

TWO HUNDRED HECTARES OF GOOD BUSINESS: BRAZILIAN AGRICULTURE IN A THEMED SPACE*

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ABSTRACT. Geographers have recognized that trade fairs and other temporary spaces function as centers of knowledge, but we have a weak understanding of how fairs are themed spaces, similar to parades, festivals, and built environments, that produce cultural and political meanings. In this article we analyze the morphology, iconography, and performance of a large agricultural fair in Brazil, the Bahia Farm Show, which produces a regional identity of highly productive, leading-edge, and globally competitive agriculture in a former economic backwater. We discuss the production of themes in terms of power relations, cultural processes, relations with nature, and sociotechnological norms for agriculture. Omissions from the Farm Show indicate tension and accommodation between elites at different geographical scales. Brazil's high-input, high-output agriculture relies in part on the meanings that events such as agricultural fairs sustain and reproduce. *Keywords:* agriculture, Brazil, culture, theme, trade fair.

Agricultural fairs are themed spaces that produce cultural and political meanings attracting nearly 160 million visitors per year in the United States (Corbin 2002; Lukas 2007). In Brazil, an “agricultural superpower” in the words of former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell (Powell 2004; Barros 2009), fairs are held regularly in thousands of municipalities. Since the early 1990s Brazil's farming elite in leading-edge regions have held megafairs to display farm machinery, inputs, and services as showcases of farming prowess or “regional prestige,” arguments for regional economic development that attracts investment (Chase 2003).

We analyze one megafair, the farm show in the Brazilian northeast state of Bahia, as a themed space that promotes regional economic development in “200 hectares of good business,” as the master of ceremonies and the public-address system constantly reminded the audience. We do this by considering how morphology, performance, and iconography create arguments about power, culture, nature, and sociotechnological relations. We argue that the agricultural fair is a site where economic elites construct arguments aiming to increase regional prestige and create notions of normal agricultural scale while accommodating state-wide political elites. Through this analysis we claim that the megafair is a site for producing arguments that help sustain Brazil's global agricultural prowess. That such trade fairs exist in Brazil is not surprising; their content, however, is not known but merits study from a themed-space perspective which illustrates how elites produce spaces that generate arguments sustaining accumulation strategies.

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METHODS

Our research preceded along two independent lines that approached the June 2009 Bahia Farm Show as a consolidated event or performance read as a “text” (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988). The first author, Christian Brannstrom, followed a methodology based on participant observation coupled with analysis of documents available from fair organizers. After paying the entrance fee (an amount equivalent to approximately U.S.\$2.00), he spent one day at the site and returned for a second, “free” day. Upon entering the site, he observed three aspects of the fair: morphology or internal organization (Kniffen 1949, 1951); performances, such as speeches, intended to generate meanings; and iconography within and outside the fair. Notes of speeches, sketch maps, photography, and a census of display stands constituted his data.

Independently of the first author, the second author, Paulo Brandão, observed the 2009 Bahia Farm Show as professor of undergraduates enrolled in the geography program at the branch campus of the Federal University of Bahia in Barreiras, a fast-growing city in the western part of the state. Brandão led twenty students on a four-hour field trip that showed how the landscape of an agricultural fair simultaneously creates geographical representations and reflects power relations inherent to the elites who created the Farm Show as a spectacle and performance. Milton Santos’s argument that this type of event exemplifies “technical-productive structures” motivated this approach (2004, 39). Students began the field trip with the premise that the temporary nature of the Bahia Farm Show expresses its creators’ intentionality. Brandão instructed the students to collect data in two ways. First, the students were to circulate freely in small groups through the Farm Show, observing the most prominent themes and engaging attendees and participants in open-ended interviews. Second, they were to randomly interview 200 attendees, with questions focusing on the landscape representations of the Farm Show. After the field trip, the students discussed their findings and collectively produced a text that summarized their observations.

We identified the themes—power, culture, nature, and sociotechnological relations—checked assertions and claims against our own field notes, and cross-checked each other’s assertions. The first author used several years of prior research, focusing on environmental governance, as his basis for interpreting results (Brannstrom 2005, 2009, 2011); while the second author relied on his daily experiences in the region, his dialogue with undergraduate researchers, and his knowledge of the region’s historical geography (Brandão 2009, 2010).

THE TRADE SHOW AS THEMED SPACE

Themed spaces gained analytical attention with Michael Sorkin’s critique directed toward the “ageographical city” (1992, xi), which Scott Lukas reworked into the idea of “themed space,” defined as the use of “a theme to establish a unifying and often immutable idea throughout its space” (2007, 2). Several scholars have shown how permanent built forms and temporary events produce themed spaces

(Hoelscher 1998; Frenkel and Walton 2000; Schnell 2003; O'Reilly and Crutcher 2006; Shanken 2007; Hagen 2008). Scholars have not yet studied trade fairs as themed spaces, although economic geographers realize their importance for acquiring and disseminating knowledge (Bathelt and Schuldt 2008; Power and Jansson 2008; Bathelt and Spigel 2012). In interpreting the Farm Show as a themed space, we advance Carla Corbin's argument that agricultural fairs are "simultaneously landscapes and are *about* land" (2002, 185; italics in the original).

