

RGS-IBG BOOK SERIES

**Royal
Geographical
Society**
with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

EVERYDAY MORAL ECONOMIES

FOOD,
POLITICS
AND SCALE
IN CUBA

Marisa Wilson

WILEY Blackwell

Everyday Moral Economies

RGS-IBG Book Series

Published

Material Politics: Disputes Along the Pipeline

Andrew Barry

Everyday Moral Economies: Food, Politics and Scale in Cuba

Marisa Wilson

Working Lives: Gender, Migration and Employment in Britain, 1945–2007

Linda McDowell

Fashioning Globalisation: New Zealand Design, Working Women and the Cultural Economy

Maureen Molloy & Wendy Larner

Dunes: Dynamics, Morphology and Geological History

Andrew Warren

Spatial Politics: Essays for Doreen Massey

Edited by David Featherstone & Joe Painter

The Improvised State: Sovereignty, Performance and Agency in Dayton Bosnia

Alex Jeffrey

Learning the City: Knowledge and Translocal Assemblage

Colin McFarlane

Globalizing Responsibility: The Political Rationalities of Ethical Consumption

Clive Barnett, Paul Cloke, Nick Clarke & Alice Malpass

Domesticating Neo-Liberalism: Spaces of Economic Practice and Social Reproduction in Post-Socialist Cities

Alison Stenning, Adrian Smith, Alena Rochovská & Dariusz Świętek

Swept Up Lives? Re-envisioning the Homeless City

Paul Cloke, Jon May & Sarah Johnsen

Aerial Life: Spaces, Mobilities, Affects

Peter Adey

Millionaire Migrants: Trans-Pacific Life Lines

David Ley

State, Science and the Skies: Governmentalities of the British Atmosphere

Mark Whitehead

Complex Locations: Women's Geographical Work in the UK 1850–1970

Avril Maddrell

Value Chain Struggles: Institutions and Governance in the Plantation Districts of South India

Jeff Neilson & Bill Pritchard

Jeff Neilson & Bill Pritchard

Queer Visibilities: Space, Identity and Interaction in Cape Town

Andrew Tucker

Arsenic Pollution: A Global Synthesis

Peter Ravenscroft, Hugh Brammer & Keith Richards

Resistance, Space and Political Identities: The Making of Counter-Global Networks

David Featherstone

Mental Health and Social Space: Towards Inclusionary Geographies?

Hester Parr

Climate and Society in Colonial Mexico: A Study in Vulnerability

Georgina H. Endfield

Geochemical Sediments and Landscapes

Edited by David J. Nash & Sue J. McLaren

Driving Spaces: A Cultural-Historical Geography of England's M1 Motorway

Peter Merriman

Badlands of the Republic: Space, Politics and Urban Policy

Mustafa Dikeç

Geomorphology of Upland Peat: Erosion, Form and Landscape Change

Martin Evans & Jeff Warburton

Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities

Stephen Legg

People/States/Territories

Rhys Jones

Publics and the City

Kurt Iveson

After the Three Italies: Wealth, Inequality and Industrial Change

Mick Dunford & Lidia Greco

Putting Workfare in Place

Peter Sunley, Ron Martin & Corinne Nativel

Domicile and Diaspora

Alison Blunt

Geographies and Moralities

Edited by Roger Lee & David M. Smith

Military Geographies

Rachel Woodward

A New Deal for Transport?

Edited by Iain Docherty & Jon Shaw

Geographies of British Modernity

Edited by David Gilbert, David Matless & Brian Short

Lost Geographies of Power

John Allen

Globalizing South China

Carolyn L. Cartier

Geomorphological Processes and Landscape Change: Britain in the Last 1000 Years

Edited by David L. Higgitt & E. Mark Lee

Forthcoming

Smoking Geographies: Space, Place and Tobacco

Ross Barnett, Graham Moon, Jamie Pearce, Lee Thompson & Liz Twigg

Africa's Information Revolution: Technical Regimes and Production

Networks in South Africa and Tanzania

Pádraig Carmody & James T. Murphy

Peopling Immigration Control: Geographies of Governing and Activism in the British Asylum System

Nick Gill

Geopolitics and Expertise: Knowledge and Authority in European Diplomacy

Merje Kuus

The Geopolitics of Expertise in the Nature of Landscape: Cultural Geography on the Norfolk Broads

David Matless

Rehearsing the State: The Political Practices of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile

Fiona McConnell

Frontier Regions of Marketization: Agribusiness, Farmers, and the

Precarious Making of Global Connections in West Africa

Stefan Ouma

Articulations of Capital: Global Production Networks and Regional Transformations

John Pickles, Adrian Smith & Robert Begg, with

Milan Buček, Rudolf Pástor & Poli Roukova

Origination: The Geographies of Brands and Branding

Andy Pike

Making Other Worlds: Agency and Interaction in Environmental Change

John Wainwright

Metropolitan Preoccupations: The Spatial Politics of Squatting in Berlin

Alexander Vasudevan

Everyday Moral Economies

Food, Politics and Scale in Cuba

Marisa Wilson

Chancellor's Fellow at the School of Geosciences
University of Edinburgh

WILEY Blackwell

This edition first published 2014

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services, and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com/wiley-blackwell.

