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The agrifood question and rural development dynamics in Brazil and China: towards a protective 'countermovement'

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores some features of the development paths taken by Brazil and China (two member countries of the BRICS grouping) in the current context of the crisis of neoliberal globalization and transformation of the political and economic world order. The authors use Polanyi's 'double movement' thesis to argue that newly emerging rural development (RD) dynamics in China and Brazil are part of a protective 'countermovement', driven by actors and institutions responding to the contradictions of the concentration and internationalization of agrifood systems. However, the *direction* and scope of these countermovements are still open; their transformative potential should be viewed in Gramsci's terms as a struggle for hegemony the outcome of which depends on the concrete 'balance of social forces'. First, the paper characterizes the impacts of China's rise on Brazil's development, which subsequently found its economy under threat of reprimarization and deindustrialization. The paper then sketches some stylized facts of production and consumption within the Brazil–China soy–meat complex, a key element of the current global food regime, with a focus on corporate control of the soy–meat value chain, and its negative consequences. Finally, the paper identifies the key roles that actors and institutions linked to peasants and family farmers are playing in the RD dynamics of each country. Although China and Brazil represent two very different realities, the comparison shows that critical rural and agrifood issues are indeed moving onto the centre stage of the contemporary 'double movement'.

KEYWORDS

Brazil–China soy–meat complex; rural policies; farming practices; production–consumption relations

Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that the rise of China as a great power has had enormous impacts on the contemporary economic and political world order. Especially, since the 2008 financial crisis unfolded into a 'great recession', a new context seems to be emerging, one in which some countries from the Global South are leaving behind their historically peripheral condition and beginning to play a more significant role in the dynamics of global capitalism. This has led to increasing academic and social interest in the recent trajectories of countries expected to become the new economic powers of the twenty-first century, including those in the so-called BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

A number of authors have suggested the value of returning to the works of Karl Polanyi (1977, 2000) to understand these developments. His most famous book, *The Great Transformation*

(Polanyi, 2000), analysed the rise and fall of the late nineteenth century liberal world order in which the whole economy and society were subordinated to a system of self-regulating markets built upon the institution of the gold standard as well as British hegemony. Recent analyses point out the relevance of considering the critical moments of neoliberal globalization and US hegemony as a contemporary rerun of Polanyi's 'great transformation' (Arrighi & Silver, 2003; Burawoy, 2003; Evans, 2008; Levien & Paret, 2013; Schneider & Escher, 2011; Somers & Block, 2005). Central to these arguments is the Polanyian thesis of a 'double movement' inherent in the contradictory dynamics of capitalism. On the one hand, there is a movement of disembedding the markets from public regulation and social controls through legislative and institutional changes that commoditize labour, land, and money (which Polanyi calls 'fictitious commodities'), leading to destructive consequences and threats to the livelihoods of people, the natural environment and resources, as well as changes in the organization of economic activities.

On the other hand, there is a countermovement for social and economic protection of those affected by the commodification process. Here social actors engage in collective actions to struggle against the assaults of this 'satanic mill' and advocate for public intervention to circumscribe the power of markets, perhaps leading to the re-embedding of the substantive economy. However, all these authors state, in a more or less explicit manner, that the countermovement should not be viewed as a spontaneous and semi-automatic reaction to the contradictions of self-regulating markets, but as a dialectical process involving power relations and institutional mediations. From this angle, the actors, meanings, and potential outcomes of the countermovements must be evaluated, according to Gramsci's (2002) view, as a struggle for hegemony, since they depend on realization of the concrete 'correlation of forces'.

In the international literature on agrarian political economy and development studies, some authors have placed at the centre stage of the contemporary double movement the relationship between the globalization of developing countries' agrifood systems, led by large agribusiness transnational corporations, or 'food empires' (Friedmann, 2009; McMichael, 2013; Ploeg, 2008; Wilkinson, 2009), and new rural development (RD) dynamics emerging in response to its deleterious effects (Hebinck, Ploeg, & Schneider, 2015; Ploeg, Ye, & Schneider, 2012). In relation to Brazil and China, as well as several European countries, it has been argued that the new RD dynamics currently under way involve the re-alignment of agriculture to nature and society to create new foundations for food production, distribution, and consumption. This represents a counter-hegemonic expression of resistance, resilience, and autonomy of peasants and family farmers, supported by the organizations of strategic political allies (consumers, intellectuals, and policy-makers). In this view, RD is seen as part of a 'countermovement' of actors and institutions in response and reaction to what economists call 'market failure' – in other words, the contradictions and consequences of liberalized and globalized agrifood systems (Ploeg, 2011; Ploeg, Ye, & Schneider, 2010, 2012; Ventura & Ploeg, 2010).

Why are discussions on food and RD taking place in Brazil and China at the same time? How are the relations between these countries shaping the transformations of their agrifood systems? To what extent does the role played by different social actors and institutions in the new RD dynamics currently emerging in both countries allow us to interpret this as part of a Polanyian 'countermovement'? The authors discuss these questions in both countries over the same period – from the mid-1990s, with the consolidation of a market economy in China after the Tiananmen Square protests, and the consolidation of neoliberalism in Brazil after the victory of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, to the present. In the mid-1990s, the effects of globalization began to emerge clearly in both economies, laying the bases for subsequent internationalization of key actors in the agrifood systems

of Brazil and China. This is also the point at which new rural livelihood strategies, social practices, and organizational initiatives began to emerge from peasants and farmers themselves, and the point at which new specialized state institutions and policies came into being.

Burawoy (2003) offers a framework for institutional analysis derived from a synthesis of Gramsci and Polanyi. This approach might be useful for examining how key actors engage with each other and the institutions that surround them to produce structural changes across the state, markets, and society. From this perspective, the concept of 'society' assumes both historical specificity and theoretical generality, as it places actors and institutions at the core of the balance of social forces in the struggle for hegemony. While 'civil society' (Gramsci) or 'society as a whole' (Polanyi) reflects the crises and contradictions of capitalism, it is also the terrain of its transcendence. Any process of progressive social change and development triggered by a countermovement necessarily requires interactions between the social actors (society) mediated by the institutions constituted in the spheres of politics (states) and economy (markets). As the historical process evolves, the habitual attitudes of the actors change in response to the changes in institutions, and the determinants of the existing social structures are fully reproduced, partially modified, or radically transformed.

Although Polanyi (2000) had a limited understanding of capitalist hegemony based in the realm of production when compared to Gramsci (2002), he was nonetheless able to understand that the awareness of broader societal interests has its *focus* in the lived experiences shared by people, and that the *locus* of transformative potential resides in the realm of circulation, in the perception that turning livelihoods, public services, and social rights into commodities is destructive. The politicization of circulation and consumption thus provides transformational potential to the universal experience of markets under capitalism, and creates the social foundations for counter-hegemonic movements. Avoiding economic reductionism, progressive social change is seen as a political project, which further depends on the realization of actors' ideas, practices, and struggles to subordinate the economy to 'self-regulating society'. However, this is not to say that the politics of production does not matter. Rather, the point is that the realms of circulation and consumption *also* matter. Concretely, both realms represent two distinct political 'moments' of the hegemonic struggles, and one can strengthen the other.