We also contribute to understanding cultural processes that help sustain Brazilian high-input, high-output agriculture. Susanna Hecht, for example, argues that the "central dynamics" of large-scale soy and livestock systems in Brazil "are still somewhat open to question" (2011, 214) (Figure 1). Poorly known "central dynamics" include cultural processes, which Jacquelyn Chase identified as the process by which agricultural organizations in Brazil create "regional prestige," defined as claims for rescuing "a once 'backwards' region from obscurity and traditionalism" (2003, 38, 42). For Chase, organizations create regional prestige by demonstrating that farming prowess motivates regional economic development. Regional prestige arguments occur within a national context that is globally competitive. Brazil is the world's fourth-ranking agricultural exporter (among the top three producers and exporters of beef, broilers, citrus, coffee, pork, soy, and sugar), and agribusiness accounts for approximately 30 percent of its gross domestic product, generating approximately U.S.\$35–40 billion annually (Abbey, Baer, and Filizzola 2006, 99–100; Baer 2008, 303; Hecht and Mann 2008).

We build on Hecht's and Chase's observations by showing how an agricultural trade fair generates the theme of a region that is shedding its former status as economic backwater to become dynamic, highly productive, leading edge, and globally competitive. Rather than see the trade fair as a product of global agricultural dynamics, we view it as the work of economic elites who are promoting normative claims for regional economic development. These arguments inevitably face tensions with elected state officials and their political appointees. The argument resulting from the themed space is that continued economic development generates lucrative farming investment opportunities that are unencumbered by environmental concerns in the country's *cerrado* (savanna) region.

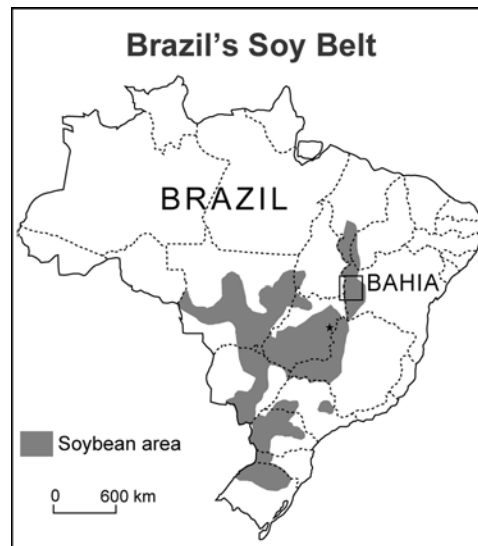


FIG. 1—Brazil's soy belt. The rectangle in western Bahia State demarcates the study area. Source: USDA 2006. (Cartography by Christian Brannstrom)

AGRICULTURE, ETHNICITY, AND POLITICS IN WESTERN BAHIA

The focus of our analysis is the annual Bahia Farm Show—no translation is necessary, because the official name is in English, not Portuguese, to suggest global importance—held in the municipality of Luis Eduardo Magalhães in western Bahia State (Figure 2). In June 2009 the Bahia Farm Show attracted 32,000 visitors and generated R\$214 million (U.S.\$109.7 million) in transactions (AIBA 2009c).



FIG. 2—The approximate cropland area in western Bahia State. Sources: Brannstrom 2009; land-cover posters viewed at the Bahia Farm Show in 2009. (Cartography by Christian Brannstrom)

Promoters marketed the fair to domestic and international firms eager to rent display space. Sponsors included the Barreiras-based Association of Bahian Farmers and Irrigators (AIBA), a farm-equipment-sales and cotton-growers association, and the municipality of Luis Eduardo Magalhães. Businesses in Luis Eduardo Magalhães are fierce supporters of the fair because of the large number of visitors who are drawn to this city of 50,000. For example, Figure 3 shows the iconography of the Bahia Farm Show in the form of a cake prepared for the complimentary breakfast at a hotel in Luis Eduardo Magalhães. Elites based the Farm Show on the Ribeirão Preto Agrishow in São Paulo, which, in turn, was based on the Farm Progress Show in Decatur, Illinois, and the Expochacra near Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The region's agricultural, ethnic, and political geographies create both limitations and opportunities for Farm Show organizers to formulate arguments for a leading-edge farming region. Sparsely occupied as late as 1979, the cerrado of western Bahia has developed rapidly into a globally competitive agroexport sector reliant on high-input, high-output agriculture (Brannstrom 2005, 2009, 2011). By 2010, farmers had planted the region's 1.75 million hectares of cropland in soy (1 million hectares), cotton (243,000 hectares), and maize (170,000 hectares), representing an annual investment of R\$3.8 billion (U.S.\$2.1 billion) (AIBA 2010a, 29).

The Economist magazine showcased western Bahia in 2010 as an example of the "Miracle of the Cerrado," interpreted as the transformation of lands considered worthless in the 1960s into farms that sustain Brazil's agroexport prowess: Liming technologies, African pasture grass, soybean development, and no-tillage practices have allowed Brazil to become one of the world's top grain exporters "without deforesting the Amazon" (*Economist* 2010). Nevertheless, by 2005 farming in

western Bahia had reduced the native cerrado to 40 percent of its nearly complete cover as visible in 1979 satellite imagery (Batistella and Valladares 2009; Brannstrom 2009; Menke and others 2009). The land-cover change has been the focus of a major polemic regarding the degree of compliance among farmers with Brazil's federal environmental legislation, as we discuss below.

