent female labor force. A conclusion from these case studies is that the promises of rural community development through large-scale private investments in farming were not realized.

Of the two historical moments in agri-food system change that the book captures, the account of the shift from neoliberalism to reconstruction is more compelling. Sekine and Bonanno choose contrasting case studies (Chapters 6 and 7), which lends nuance to the analysis of a rather contested process. Also, most of the field research that the author/s conducted was in the communities undergoing reconstruction.

The most revealing of the case studies are in the fishery reconstruction areas in Miyagi and Iwate prefectures, two of the most heavily damaged in the 2011 earthquake/tsunami/nuclear meltdown (Chapter 7). In Miyagi the governor promoted the creation of a SZR for coastal areas, which would undermine the local fishing cooperatives' exclusive fishing rights. This policy engendered both tacit and organized opposition among fishermen, cooperatives, and others. The opposition did not stop the creation of the SZR, but it did channel corporate entry into fishing through the cooperatives.

In contrast, in Iwate the government decided not to go along with the central government's reconstruction plan and instead prioritized policies that would recover the family-based systems of fishing. The authors contend that the contrasting reconstruction approaches in the two prefectures are a result of the different ways in which the prefectures are integrated into the larger national economy. But it remains unclear why and how the prefecture of Miyagi was connected economically to major markets and Iwate was not.

A more systemic analytical shortcoming is the perspective of resistance as solely a response to processes of neoliberalization. The Fordist regime was slowly and unevenly

chipped away at (Chapter 2), and a question to ask is, "What role did political opposition and resistance play in this process?" Resistance to neoliberalism is mentioned only after the culmination of neoliberal measures in 2002, which paved the way for the corporate entry in farming. By analyzing resistance as a consequence of, rather than co-constitutive of, processes of neoliberalization, there are missed opportunities throughout this book to make more explicit connections between various forms of resistance and the trajectory, scope, and speed of these processes.

Overall, the book has analytical shortcomings. And theoretically it offers few insights into agri-food system change. How Japan is integrated into the world economy, and the country's political and diplomatic power in trade and other relations, remain opaque. Consequently, from this account it is quite easy to view Japan as a developing, indebted country subject to the whims of a western neoliberal order. And yet, Japan's position surely differs.

Moreover, the notion of a western neoliberal order being imposed on Japan animates the book's primary thesis of a fundamental socioeconomic and cultural incompatibility between neoliberalism and Japanese farming and fishing. This thesis is a gross understatement: neoliberalism comes up against the public sphere, against unpaid reproductive work, against environmental stewardship, and on and on. Worse, the flip side of the thesis can be used to explain the lack of modernization in farming by the inability of "cultural patterns" to change (p. 199). Such an argument confuses resistance to attacks on social protections (over access to livelihood resources, citizenship rights, safety nets, etc.) with a kind of obstinacy on the part of family farmers and fisherfolk toward cultural change.

Despite these analytical and theoretical weaknesses, *The Contradictions of Neoliberal Agri-Food* succeeds in demonstrating that "the implementation of Neoliberalism resulted in the [agri-food] sector's economic decline and the emergence of social tension, local dissatisfaction, and opposition" (p. 173). This book could be an effective tool for teaching the dynamics and consequences of neoliberal agri-food and of neoliberalism in Japan.

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Scenescapes: How Qualities of Place Shape Social Life, by **Daniel Aaron Silver** and **Terry Nichols Clark**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016. 441 pp. \$37.50 paper. ISBN: 9780226356990.

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Daniel Aaron Silver and Terry Nichols Clark embark on an ambitious project in their guide to the study of scenes in *Scenescapes: How Qualities of Place Shape Social Life*. Cities have been reimaged as part of a renaissance of economic growth in terms of their allure in a global marketplace of urban imaginaries. The authors explain how scenes and consumption in scenes shape economic development, residency flows, and politics. With an analysis of cities from all over the world, down to their ZIP code data, Silver and Clark give urban planners and cultural analysts myriad tools for reflecting on how place informs us about where to live and work and how to best organize our communities.

Their goal is multifold; one overarching ambition is to “show how access to scenes empowers people to improve their lives” (p. 135). Three factors—the rise of arts and culture, the rediscovery of the urbane, and the rise of a new political culture—give rise to scene effects in contemporary cities. The urbane—“what kind of place enables me to pursue a life deemed worthy, interesting, beautiful, and authentic”—illustrates how cultural branding and place identity become crucial (Harvey 1989).

Another goal is to move from the literature on the concept of a “scene” to a general theory and practical methodology to study the relationship between certain amenities and lived meaning in place. They aim to bridge the gap between qualitative studies of authenticity in place with the quantitative tools of inferential statistics and the covariance of factors such as self-expression, glamour, charisma, and proximity effects or age.

The social attributes particular to a scene are composed of specific, emplaced tenets of value. In the post-industrial landscape of cities, cultural categories, such as “scenes,” take on a more prominent role in demarcating inclusion, group membership, and the identity politics of power. Consumption and lifestyle are overtaking production and identity essentialisms in many people’s lives, and this can be complementary to traditional macro-social dynamics. Scenes, and their dimensions of aesthetic styles of living, represent the character of enclaves that attract residents and fuel power in new political formations in cities. In referring to the phenomenon of the big sort, social clustering has led to these new social formations, and as such, they must be studied with a new lens.

Theoretically, the authors suggest that David Ricardo and Alfred Marshall have something to offer concerning the value of land itself in a society that has shifted from production relationships toward the valorization of place. They suggest that Marx, through positing a dialectical relationship between labor and capital, covers over the lasting persistence of the living agency of soil and place in the categorization of value. Contemporary Marxist geographer David Harvey supports their contention that land value plays an independent role in valorizing place.

The philosophical basis for the book is the aesthetic disposition of place. This dimension is brought forth through the use of Kantian notions of categories of judgment and Gestalt theory. The idea that the object world of places informs one’s dispositions (“affordances”) is an important contribution to theory on the cultural effect of place. The authors could have gone a step further to include Actor Network Theory and the aesthetic potential of things on action, but the way they assert that a situated gestural economy of action varies along the lines of aesthetic scenes is a strong one.

It is in this way that they conceptualize their idea of a *New Chicago School* that is both ecological and place based but based on amenities and aesthetics. The broad brush with which they paint scenes is a useful one; for instance, they don’t relegate