The right of Marisa Wilson to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author(s) have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. It is sold on the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering professional services and neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wilson, Marisa L. (Marisa Lauren), 1979–

Everyday moral economies: food, politics and scale in Cuba / Marisa Wilson.

pages cm – (RGS-IBG book series)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-118-30200-2 (hardback) – ISBN 978-1-118-30192-0 (paper)

1. Food supply – Social aspects – Cuba. 2. Food supply – Economic aspects – Cuba.
3. Consumption (Economics) – Cuba. 4. Exchange – Cuba. 5. Value. 6. Cuba –
Economic conditions – 1990–. I. Everyday moral economies.

HD9014.C92W55 2014

338.1'97291—dc23

2013018233

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Cover image: 'The hand is that of a woman farmer in her mid-60s, who requested that the photo be taken as a symbol of "a real worker in Cuba". As she told me, "you can always tell a *campesino* [farmer] by their hands".' © Marisa Wilson

Cover design by Workhaus.

Set in 10/12pt Plantin by SPi Publisher Services, Pondicherry, India

Printed in [Country only]

For my parents

Contents

<i>Series Editors' Preface</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xxiii
<i>List of Acronyms</i>	xxv
1 Introduction	1
2 The Historical Emergence of a National Leviathan	33
3 Scarcities, Uneven Access and Local Narratives of Consumption	73
4 Changing Landscapes of Care: Re-distributions and Reciprocities in the World of Tutaño Consumption	99
5 Localizing the Leviathan: Hierarchies and Exchanges that Connect State, Market and Civil Society	121
6 The Scalar Politics of Sustainability: Transforming the Small Farming Sector	153
7 Conclusion	181
<i>Appendices</i>	199
<i>Index</i>	211

Series Editors' Preface

The RGS-IBG Book Series only publishes work of the highest international standing. Its emphasis is on distinctive new developments in human and physical geography, although it is also open to contributions from cognate disciplines whose interests overlap with those of geographers. The Series places strong emphasis on theoretically informed and empirically strong texts. Reflecting the vibrant and diverse theoretical and empirical agendas that characterize the contemporary discipline, contributions are expected to inform, challenge and stimulate the reader. Overall, the RGS-IBG Book Series seeks to promote scholarly publications that leave an intellectual mark and change the way readers think about particular issues, methods or theories.

For details on how to submit a proposal please visit:
www.rgsbookseries.com

Neil Coe
National University of Singapore

Joanna Bullard
Loughborough University, UK

RGS-IBG Book Series Editors

Preface

¡Con lo que un yanqui ha gastado
no más que en comprar botellas
se hubiera Juana curado! ...
With what a Yankee spends
Just buying bottles,
Juana could have been cured! ...

Nicolas Guillén (from the poem,
Visita á un solar, 1930)¹

This book is about the relationship between provisioning and politics. To be clear, politics is understood in terms of values, economic or otherwise. In this sense, politics is ‘less about the struggle to appropriate value (or freedom to create/accumulate value), but the struggle to establish what value *is* (or the freedom to decide what makes life worth living)’ (Graeber 2001: 88). I am concerned with values and their spatio-temporal dimensions, like nationalism or economic globalization, and with the way associated values are evidenced in moral ideas and practices that shape everyday life.

In the above verses, for example, there are two values of beer: the first is the market value paid for by tourists from the United States, the second, the social value of finding a cure for Juana (a poor woman from rural Cuba). As the poem suggests, in the 1930s ordinary Cubans saw the two forms of value as commensurable; ‘Yankees’ did not. Since then, contradictions between social values and market values have become even more pronounced, associated with incessant bi-polar discourses of liberalism and socialism. As I will argue, each discourse is tied to particular temporalities and spatialities, becoming what I call *Leviathans*² that frame the material and ideational spaces in which ordinary people in Cuba claim their rights and entitlements.

