

Market resistance in alternative socio-economic models: A multi-sited ethnographic research

Resistência de mercado em modelos socioeconômicos alternativos: Uma pesquisa etnográfica multissituada

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to analyze the organization of resistance tactics and market strategies within alternative socio-economic models. Specifically, we examine how resistance forms and identify shared attributes across alternative socio-economic models.

Originality/value: The study redefines resistance as generative rather than merely disruptive, demonstrating how it creates alternative market practices and economies that go beyond profit. Building upon De Certeau's theory, it unveils non-capitalist market models and extends the scope of resistance beyond consumer activism.

Design/methodology/approach: A year-long, multi-sited ethnographic study was conducted. In addition to systematic observation, twelve relational interviews were conducted with individuals present in the research settings, including Couchsurfing, permaculture farms, and cooperatives.

Findings: A diverse collection of resistance tactics can be employed to develop market practices, creating alternative methods of managing scarcity and economic exchange that transcend traditional market relations. These tactics exist within contexts defined by economic relations, influencing the development of various socio-economic initiatives. Rather than viewing resistance as random disturbances that the social order must address, it is more accurate to understand it as spontaneous deviations from attempts to maintain that order.

Contribution/implication: First, building on De Certeau's work, practices transcending market strategies can be developed not only in the daily lives of ordinary people but also in market initiatives. Second, it demonstrates that other economies can be developed by fostering interdependence among social agents through community-based relationships that do not exalt profit or private property. Third, it shows that consumer resistance is part of a broader concept of market resistance.

Keywords: resistance tactics, dominant strategies, alternative socio-economic models, market relations, everyday practices

Resumo

Objetivo: Esta pesquisa visa analisar a organização das táticas de resistência e das estratégias de mercado em modelos socioeconômicos alternativos. Especificamente, examinamos como se forma a resistência e identificamos atributos compartilhados entre modelos socioeconômicos alternativos.

Originalidade/valor: O estudo redefine a resistência como geradora, em vez de meramente disruptiva, demonstrando como ela cria práticas e economias de mercado alternativas que vão além do lucro. Com base na teoria de De Certeau, revela modelos de mercado não capitalistas e amplia o escopo da resistência para além do ativismo do consumidor.

Design/metodologia/abordagem: Foi realizado um estudo etnográfico multissituado com duração de um ano. Além da observação sistemática, realizaram-se doze entrevistas relacionais com indivíduos presentes nos locais de pesquisa, incluindo Couchsurfing, fazendas de permacultura e cooperativas.

Resultados: Uma coleção diversificada de táticas de resistência pode ser empregada para desenvolver práticas de mercado, criando métodos alternativos de gestão da escassez e de trocas econômicas que transcendem as relações de mercado tradicionais. Essas táticas existem em contextos definidos por relações econômicas, o que influencia o desenvolvimento de diversas iniciativas socioeconômicas. Em vez de encarar a resistência como perturbações aleatórias que a ordem social deve resolver, é mais preciso compreendê-la como desvios espontâneos das tentativas de manter essa ordem.

Contribuição/implicação: Primeiro, com base na obra de De Certeau, práticas que transcendem as estratégias de mercado podem ser desenvolvidas não apenas no cotidiano das pessoas comuns, mas também em iniciativas de mercado. Segundo, outras formas econômicas podem ser desenvolvidas, fomentando a interdependência entre os agentes sociais por meio de relações comunitárias que não exaltam o lucro nem a propriedade privada. Terceiro, a resistência do consumidor integra um conceito mais amplo de resistência ao mercado.

Palavras-chave: táticas de resistência, estratégias dominantes, modelos socioeconômicos alternativos, relações de mercado, práticas cotidianas

INTRODUCTION

Markets are social terrains constructed through a socio-historical process of disputes and contestation (González, 2017). The non-linearity of market formation is related to the interplay of different social actors over time, as well as to the recurrent revolutions and crises of the capitalist system. Despite the complexity and intense duel of inherent market forces, a dominant economic order stands out from other social orders. For De Certeau (1984), the economic order would be responsible for establishing mass forms of consumption and specific ways of being in the world. Through dominant strategies, the economic order provides consumers with the material and symbolic resources through which they develop their practices.