This paper is structured into four sections. The introduction provides the background. The second section briefly assesses the economic challenges that the rise of China poses for Brazil, given recent trends of trade and investment. The third section, subdivided in two, firstly provides a comparative institutional analysis of Brazil and China, with a focus on critical agrifood and rural questions: the formation of a soy–meat complex linking the restructuring of their respective agrifood systems, in respect of both production and consumption; and secondly, discusses the active role of actors and institutions linked to peasants and family farmers in the newly emerging RD dynamics in both countries. The fourth section synthesizes the discussion and provides concluding remarks.

The rise of China and its implications for Brazil

The trajectory of rapid economic growth and development in China over the past 30 years is a most remarkable demonstration of the dynamic nature of capitalism in the age of 'globalization', as well as of the restructuring that China's rise has caused in the dynamics of the world economy. The resurgence of China in the contemporary era coincides with the collapse of 'real socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe, which buried the bipolar order of the Cold War, and with the reassertion of the hegemony of the United States, which marked the rise of neoliberalism. If these dramatic late

twentieth century events mean that China has embraced globalization, this embrace should not be confused with an unrestricted adherence to neoliberal principles, as Harvey seems to suggest (2005). Nor does China's rise to the status of a great economic power seem to be determined solely by the secular and exogenous macro-structural factors identified by Arrighi (2010), as the systemic cycles of accumulation of wealth and power and the corresponding hegemonic transitions show. It is reasonable to assume that the changing geopolitical context, particularly in relation to institutional configurations and an assertive strategy of state-led development, all played important roles in China's economic trajectory.

When critical voices against neoliberalism began to emerge, Ramo (2004) provocatively proposed the possible replacement of the hegemonic 'Washington Consensus' by an alternative 'Beijing Consensus' (BC). Zhao (2010) argued that whether Ramo's notion of BC and the different uses people make of it are accurate or not, or whether and when China will replace the Western model of modernization and appropriate economic and political hegemony from the US, the 'China model'¹ of state-led economic reforms with limited political reforms has indeed gained ground in many developing countries. Meanwhile, with regard to China's 'going global' internationalization strategy, despite its efforts to 'grow based on the domestic market' at a time when the advanced capitalist economies are in crisis, China will probably continue to pursue two key strategies: to channel industrial exports to the markets of economies with greater potential for expanding consumption; and to redirect its flow of trade and investments to provide sources of supply for the strategic natural resources, energy, raw materials, and foodstuffs it needs (Armony & Strauss, 2012; Cunha, Lélis, & Bichara, 2012). China frames its 'going out' imperative and its 'arriving in' Latin America in terms of the complementarities and mutual benefits that can be gained through 'comparative advantages' and 'division of labour'. Particularly in the Brazilian case, the discourse emphasizes 'win-win results' and 'mutual cooperation', and a newer emerging rhetoric of global partnership based on equality, which has gained increasing legitimacy from the BRICS institutionalization process since 2009 (Strauss, 2012).

With the US having been displaced as the main centre of gravity of the world economy, the rise of China as a great power brings opportunities and challenges, uncertainties and concerns for Brazil. The data and literature indicate that Brazil is experiencing a set of contradictory impacts associated with the so-called China effect.² Direct effects are related to the bilateral flows of investment and trade. Data from the Brazil–China Entrepreneurial Council (CEBC, 2016) show that between 2007 and 2013, US\$56.5 billion of Chinese investments entered Brazil, of which US\$28.3 billion were confirmed. Between 2014 and 2015 another US\$11.4 billion arrived, of which US\$9.2 billion were confirmed. Most of these investments were in mergers and acquisitions, primarily in mining, oil and gas, and secondarily, in agribusiness. Investment in agribusiness is particularly controversial, as Chinese companies have purchased vast rural tracts of land and concerns have been expressed around concentration and 'foreignization' of land ownership in a context of 'global land-grabbing'.³

However, the main driver of Brazil–China economic relations is trade, which has grown enormously in the decade to 2015 (Figure 1). The most remarkable characteristic has been a notable change in the structure of Brazil's trade with China by value-added and technological content (Table 1). Brazil's exports are mainly primary and resource-based commodities (basically iron ores and soybeans), while its imports are predominantly manufactured goods (mostly machinery, equipment, and electronics). The balance of trade has been favourable for Brazil, with surpluses in primary products and deficits in manufactured goods.

Brazil's economic relations with China have also had a number of indirect effects linked to the terms of trade and competition in third markets. According to Demeulemeester (2012), in the period

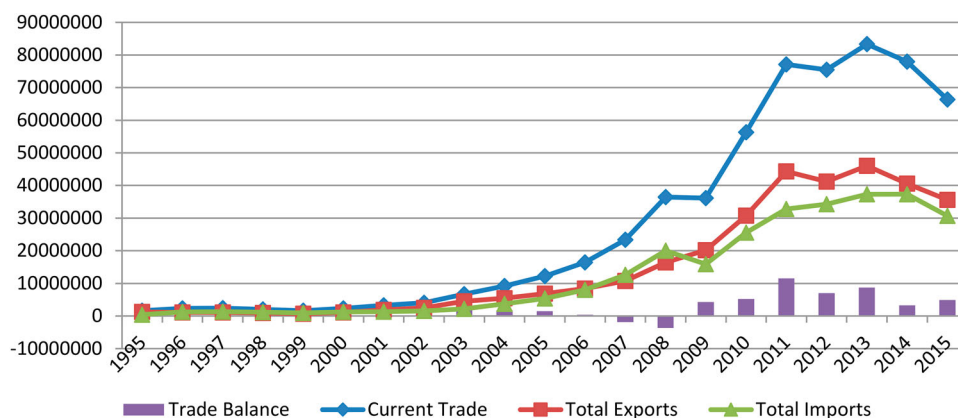


Figure 1. Bilateral trade between Brazil and China, 1995–2015 (US\$1000). Source: UNCTAD (2016).

from 2000 to 2010 between 16% and 25% of the total value of the 10 main Brazilian commodities exported are explained as the indirect effect of China's demand on prices, with a significant improvement in the terms of trade. According to Honório and Araújo (2013), the terms of trade index (the ratio between the price indexes of exports and imports), which stayed around 100 between 1999 and 2005, grew to 110 in 2009 and 130 in 2011. With this rise in the prices of its main products, Brazil benefited from exports to China, and to other markets too. However, Brazil is facing fierce competition from Chinese-manufactured goods exported to third markets. After calculating indexes for export concentration, trade complementarity, and constant market share, Demeulemeester (2012) concludes that Brazilian exports have a growing sector concentration in its main destination markets, while Chinese trade is becoming increasingly diversified; and Brazilian trade is becoming less complementary with its main partners, while the Chinese trade is becoming more complementary. Consequently, between 2002 and 2011, Brazil lost market share to China in manufactured exports to the US (−12.87%), the European Union (−5.49%), and Latin America (−7.3%).

Furthermore, these effects have cumulatively had wider consequences related to the risks of 'regressive specialization' in the production, employment, and foreign trade structures of the

Table 1. Brazil–China exports, imports, and trade balances, 2001–2015 (US\$1000).