The ethnic composition of western Bahia requires comment because of the cultural elements on display at the Bahia Farm Show. Historically, western Bahia was the region “beyond” the São Francisco River (Brandão 2009, 2010), distant in every respect from the slave-based sugar economy centered on the coastal city and state capital, Salvador. Barreiras, the region's major city, developed as a river port, sending shipments of hides, cotton, and latex by boat to ports on the São Francisco River (McCreery 2006). Relative isolation persisted until the early 1980s, when increasing numbers of *gaúchos* (the generic term for Brazilians from the three southern states) traded up small properties in the south in order to purchase large expanses of cerrado western Bahia and establish high-input agriculture (Haesbaert 1997; SEI 2000).

Gaúchos and *baianos* (natives of Bahia State) coexist in an uneasy mix (Haesbaert 1997, 157–196). *Gaúchos* have appropriated most of the prime farmland; *baianos* represent the vast majority of unskilled labor that services the farm sector. Colloquially, *baianos* residing in western Bahia use the term “*gaúcho*” to describe gay men, and *gaúchos* in the region use the phrase “*baiano turd*” to describe the agricultural weed *Cenchrus echinatus* (sandbur), which sticks to cloth-

ing and skin. The municipality of Luis Eduardo Magalhães, known as a “*gaúcho* city” (Haesbaert 1997, 213–230), spatially epitomizes this uneasy coexistence, having separated politically from Barreiras in the early 2000s in a movement that *gaúchos* led. Labeling the city the “Capital of Agribusiness,” the elites aggressively courted investments in agriculture and agroindustry. In 2005 a *gaúcho* real estate agent proudly proclaimed to the obviously foreign first author that the *gaúcho* half of the city “was just like southern Brazil” and that a *baiano*-dominated district was “disorganized and dirty, just like Bahia.”

Western Bahia's political landscape has shifted as rapidly as the agricultural economy has. One national newspaper headline summarized the dynamics: “Boom concentrates wealth and takes businessmen into politics” (Canzian 2008; translation by Christian Brannstrom). New economic elites, enriched from farming and associated business, live in gated communities and send their children to expensive private schools. In the early 1990s economic elites founded the AIBA, a sponsor of



FIG. 3—A cake prepared for the complimentary breakfast at a hotel in Luis Eduardo Magalhães showing the iconography of the Bahia Farm Show. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)

the Bahia Farm Show. By 2009 AIBA's members numbered approximately 1,300, and they generated R\$1.12 million (U.S.\$574,000) in dues (AIBA 2010b, 2010c). The AIBA lobbies federal and state governments with regard to farmer indebtedness, infrastructure development, agricultural credit, minimum prices, environmental regulation, and labor policies, among other concerns. In confidential research settings, observers described the AIBA as a "parallel government" and the "true source of power" in policymaking. State and federal environmental and agricultural bureaucracies lack capacity; a small staff, few vehicles, and a minuscule operational budget inhibit enforcement of environmental laws. That the AIBA has become a major player in the region's environmental policy debates is therefore no surprise (Brannstrom 2005, 2011). In an example of Chase's "regional prestige" argument (2003), the AIBA proclaims that the Bahia Farm Show is the "showcase of all of [the AIBA's] conquests" in agricultural development and that its twenty-year history is inextricably linked "to the development trajectory of agriculture in western Bahia," which they describe as "the object of desire of investors from around the world" (AIBA 2010a, 3, 2; 2010b, 3; translations by Christian Brannstrom). The AIBA's financial statement showed an income equal to R\$1.2 million (U.S.\$615,000) from the Bahia Farm Show against approximately R\$1 million (U.S.\$513,000) in reported expenditures (AIBA 2010c).

The first elected mayor of Luis Eduardo Magalhães, Oziel Oliveira, claims credit as originator of the Bahia Farm Show. Oliveira, from São Paulo State, married into a southern family that had established vast land claims over the areas in western Bahia that would become prime farmland. From its origin, the Bahia Farm Show represented the new economic elite's attempt to further the image of Luis Eduardo Magalhães as the "Capital of Agribusiness." Humberto Santa Cruz, who founded and led the AIBA for nearly twenty years, succeeded Oliveira's two-term mayoral administration in 2009. Santa Cruz also is the owner of the export-oriented Agronol farm used to showcase the region to potential investors. Voters elected Oliveira's wife, Jusmari, as mayor of Barreiras in 2008 after highly regarded terms as a deputy in the Bahian and federal legislatures. Thus, in 2009, the region's economic elite controlled both of the municipalities—Barreiras and Luis Eduardo Magalhães—that are critical to realization of the Bahia Farm Show and articulation policies favorable to the region's agricultural interests.

THE BAHIA FARM SHOW AS THEMED SPACE

We identified four ways in which elites used the Bahia Farm Show to create a themed space of regional prestige and economic development: displays of power; promotion of politically useful cultural elements; reconciliation of the contradiction between rapid agricultural expansion and Brazil's environmental legislation; and presentation of sociotechnological relations as a normative argument for large-scale farming. Elites do not have unlimited ability to define economic development; larger political forces visible at the Farm Show indicate the constraints that its organizers and participants confront.