According to De Certeau (1984), the main characteristic of market strategies is the superiority of time over place. This superiority allows them to capitalize on conquered advantages and no longer depend on the variability of social circumstances, thus preparing for future expansions. Resistance tactics, on the other hand, are characterized as everyday practices that, although they flourish on all sides, are not capitalized; that is, they do not dominate time. In this sense, they have a provisional and limited performance in a particular time or place, residing only in the present, and therefore strenuous to capitalize.

Despite the apparent ubiquity of market relations, resistance tactics are characterized by their ability to escape the hegemony of their dogmatic structures and principles. They emerge spontaneously from everyday life, understood as the site of resistance par excellence (Wild, 2021). Everyday life is the space where different spheres and social forces converge, providing ordinary people with the resources to construct their tactics of dissent and resistance. It is precisely in everyday spaces that deviations from market strategies emerge, challenging the consumption patterns established by the traditional marketing system (De Certeau, 1984).

However, this analytical distinction becomes problematic considering the growing proliferation of alternative socioeconomic models, such as the sharing economy, the solidarity economy, and the social economy (Pottinger, 2018; Gerwe & Silva, 2020; OCDE, 2023). These models are frequently framed as forms of resistance because they challenge the principles of traditional economic relations. Examples include solidarity in self-management-based initiatives (Kawano, 2020; Esteves et al., 2021) and the weakening of individual property in the access-based economy (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). What all these models have in common is that they are based on practices

that undermine the mass forms of consumption or interpersonal forms of production promoted by traditional markets. At the same time, they continue to rely on core market principles, including exchange relations, private property, interdependence, and scarcity. This configuration raises questions about whether such models enable resistance or merely reconfigure market strategies in alternative forms.

De Certeau's (1984) thesis proposes the 'triumph' of resistance tactics (i.e., non-capitalizable or mass-reproducible actions that do not submit to dominant strategies) in the everyday context of ordinary people over market strategies. Specifically, the author delimits this triumph in contexts not affected by market relations, such as the everyday context. However, there is still a lack of empirical and conceptual clarity regarding how resistance tactics are organized and enacted within market-based contexts that simultaneously contest and reproduce dominant economic logics (González, 2017). Existing research has not sufficiently examined whether resistance tactics can emerge, persist, or even be transformed within alternative socio-economic models that are themselves embedded in market structures. This gap limits our understanding of the boundaries of De Certeau's thesis of the contemporary forms of consumer resistance in hybrid markets.

Against this backdrop, the research problem guiding this study can be formulated as follows: how are resistance tactics and market strategies organized, negotiated, and intertwined within alternative socio-economic models? Based on this question, this research aims to analyze the organization of resistance tactics and market strategies within alternative socio-economic models. To this end, we aim to 1. examine the formation of resistance tactics; 2. identify attributes and aspects they share; and 3. draw parallels and differences between resistance tactics and dominant strategies present in alternative socio-economic models. The qualitative analysis employs De Certeau's (1984) theoretical repertoire of strategies and tactics of resistance, as well as subsequent translations of this repertoire into the field of marketing. Because they are characterized as models capable of dispensing with some of the traditional market relations, the field study focuses specifically on three alternative socio-economic models: the sharing economy (Pottinger, 2018; Gerwe & Silva, 2020; Akbar & Hoffmann, 2022), the solidarity economy, and the social economy (Gaiger, 2021; OCDE, 2022; 2023).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Dominant strategies and resistance tactics

De Certeau's (1984) theory of strategies and tactics offers a foundational framework for understanding popular resistance within capitalist societies. Among the various forms of popular resistance, he identifies disobedience to the techniques of socio-cultural production as its most basic form. Central to this process is the dominant economic order (i.e., the market and its structures of mass distribution and reproduction of uniform practices), which seeks to massify collective production and consumption practices to extract economic value (Wild, 2021).