Category of products	Exports (%)			Imports (%)			Balance (US\$1000)		
	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015	2001–2005	2006–2010	2011–2015
Primary products	37.7	42.0	49.9	3.3	1.8	2.4	7,540,394.37	34,891,449.94	99,698,285.03
Resource-based products	38.8	47.9	43.4	17.8	10.6	10.4	5,740,108.00	32,686,298.32	72,328,725.17
Low-tech manufactures	9.5	2.6	1.7	13.8	19.6	21.6	86,672.69	−13,887,787.60	−33,814,008.12
Mid-tech manufactures	11.6	5.6	3.4	21.6	26.4	32.1	−587,856.53	−16,804,389.55	−48,327,578.76
High-tech manufactures	2.3	1.8	1.5	43.5	38.7	33.4	−5,649,877.11	−30,203,506.98	−54,486,635.29
Unclassified manufactures	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	2.9	0.2	8587.06	−2,278,604.17	−5952.16
Primary products	76.5	89.9	93.4	21.0	12.4	12.7	13,280,502.36	67,577,748.27	172,027,010.20
Manufactures	23.5	10.1	6.6	79.0	87.6	87.3	−6,142,473.89	−63,174,288.30	−136,634,174.33
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	7,138,028.47	4,403,459.97	35,392,835.87

Source: UNCTAD (2016).

Brazilian economy. Despite the Chinese rhetoric of ‘mutual development’, there is growing concern in Brazil with regard to two problems: ‘reprimarization’, given the dependence on exports of agricultural and mineral commodities (now exceeding 50% of the export basket) (Branco, 2013; Delgado, 2012); and ‘deindustrialization’, apparent in the fact that since its peak, in the 1980s, the GDP share of manufacturing sector has reduced from 33% in 1980 to 16% in 2010, and the total employment share of manufacturing has fallen from 21% in 1994 to 18% in 2010 (Bresser-Pereira, 2010; Gonçalves, 2012). While one cannot blame China for Brazil’s economic problems (most of which are for domestic reasons), the deterioration of quality in their bilateral trade seems to reproduce the traditional pattern of core-periphery dynamics long criticized by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Brazil is positioning itself in a changing international order responding to the rise of China, and it faces the possibility of losing density, diversity, and complexity in its productive and export structures, as well as its capacity to generate industrial employment, innovation, and technological linkages (Cunha et al., 2012). It could be argued that the nature and character of this ‘regressive specialization’ can be partly understood as an outcome of the ‘political economy of agribusiness’ (Delgado, 2012; Ioris, 2016). This refers to a hegemonic construction anchored on a coalition of power,⁴ that articulates the agrarian bourgeoisie, as well as agro-industrial and mineral-extractive capitals, with state credit policy. This coalition sustains a pattern of capital accumulation through the extraction of economic surplus in the primary sector, pursuing the capture of land rent provided by ‘natural comparative advantage’. Competitiveness in the exploration of oil and hydropower also relies on a monopoly over natural resources, but productivity gains are mainly the result of advances in technology with strong inter-sectoral linkages, and most of the asset ownership is under public control. The acquisition of land by foreigners (the global land-grabbing) is something different (see Note 3). However, the competitiveness of agricultural and mineral commodity exports is crucially linked to the overexploitation of natural resources and the capture of land rent, capitalized in land prices and appropriated through financial speculation, with land assets held mostly by domestic corporate actors, with many negative consequences on human health and the environment, rural livelihoods, and diversification of farming.

A comparative institutional analysis of agrifood and RD dynamics in Brazil and China and the emergence of a ‘countermovement’

This section combines institutional and class analysis to compare the ‘agrifood question’ and ‘rural development dynamics’ in Brazil and China. Comparison, according to Byres (1995, p. 572), ‘can open analytical perspectives when securely based theoretically, by extending our range of criteria independent of the particular context, and so allowing theory to be more nuanced in what it can reveal’. All the BRICS countries seem to pursue a path of economic development and an international projection of their power which is strongly grounded in leadership in their respective regions, but there are significant disparities between them and unequal capacities to operate as ‘regional locomotives’, given their distinct economic dynamics (Fiori, 2007; Visentini, 2012). Regarding agrarian issues, these points are treated in papers by Sauer, Balestro, and Schneider (2017) for the case of Brazil in Latin America, and Mills (2017) for the case of China in Southeast Asia.

In the broader sociological literature, the patterns of inequality, social stratification, and class mobility within these countries are also relevant topics, with special attention to the rise of the ‘new middle classes’ and the recomposition of the working classes. Also important are the entry of working classes into consumer markets, their relations with the dominant classes, and the

repercussions of these developments on the social values and political projects that guide development trajectories in the BRICS countries (Peilin, Gorshkov, Scalon, & Sharma, 2013). Meanwhile, the recent convergence of financial, food, energy, and environmental crises has put the nexus between ‘food security (and sovereignty)’, ‘rural development’, and ‘development in general’ back onto the centre stage of theoretical, policy, and political agendas in the world today (Borras, 2009). All these issues have wider implications for BRICS countries, and particularly for Brazil and China.

The agrifood question and the assaults of the ‘satanic mills’

Between the biennia 1990–1992 and 2012–2014, the number of chronically undernourished people in the world fell by 39.6%, from 1.014 billion to 805.3 million. Asia and Latin America were the regions that performed best, especially influenced by changes in China and Brazil. In Brazil, between biennia 1990–1992 and 2000–2002, the percentage of hungry people decreased from 14.8% (22.5 million) to 10.7% (19 million) and then fell to less than 5% of the population in 2012–2014, a very low level. In China in the same periods of time, the percentage of hungry people decreased from 23.9% (288.9 million) to 16.1% (211.7 million) and then to 10.6% of the population, a moderately high level (FAO, IFAD, WFP, 2014, pp. 41–43). The paradox that developing countries such as Brazil and China are experiencing is that the old and declining problem of hunger coexists with new and rising problems of malnutrition and obesity. The total percentage of obese and overweight people in Brazil is 63.5% and 27% in China (FAO, IFAD, WFP, 2014). This is linked to the phenomenon of ‘nutrition transition’ and corresponding changes in eating habits and class-related diets. Large-scale urbanization and improvements in the incomes of ‘affluent’ portions of the population in developing countries (the ‘new’ working and middle classes) are accompanied by shifts in lifestyles and changes in diet from large proportions of staple foods and low proportions of protein, based on cereals, vegetables, and fibre, to diets which feature ultra-processed foods and which are low in fibre and high in animal protein, saturated fats, salt, and sugar. There have also been shifts toward lower rates of fertility and mortality, growing incidence rates of chronic and degenerative diseases, and decreasing incidence rates of infections and under-nutrition (Lang & Heasman, 2006).

In sum, the phenomena of increasing financial speculation and land-grabbing, corporate agribusiness control over and appropriation of the value chains in which family farming is inserted, reduced state regulation of agricultural and livestock production, and greater liberalization of foreign trade, could all be seen as expressions of the commodification movement in both Brazil and China. Against this background, the roots of the ‘agrifood question’ stem from the globalization of developing countries’ agrifood systems (McMichael, 2013; Peine, 2009; Wilkinson, 2009).