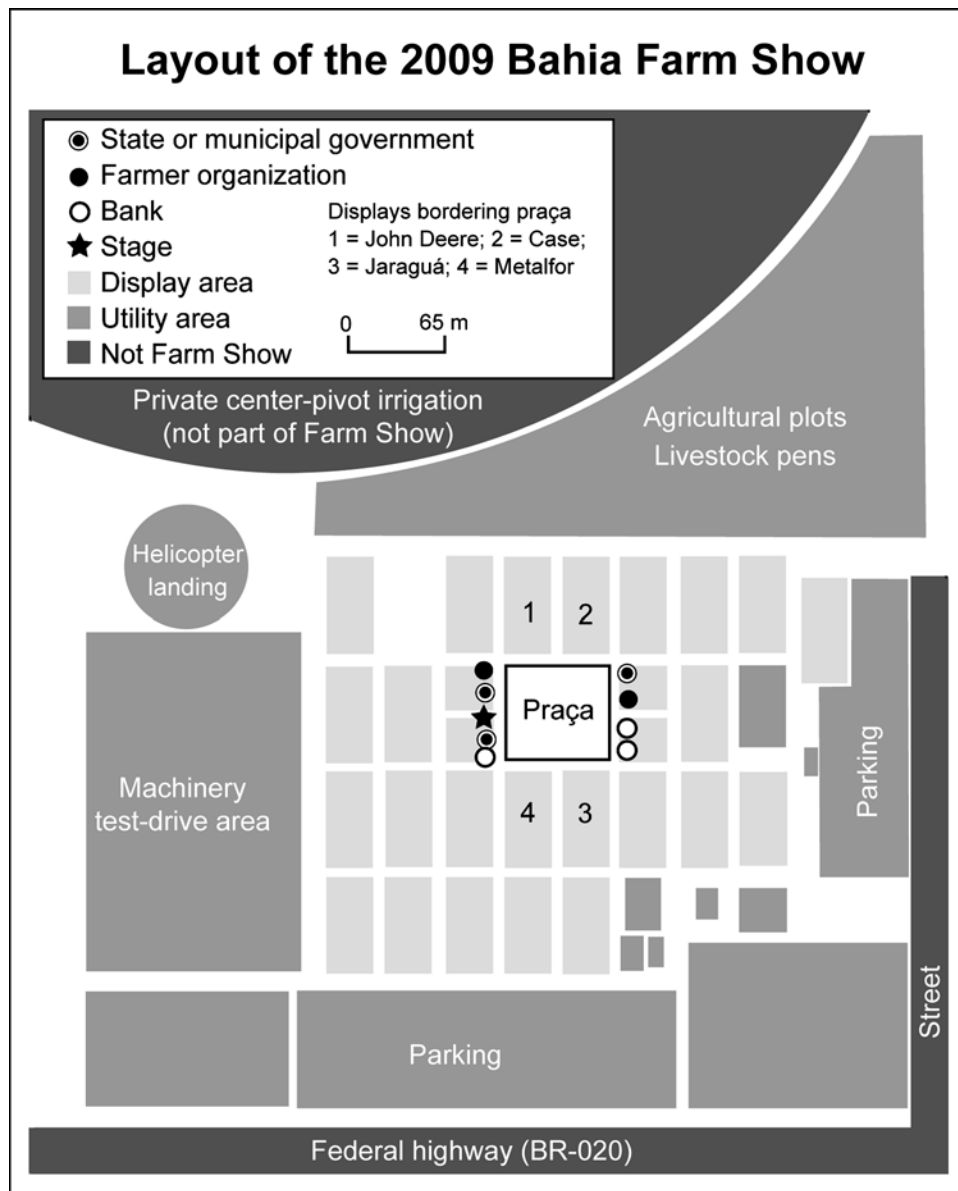


FIG. 4—Layout of the 2009 Bahia Farm Show, held in Luis Eduardo Magalhães, Bahia State, Brazil. Sources: AIBA 2009c; fieldwork. (Diagram by Christian Brannstrom)

POWER RELATIONS

Material and discursive displays of power at the Farm Show begin with the morphology of the *praça* (square), the spatial center of the Bahia Farm Show (Figure 4), which plays on the theme of the colonial *praça* to suggest a long heritage even though agricultural development is recent in western Bahia. The landscaping within the *praça* and the placement of the three flags—Brazil, Bahia, and Luis Eduardo



FIG. 5—View of the praça of the 2009 Bahia Farm Show. The Brazilian flag is flanked by the state flag of Bahia to the right of it and of Luis Eduardo Magalhães to the left of it. The stage is at the far left of the photograph. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)

Magalhães—recall the work of the landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx (Curtis 2000). Importantly, the flag of Bahia rarely appears in public events in western Bahia, so its presence at the Farm Show is congruent with other arguments that show allegiance to the Bahian state government (Figure 5).