De Certeau (1984, p. 19) calls a "strategy the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an environment." To this end, strategies posit a place (physical and abstract) for producing something specific (i.e., a belief system that regulates social practices) to govern social relations. Strategies are actions that, legitimized by places of power, elaborate theoretical places (totalizing systems or discourses) that hide "beneath objective calculations their connection with the power that sustains them" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 20).

In creating its own 'proper', the dominant order develops an even more fundamental form of domination linked to the formation of intersubjective relations. This happens when the market specifies ways of being in the world (De Certeau, 1984). In general, profit and social labour relations have been identified as the key factors that differentiate capitalism from other socio-economic systems. However, capitalism advances in relation to other systems by introducing a new model of social relations. Extending the view beyond the productive system, Gallagher et al. (2019) identify a fundamental socio-cognitive component in the process of building market economies. Based on economic rationalism and acquisitive impulses, the driving force of modern economic life, this component influences not only the material production of society but also every social relationship among its members.

After postulating a 'proper', strategies create a place, i.e., "the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. [...] The law of the 'proper' rules in the place [...] A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 117). Place differs from space because "in contradistinction to the place, it has thus none of the univocity

or stability of a ‘proper’ [...] There are as many spaces as there are distinct spatial experiences” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 117-118). Space, therefore, is a practiced place. De Certeau (1984) attributes different intentions to spatial practices, referring to them as resistance tactics when they oppose strategies. He defines a tactic as “a calculus which cannot count on a ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 19). Unlike strategies, which can produce, map, and impose, tactics manipulate and alter existing operations in specific moments to create spaces. Tactics, lacking a ‘proper’ or capital, depend on material and abstract resources from dominant forces. Therefore, resistance tactics differ from strategies in that they rely on external resources and lack sustained progression.

Resistance has its meaning linked to facing, reflectively or pre-reflectively, the homogenizing strategies imposed by a dominant order, in opposition to the traditional capitalizing devices present in market relations (Brownlie & Hewer, 2011; Lekakis, 2021). This is because a tactic “has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. [...] Whatever it wins, it does not keep” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 19). Since synthesis is not a discourse but a set of decisions and ways to take advantage of an opportunity, resistance tactics have an eminently practical focus (De Certeau, 1984). Thus, by combining heterogeneous elements, practices “trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which they develop” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 18).

While this distinction has proven productive for analyzing resistance in everyday consumption practices, its applicability to contemporary socio-economic models reveals important analytical tensions. De Certeau (1984) conceptualizes tactics as dispersed, ephemeral, and fundamentally non-capitalizable. However, in alternative socio-economic models, resistance practices often evolve into collective, durable, and even institutionalized arrangements. These models combine elements traditionally associated with capitalism (e.g., money, exchange relations, and private property) with alternative logics of reciprocity, solidarity, and mutual aid (Pottinger, 2018; Laamanen et al., 2018; Rojanakit et al., 2022). As a result, resistance cannot be easily located outside or against the market; instead, it appears embedded within hybrid configurations that blur the boundaries between strategies and tactics.

De Certeau addresses part of this ambiguity in his analysis of Mauss’s (2002) notion of the gift economy. Defined as the systems of voluntary

benefits (*prestations* and *counter-prestations*), based on the obligation to give, receive, and repay (Mauss, 2002), the gift economy represents an economic diversionary practice for De Certeau (1984), suggesting that gift economies persist as alternative circuits of value within capitalist societies. In contrast to utilitarian market logic, the gift privileges relationality, moral obligation, and symbolic meaning, often appearing as waste, defiance, or irrationality from the standpoint of profit maximization. Although modern societies are based on liberal principles that establish money as a generalized code of equivalence, models such as the *potlatch* and the *kula* (Mauss, 2002) appear to persist as signs of an alternative economy. In this sense, “the politics of the ‘gift’ also becomes a diversionary tactic” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 27), understood as attempts to establish alternative circuits of value and meaning that resist utilitarian rationalism, rather than simply as gestures of defiance against the dominant order.