A most significant issue in understanding the nature and characteristics of the Brazil–China agrifood question is the formation of a ‘soy–meat complex’ (Weis, 2013), whose dynamics have been a decisive driver in their economic relations over the last 13 years. Indeed, the boom of soybean production and exports in Brazil and the restructuring of the meat and feed industries in China have been two mutually constitutive phenomena which encapsulate in many ways the ongoing changes in their respective agrifood systems, and are emblematic of a wider process of polycentric restructuring of the dynamics of the global food regime. As many authors have shown, the analysis of both the production and consumption sides of this ‘complex’ can illuminate the ways through which socio-economic, environmental, health, and cultural concerns intertwine in the two countries (Wilkinson & Wesz, 2013; Schneider, 2014; Oliveira & Schneider, 2016; Schneider and Sharma (2014); Oliveira & Hecht, 2016; Oliveira, 2016; Yan, Chen, & Ku, 2016; Wesz, 2016).

Some data and stylized facts help to illustrate this issue in respect of China. The per capita GDP of China (in purchasing power parity – PPP) increased from US\$302 in 1980 to US\$1227 in 1992, US\$3804 in 2003, US\$9012 in 2010, and US\$12,879 in 2014 (IMF, 2015). Its urbanization rate, about 18% in 1980, exceeded 50% in 2010 (CSY, 2015). The number of people below the poverty line of US\$1.25 a day (PPP) decreased from 63.8% of the Chinese population in 1992 to 28.4% in 2002 and 11.8% in 2009 (World Bank, 2015). Between 1980 and 2010, household expenditure per capita with food (in nominal prices) increased by a factor of 22 in rural areas and 15 in urban areas; and their share of total expenditure decreased from 68% to 41% in rural areas and from 57% to 36% in urban areas during the same years (Garnett & Wilkes, 2014, p. 47).

This socioeconomic transformation of China is a result of institutional changes introduced through the reforms, especially in rural areas (household responsibility system, township, and village enterprises), but also in urban areas (special economic zones and relaxation of the hukou household registration system to permit more migration). These have altered the composition of social classes (especially the new middle class and migrant workers) and fuelled an expansion in the consumer market (particularly food markets). Undoubtedly, the change in eating habits towards a greater consumption of animal protein is the most important factor.⁵ China quadrupled its per capita meat consumption from 1980 to 2010, reaching an average of 61 kg per annum, compared to 42 kg in the world as a whole, 71 kg in Brazil, and 120 kg in the US (Oliveira & Schneider, 2016). The country produces and consumes over 50% of the world's pork, 20% of the world's poultry, 10% of the world's beef, and is the fourth largest milk producer (Schneider & Sharma 2014). Pork is a special case: in China, the average per capita consumption is 39 kg per year, compared to 27 kg in the US (Schneider, 2011).

In short, in a context of rapid social change, the adoption of these new diets plays an important role as a practice of distinction and a social marker by defining consumer class identities,

both symbolically as a representation of status and success, and materially as a high-priced food commodity. For example, an agribusiness executive in Shanghai, discussing development prospects for his firm, is quoted as saying: 'Meat signifies wealth. The more money you have, the more meat you will eat'. In China, meat consumption is increasing across the population, but is most pronounced in urban areas, and among middle-and upper-class consumers. (Schneider, 2014, p. 617)

These changes in consumption have been a key demand driver for the restructuring of the meat industry, and for increasing feed imports in China. While soy-derived foods remain common staples in Chinese cooking and diets (most from still non-GMO [genetic modified organism] domestic soy production), people now consume soy increasingly as cooking oil and in the form of industrial pork or poultry (mostly using GMO-imported beans in animal feeds) (Yan et al., 2016). According to Sharma (2014, p. 14),

[b]etween 2001 and 2012, China's import dependence doubled from 6.2% to 12.9% with a net deficit in agriculture and food. China's targets for meat production growth are likely to add to that trend in the coming decade due to feed imports.

China is the world's leading importer of soybeans, having bought 60% of the soybeans traded in the international market in 2012. Brazil is its major supplier (45%), ahead of the US (39%), and Argentina (13%).⁶ The feed industry is largely controlled by Chinese-owned private companies and 'dragon-headed enterprises' (DHEs), and specialized supply-and-marketing cooperatives control no less than 60% of the soy traded to China, challenging the power of the four major transnational players ADM, Bunge, Cargill, and Dreyfus (collectively known as ABCD) (Sharma, 2014).

There is a similar pattern in the ownership of China's pork industry and operations. Even though it is based on the logic and practices of agribusiness elsewhere, production in the industry is largely domestic. DHEs are said to control – in a certainly overstated estimation – around 70% of pork and poultry production, their operations are supported by large governmental credits and subsidies, and they coordinate a number of stages of the value chain, combining vertical integration and contract farming systems. DHEs have changed the face of pig production in China. In 1985, 'backyard farmers' (typical Chinese peasants) produced at least 95% of the country's pork. But in 2009, the figure was quite different: backyard farmers (1–10 pigs/year) accounted for about 27% of nationwide pig production; 'specialized household farmers' (50–500 pigs/year) (simple commodity producers) accounted for about 51%; and 'large-scale commercial farms' (>500 pigs/year) (entrepreneurial or even capitalist producers) about 22%. While backyard farmers still engage in a kind of agroecological style of farming, both specialized household farms and large-scale commercial farms produce under concentrated animal feeding operation systems controlled by a few large DHEs, which subordinate their practices to the logic of contractual relations (Schneider & Sharma, 2014).

Data and stylized facts about Brazil similarly illustrate fundamental transformations in agrifood systems. Brazil's soybean production grew by 5.5% annually between 2000/2001 and 2013/2014. The harvested grain volume skyrocketed from 13.9 to 87.5 million tons in the period. The national harvested area increased by 4.3% per year, from 14.0 to 30.1 million hectares. Productivity increased by 1.1% per year. Soy currently represents 52.9% of the total grain area and its cultivation is concentrated in the South and Midwest regions, which have the top five producing states in the country. The gross value of production (GVP) of soy in Brazil grew 7.7% per year from 1996 to 2012, increasing the share of GVP in national agricultural GDP from 9.4% to 25.73%. Although there was a 67.3% reduction in poverty between 2003 and 2012, bringing the Engel coefficient for food to less than 16% of average household expenditure and enormously expanding the domestic market, the main target of Brazilian soy is the foreign market. Total Brazilian soybean exports increased at a rate of 8.84% per year between 2000/2001 and 2013/2014 from 15.5 to 44.5 million tons. The soy complex is one of the most significant contributors to the country's trade surplus, growing six-fold between 1997 and 2013 and currently accounting for over 37% of the trade balance of Brazilian agribusiness. A total of 51% of the Brazil's soybean is exported, accounting for 41% of the global market, making Brazil the leading soybean exporter, followed by the US and Argentina (Hirakuri & Lazzarotto, 2014).