Four symbols of power, critical to the farming economy, surrounded the praça: municipal and state governments; major banks, critical to providing farmers with credit; major farm-equipment firms; two farmers' associations, the private AIBA and the state-sponsored Sindicato Rural; and major agricultural firms (see Figure 4). A stage where a crowd gathered for the opening ceremony faced the praça (Figure 6). Farm Show organizers summoned the stage party, made up of the region's economic elite: Oziel Oliveira, the former mayor who had pushed for the first Bahia Farm Show; Humberto Santa Cruz, the former president of the AIBA who was now the mayor of Luis Eduardo Magalhães; Walter Horita, the president of the AIBA; Jusmari Oliveira, the former federal deputy and present mayor of Barreiras. Also on stage were Jaques Wagner, Bahia's governor and the leading figure in the left-of-center Workers' Party and state secretaries of environment and agriculture. Wagner praised the farming elite for having created a breadbasket; his secretary of agriculture, Roberto Muniz, proclaimed that "western Bahia is not a development frontier—it is development!"

Especially important to the creation of regional prestige was the speech that AIBA President Horita made on the stage facing the praça. Horita's speech proudly announced that "We're growing," stated that the agricultural area had increased by approximately 30 percent between 2008 and 2009, and then quickly situated



FIG. 6—Children’s choir singing for Bahia’s governor at opening ceremony of the 2009 Bahia Farm Show. The children are from an agrarian reform settlement near Luis Eduardo Magalhães. Baianas wearing typical white dresses are at the right of the image. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)

this growth within a national context. He claimed that a key reason that Brazil had fared relatively well during the global economic recession was agribusiness. He used this argument in contrast to environmental and human-rights criticisms of Brazil’s agribusiness, which left observers thinking that agribusiness in western Bahia had national importance and that criticisms of the region’s agriculture were undermining the interests of the millions of Brazilians who had benefited from economic stability. Horita defined agricultural development as “rapid growth” and took credit, in name of the AIBA, for indicators of success.

CULTURE

Elites used cultural arguments compatible with the Bahia state government while ignoring cultural elements territorialized in western Bahia. Specifically, elites aligned themselves with *baianidade*, the representation of the *modus vivendi* of the natives of Salvador, the state’s capital, on the Atlantic coast nearly 900 kilometers east of the Farm Show (O. S. A. Pinho 1998; P. S. Pinho 2010). *Baianidade* consists of Afro-Brazilian food, religion, music, and clothing. It is the image of Bahia that state elites, based in Salvador, project to the rest of Brazil and the world in order to attract tourist revenue; it has little to do with the *baianos* who lived in western Bahia in its backwater period. Nor is *baianidade* related in any way to *gaúcho* cultural elements.

Farm Show organizers contracted *baianas*, Afro-Bahian women wearing white hairpieces and dresses, who prepare the *acarajé*, a *baianidade* staple: bean dumpling fried in palm oil, then filled with a type of fish stew and dried shrimp. All socio-economic classes in Salvador adore *acarajé* as street food that *baianas* sell; moreover, *acarajé* is a consecrated food in *Candomblé* (Voeks 1997, 211). Use of *baianas* was

part of a strategy to associate the fair with the *baianidade* policy that state-tourism officials deploy to link the state to domestic and global tourist markets. During the Farm Show *baianas* prepared *acarajé* near the AIBA stand at the *praça*, and they were part of the entourage that greeted the Governor Wagner (see Figure 6). Promotional images for the Farm Show showed the *Olodum* musical group, which was integral to the re-Africanization of Salvador's Carnival (P. S. Pinho 2010). One billboard proclaimed "Bahia of Culture and Agriculture" beneath the Farm



FIG. 7—A billboard for the 2010 Bahia Farm Show using images of the *Olodum* musical group, a key element in *baianidade* (P. S. Pinho 2010), next to an image of a maize field proclaiming "Bahia of Culture and Agriculture." Similar propaganda was used for the 2009 Farm Show. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, July 2010)

Show logo (Figure 7). The display showed harmony between the high-output farmers in western Bahia and the Bahia state government despite the 900-plus kilometers that separate *Olodum* and western Bahia.

Elites used *baianidade* to substitute two cultural symbols that would have created an uncomfortable and confrontational political argument with state officials. First, *baianidade* displaced cultural symbols originating from the *gaúchos* who arrived in the early 1980s: Celebration of *gaúcho* culture would have erased the history and culture of western Bahia, suggesting a territory without history until the *gaúchos'* arrival. Though not present at the Farm Show, *gaúcho* culture would receive support from the argument that, as recently as 1990, Luis Eduardo Magalhães was a truck stop surrounded by a few houses, settled mainly by *gaúchos* seeking to create a "southern" city that would be orderly and clean, unlike their view of *Barreiras*, which had a history dating to the late 1800s. *Gaúcho* cultural elements, such as food, music, dress, and dance, were absent from the Farm Show, although they are present in both Luis Eduardo Magalhães and *Barreiras* (Haesbaert 1997).