Officially if not always empirically, values set by markets such as price stand in direct contrast to welfare values such as the grand narrative of Cuban socialism, according to which necessities such as food are considered human rights, distinct from the world of commodities. In this normative scheme, basic foodstuffs should be accessible to all needy Cubans in domestic currency, pesos, though more desirable items may only be available in hard currency (or in equivalent peso prices). The traditional planned economy of Cuba is based on a model that treats the nation as one socialist enterprise, whose ultimate aim is not profit (surplus value) but to ensure alimentary and other needs (social values) of the national community. The scalar project of Cuban nationhood, which controls and rationalizes collective forms of provisioning, and the global political economy that gives some Cubans more options than others, are practical effects of these contrasting normative and material systems, the one that privileges the sovereign nation, the other, the sovereign consumer. This book reveals how people in rural Cuba rationalize the practicalities of living in this contradictory moral and political economic world, in which both national and supranational norms influence rather than determine a more localized politics of value-making.

It was this interest in the relation between values and experience, and in the moralities, materialities and spatialities of this relation, that first motivated me to write this book. My own concern with food politics developed when I spent time in Cuba observing and often living through Cubans' daily 'fight' (*lucha*) to provision food for their families. As an ethnographic researcher, my analysis had to start with the 'concrete conditions which stimulate interest in some abstract problems rather than others' (Hart 1986: 637), and so naturally I focused on the main concern of the people under study: food. As someone from a country with much influence over the global political economy of food, the topic of food politics was also personal.

For at least a decade, I have been struck by the historical divergence of values that have developed over time in my 'home' – the United States – from those that emerged in Cuba, a country located just 90 miles away. Growing up in the Central Valley of California, I witnessed the large-scale conversion of prime agricultural lands into residential or commercial properties, creating what geographers call a 'spatial fix' that cannot easily be undone. As I was to discover, an opposite pattern was happening in 1990s Cuba, where prior neglected and/or damaged land was being converted to agroecological production to provide food for Cubans. This shift in land use patterns is a reflection of two different ways that powerful interests in each country have come to value land and its products: the first that sees land as a means to acquire high rents and profit, the second that sees land as a means to ensure collective entitlements. In the case of the United States and most other countries where private agro-food interests have come to overpower

(or accord with) public regulation, food is treated primarily as a commodity. In the case of Cuba, food for domestic consumption is officially a public good, though it may also become a commodity in export, tourist and local farmers' markets. While even organic food production in California must yield enough profits to outcompete residential or commercial land developers (see Guthman 2004), Cuban food production is guided more by alimentary necessity than market determinants.

The aims of agroecological food production in Cuba may seem ideal to the radical, ecologically minded westerner. But in the event that they could personally choose between social and market values (and he or she is more likely to have this choice than Cubans), they may not like to leave their preference for a salad of organic basil – ready washed and served with fresh mozzarella, organic heirloom tomatoes and Californian olive oil – for a collective value system that serves a simple salad of peeled cucumbers and soya oil. Indeed, it is all too easy to idealize the Cuban experience as an admirable alternative to our own, forgetting all the privileges of the market that we as 'responsible' consumers take for granted (forgetting too that ordinary Cubans would likely want access to such privileges if given the opportunity). Actually, it is this very dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' – and between market and collective (or state) forms of value – that is problematized in this book.

On a more theoretical level, the book reveals what Neil Smith (1992: 78) calls the 'double-edged nature of scale' as both enabling and disabling different forms of value: 'By setting boundaries, scale can be constructed as a means of constraint and exclusion, a means of imposing identity, but a politics of scale can also become a weapon of expansion and inclusion, a means of enlarging identities' (Smith 1992: 78). While on the one hand Cuba's food politics often limit the value of food to an instrumental substance to satisfy collective needs, neglecting consumer demand and choice, on the other, Cuba's scalar politics of food reinforce long-term values for national sovereignty and social (and now, environmental) justice, which ordinary people elicit in their own definitions of what it means to be Cuban. At the level of everyday experience, where serendipitous events and encounters enable certain forms of value and disable others, people sometimes maintain, sometimes contest what I call Cuba's national moral economy.

In a sense, then, this book is about possibilities. It is about the transformative capacities of ordinary people in rural Cuba who must work within and between internal and external materialities and moralities. It is also about analytical possibilities that emerge when one shifts from western dichotomies – between fixed representations and unfixed flows or networks, for example – to the *creative formation* of such abstract representations as Cuban nationhood, which are, ironically, often the result of unfixed, cross-border interactions.³ As Marilyn Strathern (1995: 29) argues: 'Abstract knowledge is an end-result, the effect of creative work ... In short,