In 2011, 36.9% of soy grain entering China came from Brazil and 67.1% of Brazil's soy exports went to China. In 1997, 43% was exported in the form of meal, 43% in oil, and only 14% in beans. From 2000 onwards, exports of meal sharply declined, and 93.4% of the value of the soy complex exports in 2011 was derived from beans. This is partly an outcome of the 'Kandir Law', enacted in 1996, which reduced taxes on the exports of primary products while keeping the regime on processed products the same. This increased Brazil's exports of beans, but reduced profits, as well as the capacity and power of the national crushing industry, adding to the problem of regressive specialization and relative deindustrialization (Wilkinson & Wesz, 2013).

The global food regime within which the Brazil–China soy–meat complex is situated has as its main characteristic the dominance of large transnational corporations, plus a few domestic companies, in every link of agrifood value chains. McMichael (2013) calls this a 'corporate food regime' and Ploeg (2010) uses the term 'food empires' to describe the major agrifood companies and their connections. In-depth documentation of national and transnational corporate control and market power in the soy–meat complex is provided by Wilkinson and Wesz (2013) and Wesz (2014) for Brazil, and Schneider (2014) and Schneider and Sharma (2014) for China.

The point to highlight here is that the literature on the operation of the soy–meat complex in both countries is replete with instances of both negative consequences and the contestations that these generate (Oliveira & Hecht, 2016). In Brazil, the deleterious effects of the soy complex include: the deforestation of the Cerrado and Amazon biomes; degrading labour conditions; monoculture specialization and intensification; high rates of contamination by pesticides and herbicides; and speculation in landed property and inflated land prices, land concentration, and dispossession of family farmers and other rural social groups (indigenous and traditional people) (Delgado, 2012; Oliveira, 2015; Sauer & Leite, 2012). In China, several deleterious effects include: degradation of water and soil; greenhouse gas emissions; biodiversity losses; dietary intake inequalities; and pressures on rural livelihoods leading to dispossession, given the increased commoditization of production and competition for market access (Schneider, 2011, 2014; Yan et al., 2016).

Several emblematic instances that have sparked strong contestations in the politics of consumption against corporate agribusiness in both countries are worthy of comment. Consumers' anxieties about food safety and health concerns related to huge food scandals are certainly the most serious and prominent issue in China, possibly with an even higher profile than environmental problems. The case with the largest impact was certainly that involving infant milk powder tainted with melamine in 2008, which resulted in the death of six children and more than 30,000 patients with kidney stones. So-called avian flu outbreaks are another Chinese scandal which has reverberated worldwide. Since 2003, China has reported cases in every year except 2011. Another food safety scandal was the discovery of illegal additives residues in pork, the so-called lean meat powder (these are drugs banned in China since 2002). The American fast food company KFC recently found suppliers feeding their chickens more than 18 kinds of antibiotics, drugs, and hormones (Schneider & Sharma, 2014).

In Brazil, food safety scandals, industry fraud, and the discovery of contaminants in food are quite common. The abuse of pesticides in agriculture is the most prominent problem, and has triggered intense public debates, civil society mobilization, and a backlash from corporate agribusiness. Although Brazil is the third major agricultural producer in the world (behind the USA and China), it is the leading pesticide consumer: an average of 12 litres of pesticide per ha and 4.5 litres per inhabitant is used in farming. Between 2002 and 2012, the global market for pesticides grew by 93%, while the Brazilian market grew by 190%. There have been recurrent cases of environmental and human contamination. About one-third of vegetables consumed daily are contaminated; the 'poison rain' of pesticides sprayed from aircraft causes a range of health problems; and 10 toxic substances have been found in breast milk in Lucas do Rio Verde town in Mato Grosso do Sul, the major soy-producing state (Carneiro, Rigotto, Augusto, & Búrigo, 2015).

In both countries, there have been significant concerns expressed about current and potential problems related to the cultivation, consumption, and regulation of GMO crops (and traded soy is almost all GMO) (Oliveira & Hecht, 2016). All these negative consequences of the commodification of farming and food, liberalization of trade and globalization of developing countries' agrifood systems led by transnational agribusiness corporations and food empires under the aegis of the current international food regime, have given rise to affected social actors raising the alarm and advocating alternative approaches to food production. This is a strong reason why the new RD dynamics that have emerged in Brazil and China since the 1990s can be interpreted as part of a Polanyian 'countermovement'.

RD dynamics and the emergence of 'countermovements'

For analytical purposes, it is important to distinguish between RD practices, policies, and processes, the basic components of the newly emerging dynamics of RD. While the situations in Brazil and China have their own specificities, various authors have identified some common threads (Hebinck et al., 2015; Ploeg et al., 2012).

RD practices are grassroots-level activities that significantly alter the routines and outcomes of farming. These aim to shift the boundaries of agriculture, create resistance to the control and dependency imposed by food empires, and build autonomy. This includes organic or ecological agriculture, craft processing of high-quality products, building alternative networks, short food-supply chains, ensuring self-provisioning, pluriactivity and access to non-agricultural income sources, reducing production costs, and investing in labour-driven intensification and skill-based technologies. In relation to the wider economic environment in which farmers are located, this implies the inclusion of non-agricultural productive activities into the farm, such as agro-tourism and hospitality services, energy production, mining, aquaculture, nature conservation, and landscape management.

RD policies represent efforts made by the state to respond to the demands and expectations of key social actors, stimulating and strengthening, or restricting and controlling, both the individual practices listed above and general processes of RD. Distinct from traditional agricultural and agrarian policies, based primarily on costing credits and subsidies, the new generation of RD policies focuses mainly on opening and sustaining new circuits of the social and economic reproduction of peasants and family farmers, allowing them to remain viable as food producers, even in the face of adverse market conditions. The main strategic goal of such RD policies is to redefine the role of agriculture in society, but it can embrace and support a wide range of related social goals, such as food security and safety, social and economic equality, and human health and environmental sustainability.

The *modus operandi* of RD processes basically consists of redefining and redirecting the direction of agriculture, food, and rural areas through the regulation of existing markets and the construction of new, 'nested' markets. In practice, it constitutes a way of bypassing the controls exerted by the food empires on the commodity chains and bridging the structural holes they create between producers and consumers. The relationships and interactions within these markets aim to connect previously separated value circuits in order to improve farmers' incomes and livelihoods, offering good quality products at fair prices for consumers, and creating new forms of sociability and reciprocity, trust and shared values for both, even when what they exchange are, as a matter of fact, (food) commodities.

In Brazil, the struggle against poverty and historical inequalities, the promotion of social reproduction and the pursuit of the political emancipation of family farmers and other rural groups constitute the centre of gravity of RD policies and practices, by creating mechanisms to include their participation and valorize their diversity against monocultures and the hegemony of 'agribusiness'.⁷ In China, the centre of gravity of RD policies and practices is the maintenance of social stability in an explosive context of economic growth, industrialization, and urbanization, seeking to contain the escalating inequality and promote a 'harmonious society', with rural-urban integration and the inclusion of peasant migrant workers as citizens. In both countries, RD dynamics become more effective when they can synergistically combine government policy interventions with the actors' initiatives and practices, and support of farmers' organizations and social movements, in order to adjust the institutions to the social values in a given balance of forces (Ploeg et al., 2010, 2012).