The second set of cultural elements that *baianidade* displaced has origins in western Bahia's historical geography. The region's past isolation foments a political movement aimed at creating a new state in Brazil, São Francisco, and critical of

centralization of resources in Salvador. The movement for this new state, opposed strongly by the officials in Salvador, derives from the “beyond” São Francisco idea of an isolated region (Brandão 2009, 2010). The Bahia Farm Show excluded visual elements of this movement, although several billboards around Barreiras show the territory of the proposed new state (Figure 8). State officials fiercely oppose the new state because it would deprive coffers of valuable revenue from the region’s export-oriented agriculture. As if to reconcile farmers’ desire to form their own state and state officials’ wish to keep this tax-producing region, Farm Show organizers placed a billboard in the praça showing the R\$6 billion (U.S.\$3.1 billion) “Integration Railroad”—with the AIBA’s name on it—that would link the soy and cotton fields of western Bahia to a port in southern Bahia, overcoming years of isolation and poor transportation (Figure 9).

Baianidade, congruent with state policies to promote a culture marketable to domestic and foreign tourists (P. S. Pinho 2010), displaced gaúcho cultural elements and the separatist “beyond São Francisco” cultural argument. However, not all elites accepted baianidade. Humberto Santa Cruz’s opening speech made plain what many farmers think. To great applause, he proclaimed that the “Bahia Farm Show is like Carnival in Salvador, but here we don’t party. Here we do business.” He compared the Bahia Farm Show with Salvador’s world-renowned Carnival celebration, which attracts nearly half a million tourists annually (whereas the Farm Show attracts 50,000 visitors), while using the “business” of the Farm Show to denigrate the “party” atmosphere in the distant state capital.



FIG. 8 (above)—A billboard showing the outline of the proposed new state, Rio São Francisco, to be carved out of Bahia State. The billboard reads, “Welcome to the future Rio São Francisco State” and calls for a plebiscite. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)

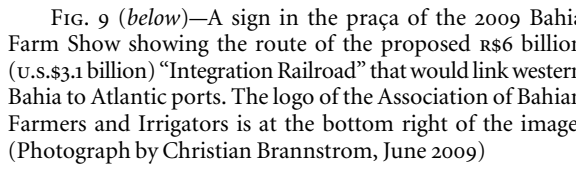


FIG. 9 (below)—A sign in the praça of the 2009 Bahia Farm Show showing the route of the proposed R\$6 billion (U.S.\$3.1 billion) “Integration Railroad” that would link western Bahia to Atlantic ports. The logo of the Association of Bahian Farmers and Irrigators is at the bottom right of the image. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)



FIG. 10—The facade of the stand of Bahia's Federation of Farmers and Ranchers, showing people and nature in harmony, as evidenced by a waterfall juxtaposed with crop products and no-tillage farming. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)

NATURE

Another theme of the Bahia Farm Show was the isolation of biophysical nature into a manageable category that would not interfere with farming prowess and economic development. Firms selling tractors, harvesters, chemical inputs, and specialized services at the Farm Show justified their presence by offering means to reduce natural obstacles and increase profitability. In addition, displays simplified nature into superficial images, suggesting the benign impact of farming on environmental resources in ways suggestive of Jennifer Price's 1995 essay on the Nature Company. For example, Bahia's Federation of Farmers and Ranchers (FAEB) displayed incongruous images of a waterfall, faux-wood pillars, and no-tillage cultivation symbolically joined by the FAEB logo in the center (Figure 10), suggesting that the FAEB could reconcile the tensions between agriculture and the environment.

Nature was central to the performance that elites enacted to emphasize their commitment to complying with existing state and federal environmental legislation. In doing so, economic elites reaffirmed the AIBA's regional prestige as having brokered a major deal, known as the "Sustainable West," between environmental regulators and out-of-compliance farmers. The opening-ceremony performance, initiated by AIBA President Horita, refuted the criticism that western Bahia's farmers were "destroying nature." After arguing that farmers create value for the federal government, Horita promoted Sustainable West as the solution to the "envi-

ronmental deficit.” The idea of an “environmental deficit” describes how farmers are not compliant with the federal Forest Code, which requires that 20 percent of farmland be reserved as conservation set-asides of cerrado.

Western Bahia’s farmers are not unique in their noncompliance. Set-asides totaling an estimated 87 million hectares of land covered with native vegetation are necessary to fulfill farmer commitments to Brazil’s Forest Code (Sparovek and others 2012). Based on a well-regarded project that the Nature Conservancy carried out in Mato Grosso, a state in central-west Brazil, Sustainable West created the means for the conservancy and the AIBA to facilitate compliance (Brannstrom and others 2012). The project began in early 2009, with both groups lobbying Bahia’s government to create the rules that would facilitate Sustainable West. At the Farm Show, the conservancy’s banner assured farmers that participation in Sustainable West would allow access to bank credit, increase land value, and free landowners from fines.

Elites used the Farm Show to promote Sustainable West as a means that would end illegal deforestation and noncompliance, thus helping dissipate a threat to the AIBA’s regional prestige and promoting the narrative of heroic settlers creating a breadbasket in compliance with environmental laws. In the opening ceremony, surrounded by symbols of power, Horita described Sustainable West as “calming the investors” interested in western Bahia. Secretary of Agriculture Muniz argued that Sustainable West would bring “tranquility and peace to investments for sustainability and economic growth.” Governor Wagner praised the dialogue between farmers—represented by the AIBA—and the state as leading to this outcome. He lauded the farmers who “cleared and settled a region that is now a breadbasket.” He went on to emphasize how the “environmental deficit can be settled without fines that are impossible to pay” and went on to “offer amnesty” to farmers as an incentive to participate (Government of Bahia 2009). Former AIBA President Santa Cruz praised the farmers who cleared land initially and turned the region into a “breadbasket” and then discussed the need to “recover the environmental deficit” but without “fines that cannot be paid.”