The gift economy involves deviance, cunning, and resistance tactics through the symbolic construction of social relations, distinct from utilitarian market strategies (Mauss, 2002). For instance, voluntary loss of gift-giving practices is “transformed into a transgression in a profit economy” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 27). Here, Mauss’s anti-utilitarian view merges with Certeau’s theory, opposing utilitarian rationalism. Although dominant economic logic governs much of the social order, gift economies enable social exchange, technical innovation, and moral resistance, thereby uniting economic and cultural realms (Mauss, 2002). While resistance mechanisms remain the same over time (Wild, 2021), their tactics must continually adapt, as markets exploit cultural differences that consumers themselves provide to consecrate the offer of new products or services (Ferraro et al., 2023). Thus, resistance, by individuals or groups, is to fight for the possibility of giving material and symbolic meaning to a world that has been historically constructed without their input (González, 2017).

By integrating Mauss’s anti-utilitarian perspective, resistance tactics can be reconceptualised not merely as acts of deviance or opportunism, but as relational practices that generate social bonds and alternative value regimes. While it challenges profit maximization by valorising reciprocity and enduring relationships, the gift economy also consolidates collective arrangements of practices (Brownlie & Hewer, 2011; Lekakis, 2021). From this perspective, resistance tactics may present an ambivalent character: they are disruptive in their opposition to dominant strategies. They are constitutive when they produce forms of sociability that can consolidate into collective and enduring arrangements within alternative socio-economic models.

Alternative socio-economic models and resistances

Research on consumer resistance has documented a wide range of practices through which consumers challenge dominant market arrangements (Lekakis, 2021; Truong et al., 2022), ranging from cases related to ethical consumption and voluntary frugality (Pottinger, 2018; Sorum, 2020) to brand rejection and boycotts (Hoffmann & Muller, 2009; Dessart & Cova, 2021), and anti-consumption (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2013; Wilson et al., 2022). These practices are typically conceptualized as individual or small-scale actions that disrupt market logics symbolically or materially. However, resistance activities can also be organized and developed collectively. These activities deviate from traditional market relations by encompassing, for instance, sharing, solidarity, and pro-social actions, resulting in distinct socio-economic models.

Alternative socio-economic models, such as sharing and social economies, are frequently presented in the literature as institutionalized expressions of resistance to consumerism and individualistic market relations (Pottinger, 2018; Lee & Cha, 2022). While the traditional economy is oriented toward profit and efficiency, the social and solidarity economies focus primarily on people and communities, prioritizing social impact over the mere accumulation of capital (Gaiger, 2021; OECD, 2022; 2023). Similarly, the sharing economy may not involve central elements of traditional market relations, such as property transfer and pricing (Laamanen et al., 2018; Gerwe & Silva, 2020). This is because these models are based on alternative forms of organizing socio-economic relations, such as cooperation, reciprocity, and sharing (Laamanen et al., 2018; Pottinger, 2018). These forms are characterized as agents of the decommodification of relations, invoking different types of social interactions to operate economic interdependencies.

Alternative socio-economic models organize distinct economic structures by decommodifying social relations, rather than relying on the principles of the traditional market. In everyday practices, activities in the sharing economy typically involve opening private spaces to foster new social relationships (Akbar & Hoffmann, 2022), creating ongoing commitments and connections among individuals (Pottinger, 2018, p. 109). This collective nature aligns with De Certeau's (1984) concept of resistance tactics because collective practices challenge the individualization of market relations and are conceptualized as a polytheism of scattered practices. Additionally, decommodified social relations promote objectives beyond mere utilitarian order, intertwining economic relations with social, political, and environmental goals (Rojanakit et al., 2022).