For a long time, RD in Brazil was associated with a set of compensatory interventions by the state and international agencies in poor rural areas that had failed to integrate the technology patterns of the 'agricultural modernization' process, along the lines of the 'Green Revolution' of the 1960s.

However, by the 1990s, under a contradictory combination of re-democratization and neoliberalism, many social actors repressed during the dictatorship returned to the scene and new civil society actors began to come to light. It is in this context that RD emerged as an important theme. After that, family farming came to be in the forefront of public debates about agriculture and food production and began to assume greater legitimacy as a social category against the background of struggles for political recognition driven by a range of actors: farmers' unions and rural social movements and organizations like CONTAG (Confederation of Agricultural Workers), MST (Landless Rural Workers' Movement), and FETRAF (Federation of Workers in Family Farming).

This spurred interest among scholars, researchers, mediators, and advisors and led to a surge of academic studies between 1990 and 1996 that produced interpretative displacements and influenced policy-making, leading to institutional recognition from the state and the development of new RD policies. The struggles of organized social movements and their pressure on the state led to the establishment of the most important RD policy instrument, PRONAF (National Program for Strengthening Family Farming), in 1996, focusing on credit for working capital and investment. Negotiations between social actors and government have increased the resources available for the Family Farming Harvest Plan every year. In 1998, the Ministry of Agrarian Development was established and a Family Farming Law was passed in 2006. CONDRAF (National Council for Sustainable Rural Development) and CONSEA (National Council for Food and Nutritional Security), both established in 2003, are also important spaces for the political representation of RD actors.

Two other RD policies deserve special note. The Food Acquisition Program was created in 2004 to respond to farmers' problems with commercialization, price instability and market access, and to meet the demand for food from public institutions (hospitals, prisons, army, etc.). The PNAE (National School Feeding Program) was reorganized and obligations placed on municipalities to purchase at least 30% of school feeding products from family farmers' new institutional markets.

The evolution of RD policies in Brazil involves three co-evolving generations of such policies. The period from 1993 to 1998 was characterized by the emergence of an agrarian policy involving land reform, rural settlements, and differentiated rural credit policies. The period from 1998 to 2004 was characterized by widely implemented compensatory and distributive policies focusing on rural social assistance and protection. From 2005 up to the present day, policies began to incorporate a strategy of building new markets to ensure food and nutrition security, with enhanced channels of connection between consumers and farmers, and an attempt to promote environmental sustainability through specific norms, regulations, and incentives (Schneider, 2010; Schneider & Cassol, 2013; Schneider, Shiki, & Belik, 2010).

In China, the institutional reforms of the late 1970s and early 1980s that targeted agriculture and the countryside were welcomed and increased production, productivity, and incomes, thus reducing rural poverty. However, in the passage from the 1980s to the 1990s, a sense of dissatisfaction with stagnating and deteriorating living conditions in the rural areas and a massive increase in rural-urban migration became apparent. This crisis became known as 'sannong wenti', the three agrarian problems: agriculture (*nongye*), countryside (*nongcun*), and peasants (*nongmin*). This concept is a hallmark of the new RD dynamics in China, and emerged to explain the limitations of the growth of agricultural production, the limitations of improving the living conditions in the countryside, and the difficulties of enhancing the income and well-being of the farmers (Ye, Rao, & Wu, 2010).

Rural change processes in China involves leadership and negotiation between different social actors: formal representatives of the party-state at various levels (village, township, city, province, central); social activists such as academics and intellectuals linked to universities or NGOs; local residents, through grassroots organizations (farmers' cooperatives, religious, and cultural associations);

or rural elites (business and local party cadres) (Thøgersen, 2009). During the 1990s, a so-called new left emerged in Chinese politics, proving to be a key actor within rural debates and adopting strong positions against the privatization of land and in favour of the protection of peasant livelihoods from market forces. Its most prominent manifestation is the New Rural Reconstruction Movement (NRRM), an attempt to bring together rural experiments in democratic cooperatives and social organization modelled in part on the Rural Reconstruction Movement of the 1930s (Day, 2013).

The state also took steps to address the *sannong wenti*. The ‘tax-for-fee’ reform in 2002 foreshadowed the abolition of agricultural taxes that was completed in 2006. In the same year, a new programme called ‘New Socialist Countryside’ (NSC) was launched to promote RD, reduce income inequality, and prevent social unrest, by redistributing resources through fiscal transfers from the central to county level, and then to villages and township projects at the local level, focused especially on infrastructure and social services. Despite the shared aim of addressing rural problems, the thrust of the state’s programme is different from that advanced by left-wing intellectuals, insofar as it calls for further urbanization, consumption, and market-driven growth. While the NSC has meant different things in different areas, one important feature is the encouragement of in-place urbanization and commercialization, making use of specialized supply-and-marketing cooperatives and DHEs which recognize, to some extent, that migration to large cities is not an immediately viable path for the majority of China’s peasants (Ahlers & Schubert, 2009; Day, 2013; Yeh, O’Brien, & Ye, 2013).

In China, RD occurs in a pragmatic and incremental manner. The government, at different levels (central and local), has the capacity to recognize and endorse promising practices and initiatives by social actors at the grassroots level. The state then supports these experiences, including them within its broader strategy, mobilizing the necessary actors to implement it and institutionalizing a policy framework which is quite flexible and adaptable to practical contingencies (Ye et al., 2010). In Brazil, on the other hand, the structural holes created during the period of agricultural modernization and the dismantling of state institutions and policies in the neoliberal period have been filled by the inclusion of civil society in the formulation and operation of actions, programmes and policies. To the extent that the state has become more permeable to social demands, the scope of action of the rural social movements and organizations also seems to have shifted over time, from a vindictive and anti-establishment stance of the 1980s to a purposeful and proactive stance in the 1990s and the co-management of public policies by the mid-2000s (Schneider et al., 2010). Be that as it may, despite their differences and singularities, the *modus operandi* of RD processes in both countries take place through regulating old markets and constructing new, nested markets to provide food security for urban residents and support circuits of social reproduction for farmers’ livelihoods.

There is no space here for a more detailed empirical analysis of RD dynamics in each country. However, two theoretical clarifications are unavoidable to make sense of the ‘double movement’ thesis advocated in this paper. The first is on the heterogeneity of family farming. The debate goes back to the endless controversy among Marxists, followers of Lenin’s thesis, and Substantivists, followers of Chayanov’s thesis and referred to as ‘populists’ by their detractors. This is not the place to take up this debate, reproduced in China and Brazil, but simply to state a position. For the authors of this paper, both approaches have key insights, though neither is fully correct. Marxists are right to stress that one cannot see family farming as an undifferentiated whole with homogeneous interests, but wrong to point out the trends of capital accumulation (from above) and class differentiation (from below) leading to an inexorable ‘disintegration of the peasantry’ without taking into account the agency of rural actors’ livelihoods reproduction strategies and the complex and differentiated character of the commodification of agriculture. And Chayanovians are wrong to overlook the

internal differentiations of family farming (or ‘the peasantry’), but right to emphasize the difference between the family form of organization of labour and production in agriculture and the capitalist form based on wage labour.