Production of the theme of imminent compliance required marginalization of at least two contrary ideas. First, federal environmental officials were absent from the opening ceremony, but whether elites did not invite them or they declined the invitation is not clear. In fact, a federal environmental police action in November 2008 motivated the AIBA to seek partnership with the Nature Conservancy to clear the “deficit,” even though the AIBA’s then president, Humberto Santa Cruz, had excoriated the crackdown as an ill-informed media circus (2008). Second, the AIBA’s leaders withheld their own criticisms of Bahia’s regulators. In print, the AIBA argued that the state’s “lack of capacity” was a threat to “the viability of one of the largest agricultural centers in Brazil” (AIBA 2009d, 3). The AIBA’s vice president even renamed the problem as the “bureaucratic environmental deficit” that resulted from poor state capacity (Pitt 2009). The AIBA’s 2009 annual report, displayed prominently at the Bahia Farm Show, argued that “the problem of the

[environmental] debate in the Bahian cerrado is more bureaucratic than environmental” because many farmers comply de facto with Forest Code provisions even if de jure they did not obtain the license to clear land (2009b, 44).

While Sustainable West created a bounded policy space that enhanced the AIBA’s regional prestige, elites confined nature associated with marginalized resource users into the similarly narrow space of handicraft work (Figure 11). The municipal government of Luis Eduardo Magalhães prominently displayed jewelry, purses, and place mats made by artisans from *capim-dourado* (golden grass), the cerrado plant *Syngonanthus nitens* commonly used in handicraft production (Schmidt, Figueiredo, and Scariot 2007). Residents of a nearby agrarian reform settlement—perhaps the parents of the children who sang for the governor, as we relate below—received training, sponsored by the municipal government, in the production of home-based products using cerrado plants. The tag on each handicraft item named the artisan and assured the purchaser that he or she had obtained an item produced as part of “socioeconomic inclusion” project that was congruent with federal and state governments, as we discuss below. Not content with affirming social inclusion, each tag also showed the symbol of Luis Eduardo Magalhães and the “Capital of Agribusiness” motto. Making small-scale agro-extractivism visible is a way of supporting the discourse that agribusiness is compatible with small farmers.

SOCIOTECHNOLOGICAL RELATIONS

The fourth theme the Bahia Farm Show produces is a normative argument for that large-scale farming. Wendy Wolford argues that Brazilian agroindustrial development in the country’s vast cerrado ecoregion relies on the “belief that large scale is ‘naturally’ more efficient, more productive, and more appropriate for the country than small scale” (2008, 651). The Farm Show produced themes supporting a naturalized scale while displaying the “family-farming” messages congruent with federal and state social policies.

Farm equipment occupied nearly one-third of the sixty-seven display stands counted (see Figure 4). Firms that sold farm infrastructural items, such as fences and metal roofing, or farm inputs, such as Bayer and Dow, occupied 16 percent of the stands. Only one environmental nongovernmental organization, the Nature Conservancy, was present. Banks were present—but none had an automated teller machine for the ordinary cash withdrawals that the bulk of the city’s population would require. Banks focused instead on promoting credit plans for high-input agriculture.

In spite of the dominance of high-tech farm machinery in the physical space of the fair, iconography and performances emphasized family farming so that elites could align themselves with left-of-center state and federal social inclusion policies (Hall 2006). For Brazil’s federal executive, support for family farming is a key aspect of its social inclusion policies. In a newsletter published prior to the Farm Show, the AIBA promised to “highlight” family agriculture supported by a federal



FIG. 11—Handicrafts made with cerrado plants, mainly *capim-dourado* (*Syn-gonanthus nitens*), displayed at the stand of the Luis Eduardo Magalhães Municipality. Tags on the items identify artisans (residents of a nearby agrarian reform settlement) by name and include the municipality's motto, "Capital of Agribusiness." (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)

subsidy program known as "Mais Alimentos" (More Food), which offered price reductions and low interest rates to family farmers hoping to purchase new farm machinery (even if they do not grow "more food"). This text used the dichotomy represented by extremes of "family" and "business" to separate the two types of agriculture (AIBA 2009a).



FIG. 12—In this advertisement a John Deere tractor suitable for family farming is shown next to a top-of-the-line cotton stripper displayed at the 2009 Bahia Farm Show. The small tractor would be financed under the federal government's "Mais Alimentos" (More Food) program. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)

Perhaps the most cynical use of family-farming discourse was the performance enacted for the arrival of Bahia's governor. A choir composed of the children—ironically, of residents of a nearby agrarian-reform settlement—greeted Governor Wagner (see Figure 6). A few minutes later, Secretary of Agriculture Muniz spoke of the need for "social inclusion" and told "small farmers" that they would not be "forgotten" by agricultural development in western Bahia. However, it is highly unlikely that "small farmers" were present at all because the Farm Show was nearly 100 kilometers distant from the main location of farming systems approximating this scale of production. Luis Eduardo Magalhães Mayor Santa Cruz talked about his plan for sustainable development of the agrarian-reform settlement. Governor Wagner, reproducing the social inclusion discourse of Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Brazil's popular president (Hall 2006), argued that "family agriculture is not about the hoe—they need technology and credit."