Although these alternative socio-economic models are linked to sustainability (Martin, 2016), moral consumption (Laamanen et al., 2018), and activism (Ertz et al., 2016; Schmidt et al., 2021), utilitarian aspects persist. In the sharing economy, for instance, practices such as opening private spaces or resources to others foster social bonds and ongoing commitments (Pottinger, 2018; Akbar & Hoffmann, 2022), but they also require digital coordination mechanisms that may reproduce market-like strategies. Similarly, social and solidarity economy initiatives (e.g., cooperatives) prioritize social objectives over profit. However, these practices often depend on market exchanges to ensure their viability (Rojanakit et al., 2022). These alternative models, therefore, are characterized as a hybrid economic form that uses elements of traditional capitalism alongside new ways of organizing social relations to create original economic structures capable of operating within the interdependence among their agents (Rojanakit et al., 2022).

Although this hybridity calls into question the assumption that the decommodification of market relations can reorganize economic structures, it can be identified as a driving force of resistance. Alternative socio-economic models cannot be classified as either in opposition to or in alignment with the market. Instead, they operate as transversal configurations in which resistance and reproduction intersect (Pottinger, 2018). From a De Certeauian perspective, these models can be conceptualized as resistance practices because producers and consumers rearrange market strategies (proper) to align with their own practices (tactics), using whatever resources are available to achieve their goals. Alternative socio-economic models may institutionalize collective practices, creating durable structures that enable coordination and continuity. This institutionalization blurs the boundary between tactics and strategies, as practices initially conceived as resistance may acquire strategic features that enable persistence.

METHODOLOGY

Guided by the research objectives, a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus, 1995) was adopted to examine how resistance practices are organized and enacted across different contexts. Rather than treating each empirical context as a separate case, the research followed practices of reciprocity, hospitality, and collective organization as they unfolded across different socio-economic models. Rajak (2011) emphasizes that this method is relevant because it makes explicit the strategies used to establish oneself in



environments shaped by corporate capitalism. Building on this perspective, Marcus (1995) further argues that multi-sited ethnography enables the overcoming of dichotomies, moving beyond a focus on grand narratives and allowing for the identification of complex contexts through the tracing of actors and their interactions.

The empirical contexts were visited at two points: from September 2019 to March 2020 (interrupted by the pandemic) and from February 2022 to July 2022. Data collection combined participant observation, systematic field notes, and relational interviews (Marcus, 1995; Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Wittel, 2011). This combination enabled access to both routine practices and participants' interpretations of their everyday experiences, consistent with an interpretive and phenomenological orientation (Van Manen, 1990).

Participant observation involved repeated and sustained engagement in everyday activities within the selected contexts. In the sharing economy, this included long-term participation in the Couchsurfing platform beginning in February 2018, involving active participation in online forums, interaction with members, and engagement in hospitality practices. After a period of familiarization with the platform's norms and dynamics, one researcher hosted travelers on multiple occasions, allowing close observation of domestic, social, and cultural interactions as they unfolded in situ. These experiences were documented in detailed field notes that focused on routines, interactions, and the negotiation of meaning in everyday life.

In addition to Couchsurfing, fieldwork extended to other alternative socio-economic initiatives, including permaculture projects, cooperatives, and sharing-based platforms such as WWOOF and Workaway. These contexts were selected because they instantiate different organizational forms through which resistance practices are enacted and sustained. Across these sites, the researcher engaged in activities, informal conversations, and observations that allowed for comparative insight into how similar practices were organized under distinct socio-economic arrangements. Thus, we identified and analyzed models under the sign of solidarity economy, e.g., permaculture (Kawano, 2020; Esteves et al., 2021), cooperativism (Wellen, 2012), and the sharing economy, e.g., WWOOF and Workway (Ertz et al., 2016).