Utilizing insights from both schools of thought, the authors of this paper subscribe to Ploeg’s (2009) notion of ‘farming styles’ to distinguish at least three segments of family farming with different degrees of commodification of the means of production and livelihoods and insertion in (conventional or nested) product markets: a typical peasant style of domestic subsistence producers; a commercial, integrated style of petty commodity producers (PCP); and an entrepreneurial style of simple commodity producers, to use the terms of the 1980s’ Marxist debate. The main differences amongst them is in relation to the intensity of their ‘peasant condition’ and their ‘degree of commodification’, basically perceived through the proportion between the *quantum* of commodities mobilized in various markets and the use values reproduced internally within the production unit (a ‘self-controlled resource base’). Thus, in line with Wolf’s (1984) contention that the ‘middle peasantry’ was the most revolutionary actor in the ‘peasant wars’ of the twentieth century, strengthening the autonomy of a ‘commercial style’ (PCP) of family farming and constructing new, nested markets with a better distribution of income and wealth are crucial tasks for RD dynamics in the twenty-first century (even if it cannot be considered a revolutionary task).

The second clarification relates to the politics of food consumption and RD dynamics. The relationship between producers and consumers in the construction of nested markets and alternative food networks is a key topic in both China (Si, Schumilas, & Scott, 2015; Wang, Si, Ng, & Scott, 2015) and Brazil (Niederle, 2014; Radomsky, 2013). Anxieties related to food safety scandals and contaminations of food due to the abuse of pesticides are the main drivers of changes in eating habits and consumption behaviour in food markets. In China, these generated state responses in form of the institutionalization of certification schemes for ecological products (green food, organic food, and hazard-free food) and, in Brazil, to the rise of social movements promoting agroecological farming, farmers’ markets, networks of producers and consumers (e.g. Ecovida Agroecology Network, *Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia*), and collective food-buying groups. The sceptical attitude of Chinese consumers towards state regulation led to the rise of self-organized, community-supported agriculture, farmers’ markets, and buying groups without the need of certification (mostly supported by the NRRM). In Brazil, the struggles of social movements led to the institutionalization of agroecology through public recognition of diversified certification schemes (third party, participatory, and direct sales without seal). In both cases, through different paths, the result was the coexistence of official schemes based on institutional trust (sometimes challenged) and alternative schemes based on consumer–producer reciprocity and interpersonal and organizational trust.

Of course, as in developed countries, as well as in Brazil and China, there are debates about the ‘conventionalization’ (Guthman, 2004) of ecological farming and alternative food networks, as well as the motives of consumers, who are more motivated by health concerns than environmental and social justice. One can argue that the values and practices underlying how society can offer solutions to the agrifood question are in dispute, not in a manicheistic way, but as a struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces.

Conclusion

In the first part of this article, the authors discussed the impacts of the rise of China on Brazil’s development prospects. While the surge of FDI between these countries since the 2008 global financial crisis constitutes a trend, the main driver of their bilateral relations has been trade. The data

presented and literature cited here indicate that Brazilian exports are increasingly concentrated in primary and resource-intensive commodities, and its imports from China are basically manufactured goods with increasing technological sophistication. So, as a major producer and exporter of primary (agricultural and mining) commodities and a diversified producer of manufactured goods, Brazil has experienced both positive and negative impacts from the 'China effect': increased demand and higher prices on the one hand, and competitive pressure on its domestic and export markets on the other hand, which may carry the risk of regressive specialization and deindustrialization. Having outlined this context, the second part of the paper provided a comparative analysis of the agrifood question and RD dynamics in Brazil and China.

Table 2 summarizes the main similarities and differences in both countries.

Through Burawoy's (2003) 'Polanyi-Gramsci framework', we view the agrifood question and RD dynamics in China and Brazil as central issues of the contemporary 'double movement'. We focus on the ways in which key social actors engage with markets and politics to attempt to turn the balance of forces in their favour and push a counter-hegemonic project against hegemonic vested interests. On the one hand, the commodification movement could be named 'Gramsci's moment'. This is the moment when the economic interests of the food empires and agribusiness capital encounter the interests of the state, being translated as broader societal interests and becoming a constitutive part of the coalition of power that forms a hegemonic bloc. Central to the relationships between Brazil and China is the convergence of hegemonic interests from both sides around trade and investment flows in the formation of a soy–meat complex, with narratives for the justification of vested interests in both sides.

In the Brazilian case, the interest of agribusiness is to pursue a private and state strategy of appropriation of land rent deriving from the comparative advantage of natural resources as the frontline of capital accumulation for the whole economy, articulating large rural property and land markets,

Table 2. Comparison of agrifood and RD issues in China and Brazil – the 'double movement'.

	China	Brazil
<i>The agrifood question</i>		
Similarities	Commodification and globalization of agrifood systems; nutrition transition; consolidation, oligopolization and internationalization of food empires; formation of a soy–meat complex driving a polycentric restructuring of food regime dynamics; contradictions and negative social, health and environmental consequences	
Differences	Diversification of production and export structures of economy; restructuring of meat and feed industries; China's agrifood system as an importing pole; reduction of hunger to a moderately high level and increase of obesity and overweight to medium level; consumers' anxieties about food safety and health concerns related to huge food scandals	Regressive specialization of production and export structures of economy; boom of soybean production and exports; Brazil's agrifood system as exporting pole; reduction of hunger to a very low level and increase in obesity and overweight to a high level; consumers' concern about environment and health concerns related to the abusive use of pesticides (agrotoxics) in agriculture
<i>RD dynamics</i>		
Similarities	Emergence of actors' practices, state's policies and processes linked to livelihood strategies of peasants and family farmers, alignment with consumers and construction of new 'nested markets' for food security	
Differences	Maintenance of social stability in a context of economic growth, industrialization, and urbanization, seeking to contain inequality and promote a 'harmonious society', with rural–urban integration and inclusion of peasant migrant workers as citizens; government ability to recognize and endorse initiatives at the grassroots level	Fighting poverty and inequality, promotion of social reproduction and pursuit of political emancipation of family farmers and other rural groups, seeking to promote social participation and valorization of their diversity against the hegemony of agribusiness; institutional voids been filled by the inclusion of civil society in the formulation and operation of actions, programmes and policies

agriculture and the downstream and upstream sides of the value chains, and access to finance capital under state credit policy. The claim of universality of such interests is based on a discourse that praises the capacity of agribusiness to generate the trade surpluses necessary to bridge the gap in the balance of payments caused by deficits in the (foreign capital) services account, supposedly crucial to prevent imbalances in the current transactions account. But despite the strength of the state and private ideological apparatuses, this narrative has been challenged by a reality in which the trend of high commodity prices in the international market cannot be taken for granted and Brazil is facing the increasing risk of regressive specialization (Delgado, 2012).