Toeing the "family-farming" line, firms such as John Deere and Massey Ferguson displayed large banners promoting their participation in Mais Alimentos. The John Deere display, for example, showed a well-off family farm, probably from southern Brazil, on a banner that, ironically, was next to a cotton stripper that would be an unimaginable acquisition for a family farmer (Figure 12).

Even as elites created enough space for family farming to appear congruent with state and federal party politics, sociotechnological facets of farming were focused on machinery, services, and credit. Labor relations were absent. Neither the manual labor, necessary for the daily operation of farms, nor labor recruiters, who provide the essential low-wage workforce, was present. In fact, export-

oriented farms rely on unskilled male workers for bottom-rung tasks; these workers, recruited from desperately poor regions of Brazil's semiarid Northeast, typically spend from two to four weeks on farms, living in dormitories, then return either to periurban settlements in western Bahia or to cities hundreds of kilometers away.

The absence of unskilled male labor contrasts with the prominent emotional labor of young women contracted through modeling firms to work at the Farm Show's display stands (Dyer, McDowell, and Batnitzky 2008) (Figure 13). Similar to practices in automobile trade shows, firms selling farm equipment hire young women to stand near tractors and make small talk to the mostly male clientele of the Bahia Farm Show. In a gendered spatial hierarchy, female workers linger on the outer ring of the larger displays of machinery or other inputs and are tasked with attracting the attention of males—prospective clients. The women aim to get the men into an inner ring, where male sales representatives engage the potential clients in conversation, offering espresso, water, and snacks in an air-conditioned lounge. In this way, women's emotional labor is critical for accomplishing the work of the Farm Show in the “200 hectares of good business” while unskilled male workers are invisible.

PRODUCING REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Trade fairs such as the Bahia Farm Show are functional with economic processes (Bathelt and Spigel 2012), but they are also themed spaces similar to parades, festivals, and built forms (Hoelscher 1998; O'Reilly and Crutcher 2006; Hagen 2008). Viewed in this context, trade fairs show strong and mutually reinforcing connections between cultural and economic processes. We did not aim to measure the economic impacts of the Farm Show; rather, we analyzed the event as a themed



FIG. 13—Women like this one were hired to make small talk with potential (male) purchasers of farm equipment at the 2009 Bahia Farm Show. (Photograph by Christian Brannstrom, June 2009)

space that produced normative claims on which Brazil's high-input, high-output agriculture depends, in part, for continued global prowess, as Wolford and Hecht suggested with respect to the internal dynamics and normative scale of agriculture (Wolford 2008; Hecht 2011).

We expanded on Chase's regional prestige idea to show how an organization used a trade show to produce ideas for regional economic development in a former backwater region that has emerged as highly productive, leading edge, and globally competitive (2003). We focused on how economic elites used morphology, performance, and iconography to produce themes relating to power, culture, nature, and sociotechnological relations. The megafair is a site for producing arguments for regional economic development that enhance the prestige of organizations while helping to sustain Brazil's global agricultural prowess. Specifically, the AIBA used the Bahia Farm Show to promote the idea that it is synonymous with regional development and with the generation of wealth from agriculture. The themed space promotes the AIBA's regional prestige by showcasing the close relationships of its leaders with high-ranking state officials and efforts on behalf of regional economic development. The AIBA further enhanced its prestige by relegating nature to narrowly defined compliance with existing environmental laws and arguing that compliance would not impair future economic development.

The Farm Show also reveals important differences with reference to agricultural fairs in the United States (Corbin 2002, 206–209). Agricultural fairs comprise long-established “expected events and elements,” whereas the Farm Show, for lack of a useful cultural-historical regional past, imported cultural processes from well outside the region. Second, Corbin argued that the “fair is defined by the agricultural production of its context,” whereas we found that the Farm Show looks forward to new investments for the next crop season and lacks the elements of a harvest festival. Third, Corbin claimed that U.S. fairs have “diverse participation and authorship,” whereas we found that a tiny elite controls the fair for a narrow audience around the theme of work and agribusiness, with amusements excluded. The “200 hectares of good business,” in contrast to Corbin's findings on the U.S. agricultural fairs, is an elitist celebration focusing on production and creating a normative view of agricultural technology, nature, and culture.

The processes by which elites territorialize themes reveal claims that deserve additional scrutiny. For example, agriculture is territorialized in terms of its fixed and sequential nature of production. However, elites who rely on farming use territorialized arguments only when convenient to justify their ultimate aim—continued enrichment through the expansion of agriculture, attraction of value-added agricultural firms, and growth of related activities such as urban real estate. When territorialized arguments contradict their prestige and accumulation strategies, elites seek alternative means to obtain goals. It is not surprising, therefore, that elites, seeking to enhance their prestige as leaders of agricultural development, create themed spaces that produce incongruous cultural elements.

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