Relational interviews were conducted with participants who were actively involved in these initiatives, either as users, members, or practitioners (Table 1). The interviews encouraged participants to engage in informal dialogue, enabling them to narrate and interpret their experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Approximately 16 hours of audio recordings were made, representing only a portion of the extensive dialogues with participants and

others in the field. Emphasizing both formal and informal conversations, the study aimed to understand the everyday lives of ordinary people through their own language, as described by De Certeau (1984, p. 50), the “conversation is a provisional and collective effect of competence in the art of manipulating ‘commonplaces’ and the inevitability of events in such a way as to make them ‘habitable.’” Over time, recurring patterns and themes became evident across different participants and contexts, and continued data collection primarily reinforced these insights rather than generating substantially new information, resulting in a corpus of 175 pages of transcripts and field notes.

Table 1
Interviewees’ information and research loci

Denomination	Genre	Age	Platform or social movement	In/out <i>locus</i>	Profession
Interviewee 1	Female	33	Couchsurfing	In <i>locus</i>	Teacher
Interviewee 2	Male	31	Couchsurfing	Out of <i>locus</i>	Sports Manager
Interviewee 3	Female	42	Permaculture – WWOOF	In <i>locus</i>	Nurse – Farmer
Interviewee 4	Male	45	Couchsurfing	In <i>locus</i>	Teacher
Interviewee 5	Female	32	Couchsurfing	Out of <i>locus</i>	Architect
Interviewee 6	Female	23	Earthship – WWOOF	Out of <i>locus</i>	Architect
Interviewee 7	Male	33	Couchsurfing	In <i>locus</i>	Entrepreneur
Interviewee 8	Male	35	Couchsurfing	Out of <i>locus</i>	Radio host
Interviewee 9	Female	52	Agricultural Cooperative	In <i>locus</i>	Cooperative – Merchant
Interviewee 10	Male	48	Agricultural Cooperative	In <i>locus</i>	Cooperative – Merchant
Interviewee 11	Female	30	Couchsurfing – Workaway	Out of <i>locus</i>	Teacher
Interviewee 12	Male	46	Agricultural Cooperative	Out of <i>locus</i>	Manager

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section is organized into three categories: 1. Pragmatic Cunning; 2. Dominant Power Places, and Resistance; 3. Counterstrategies – Building a ‘Proper’ The categories emerged from an analytical articulation between

the empirical material and the theoretical lens offered by De Certeau's notion of tactics of resistance. Rather than imposing predefined classifications, the categories were inductively derived from observed practices within alternative socio-economic models based on sharing, social, or solidarity practices. This approach allowed the identification of recurring tactics through which actors negotiate, subvert, or reconfigure dominant market logics, even when these tactics manifest differently across contexts.

Pragmatic cunning

Resistance tactics maintain an inventive element that plays with the manipulation of socially produced signs, especially those of dominant strategies. Unlike strategies, tactics do not aim to guide the individual's way of being in the world. Although much of his critique returns to the dominant economic order, De Certeau (1984) recognizes that tactics also compete for power with other hegemonic social institutions, such as governments, cities, and armies. Whatever the end, the practice of resistance can involve simultaneous opposition to more than one dominant order.

In the first formal interview, which took place in a cohabitation experience provided by Couchsurfing, interviewee 1 (Teacher, 33) commented on her experiences on the platform and how different logics of use were intermingled. As the hostess explains: "I had already used Couchsurfing in England and Switzerland, but only to meet people and sights in the city. [...] But the first time I went to Turkey, I had to use Couchsurfing a lot, because I had no place to stay". After revealing that she had gone through a series of misfortunes abroad, she found herself completely helpless in Turkey. With no financial resources to return to Brazil, she resorted to Couchsurfing as a real possibility of finding a place to stay, at least for a few days.