In the Chinese case, a strategy that includes the industrialization of agriculture, large-scale (domestic and overseas) land investments, and land transfers from peasants to agribusiness ventures, all supported by state credit and subsidies, represents hegemonic interests in the state and private sector. These are then presented as the interests of the whole society, built upon two combined narratives: a 'crisis narrative' – 'China is feeding 21% of the world's population on 9% of its arable land', and a 'victory narrative' – 'We will feed ourselves!'. However, the ideological legitimacy of this discourse could be questioned based on the fact that the concept of 'food security' (*shipin fangyu anquan*) is unusual in China, as the concept in current use is 'grain security' (*lingshi anquan*), or grain self-sufficiency, which means adhering to the policy goal of a 95% baseline for grain from domestic production. The massive amounts of soybeans imported to feed pigs to sustain the 'meatification' of diets is not accounted for in the balance sheets of grain security, and there are fears the same could happen with maize, which is also subject to liberalization and exclusion from the list of 'strategic crops' (Schneider, 2011).

Thus, the cases of both Brazil and China present evidence of the fragility of those agrifood hegemonic discourses coalesced around the interests of the soy–meat complex. A protective counter-movement, or 'Polanyi's moment', is the moment when the actors affected by the first movement (especially farmers and consumers) become aware of the negative consequences of the commodification of food production, distribution, and exchange at the expense of livelihoods, health, and the environment. In this way, new commitments can be created, and RD, food security, and ecological sustainability can be asserted as constitutive parts of a counter-hegemonic project able to represent the broader societal interests of different classes, groups, and segments of the population, in order to respond and react to the new challenges and lead society on a path towards the construction of a new historical bloc.

Both in Brazil and China, the manner in which these values and commitments evolve in terms of RD practices and policies depends on interactions between certain categories of actors and institutions: the organized peasants and farmers; the organic intellectuals; some policy-makers; and, increasingly, consumers. The general interest of such an alliance is to meet the expectations of those affected by the commoditization of food, by ensuring access to food and food quality for urban and rural citizens as consumers, and to create circuits of social reproduction and improved livelihoods for the farmers as producers. The mechanisms by which these outcomes have been achieved in both countries involve two combined processes: the creation of public regulations and controls over conventional markets; and the active social construction of new, nested markets. Such processes can open new pathways through the reconstitution of existing patterns of production, but principally of circulation, distribution, and the use of resources in ways that dominant interests find it difficult to capture.

In sum, the meaning of the twenty-first century's 'double movement' might be interpreted as follows. The movement led by agribusiness capital and food empires for the commodification, liberalization, and globalization of the agrifood systems of Brazil and China under the current food regime

is understood as ‘Gramsci’s moment’. Gramsci correctly saw the realm of production as the site of organization of the interests of the capitalist class and capital accumulation as the source of power and the material basis for their hegemony. But as for Gramsci, along with Marx, markets are just the space of realization of capital, and commodity fetishism is a veil that obscures the productive core of capitalism and uncovers its contradictions. Both are limited in thinking that only the realm of production can provide the basis for counter-hegemony, and thus discard the possibilities of a producer–consumer political alliance and the agency of actors in the realm of circulation, leaving little space for countermovements.

The protective countermovement, driven by the actors and institutions affected by the commodification process, can be understood as ‘Polanyi’s moment’, precisely because Polanyi was able to conceive the realm of circulation and the relationships between producers and consumers that take place in the markets as potential grounds for counter-hegemony. As Gramsci may warn, of course such an alliance on its own is insufficient, and unlikely to radically overturn capitalist domination as a whole in a ‘war of movement’. However, it could wield sufficient power to politicize the contradictions ingrained in these transforming agrifood systems and to shape the direction of RD dynamics, in a ‘war of position’. Thus, although the politics of both production and labour relations are crucial sites of struggle in Brazil and China, the construction of new, nested markets, by linking the provision of material needs to shared social values held by both producers and consumers, means that the *locus* of the relationships between them is principally in the realm of circulation. It is here that the transformational potential of an alliance that defends the resilience and autonomy of farmers and the rights of consumers against the ‘assaults’ of agribusiness and food empires is situated.

Notes

1. Another vision of the ‘China model’ and the ‘lessons’ that other developing countries, especially those of Latin America, can learn from the Chinese experience can be found in the works of the former president of the World Bank, Justin Yifu Lin and his collaborators (Lin & Treichel, 2012), and several others.
2. There is a significant literature in Brazil and elsewhere about the effects of China’s rise on the Brazilian economy and other Latin American economies. For our purpose, it is sufficient to cite some works that document and analyze the stylized facts briefly outlined in this paper: Sauer et al., 2017; Jenkins, 2015; Jenkins & Barbosa, 2012; Curado, 2015; Ray & Gallagher, 2015; Cunha et al., 2012; Medeiros, 2011; Cano, 2012; Armony & Strauss, 2012.
3. The main controversies involve: the ‘developmental outsourcing’ purpose of Chinese overseas land-based investments, in which the state plays a key role (Hofman & Ho, 2012); the extent, character, origins, and directions of land-grabbing in Latin America (Borras, Franco, Gómez, Kay, & Spoor, 2012); the impacts of FDI land purchases on land prices, land market dynamics, and land concentration in Brazil; the motivations and interests of the investors; the expansion of the agricultural frontier driven by soy and sugarcane, forestry plantation, cattle ranching and mineral extraction; and the legal measures and regulatory controls taken by the Brazilian state to limit foreigners’ access to land (Sauer & Leite, 2012; Wilkinson, Reydon, & Di Sabbato, 2013).
4. The origins of this coalition go back the 1999 currency crisis, when Cardoso saw the activation of primary exports as a strategy of adjustment to the neoliberal order, able to generate trade surpluses to support the balance of payments and control inflation. In the politico-institutional sphere, this position is represented by the so-called *Bancada Ruralista* (Ruralist Block), officially the Agriculture Parliamentary Front, a set of parliamentary representatives from across the party political system ranging from the far right-wing to the center left-wing, united by their defense of agribusiness. Although some of these representatives supported the progressive PT (Workers’ Party) government (in itself a contradictory position), most have historically been identified as conservative or even reactionary.
5. An oversimplified representation of this phenomenon is that the standard Chinese food-consumption pattern of 8:1:1, or eight parts grain, one part meat/ poultry/fish, and one part vegetables/fruit, has

been changing rapidly towards a 4:3:3 pattern of four parts grain, three parts meat/fish (and eggs and milk), and three parts vegetables/fruit (Huang, 2011, p. 4).

6. Wilkinson and Wesz (2013) stress that the Chinese interest in acquiring land in Brazil (sometimes with investments in crushing plants and port terminals) is closely linked to its 'need for feed' and its strategy to exert direct control over the soy commodity complex. Schneider (2014) describes such land deals and agribusiness investments as 'meat grabs' rather than using 'food security land grabs', the more common term in the literature. However, as Oliveira (2015) notes, while Chinese–Brazilian value flows around the soy complex are displacing North Atlantic agribusiness power in a South/ East direction, the 'old hubs' of capital (US, EU, Japan) still play very important roles.
7. Since 2013 and the 'Journeys of June', and even more strongly after the impeachment (or parliamentary coup) of 2016 that ousted President Dilma Rousseff and put Michel Temer in her place, Brazilian political and policy landscapes are going through a period of regressive changes producing great uncertainty. But this period is not covered in our analysis.

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