My experience with Couchsurfing, the first time [as a guest], was out of necessity. I experienced something that is not exactly Couchsurfing. That was in 2015. When I returned to Brazil, I had already lived in Turkey, with those people who welcomed me, who didn't even know who I was, who adopted me, who helped me in a time of need. [...] When I came back in 2016, I opened my house for Couchsurfing. I was so grateful that I was willing to make any sacrifice to welcome people.

She spent four months living with two local families until she was financially stable enough to rent a house – a practice associated with the tradi-

tional market strategy. As registered in the field notes: “Despite the fact that interviewee 1 understands renting as standard practice, as she relegated shared accommodation to the last option, she was unable to resort to conventional market practices” (Field Notes, 09/22/2019).

A similar situation also led interviewee 11 (Teacher, 30) to stay on Couchsurfing. After deciding to learn Spanish in an immersive way, the interviewee contacted a small inn in Buenos Aires, Argentina, via the Workaway platform. According to her, the main objective was to work temporarily in exchange for accommodation and food aid. However, “after a week of hard work, I saw that it was not the situation I had planned. I was working hard and didn’t have time to study the language or get to know the city”. In the search for an alternative and without money to pay for a hotel, the interviewee reactivated her account at Couchsurfing and requested accommodation. After a few weeks as a couch surfer, she got a better-paying job in the city, which allowed her to rent her own house. In the meantime, two hosts hosted her on the platform at no cost. “I offered to pay for some household expenses. I usually went to the supermarket to buy food or a product that was missing.”

The dominant strategy for the two interviewees would be to search for a proper place that, through a formal payment, would allow them to establish a property relationship with the consumption object. In contrast, the interviewees were forced to resort to other logics, opting to engage in relationships based on reciprocity and sharing. “It is clear, therefore, that the dramatic incidents of everyday life can assume a leading role over formal patterns” (Field Notes, 09/22/2019). Although these patterns are used as the main norm of performance under usual economic conditions, they can be readily isolated in specific situations.

Not all respondents, however, used Couchsurfing just to overcome moments of difficulty. This is the case of interviewee 2 (Sports Manager, 31), who uses Couchsurfing for exotic experiences and cost reduction, which does not differ from mass consumption strategies. “Because we were students at the time, I wanted everything cheaper. [...] Couchsurfing appeared as the last option. We had already looked for everything, several forms of accommodation. [...] We also agreed to use the ‘couch’ for adventure. It was a castle in England! For interviewee 5 (Architect, 32), the platform proved to be an adventure as well. After a year of restless work in Europe, she decided to travel across the continent without spending much, staying at local residences. The experience, however, was not positive: “Right at the first residence I stayed in (Italy), the host harassed me. [...] I reported on

the platform and immediately left for another city. I still used the program other times, but after that trip, I kind of abandoned my account.”

To designate operations in which individuals somehow subvert the dominant economic order. Still, without aiming to reverse it, we use the concept of pragmatic cunning, which De Certeau (1984) took from the ideas of practical intelligence (*mètis*, from the Greeks) and practical sense (of the *kibilas* and *bearnesas*). Such forms of resistance have both the inventiveness inherent in tactics and the objectivity of meeting needs pragmatically. Despite being formed by individual decisions, such cunning relies on a community of practice aimed at sharing accommodation—hence their inventiveness. At the collective level, they begin to develop a space, that is, a place formed by practices, in which the inventiveness of the actors transforms the univocity and stability of the market order. Nonetheless, these practices are momentary and based on immediate circumstances, underlining the spontaneity of the tactics.

Dominant power places and resistance

It is not only through cunning, as evidenced earlier, but also by questioning places of power. More elaborate forms can insinuate against domination strategies, directly questioning not only capitalizable practices but utilitarian rationality itself. The 165 experiences of interviewee 4 (Professor, 45) in Couchsurfing, all as a host, substantiate these insinuations. In a sharing experience at his home, the interviewee commented a little about his story. How he joined the platform without many pretensions: “I entered to understand a little more about the world, to understand the thoughts of others, because you have your political conception, your critical sense. But what does the other think, related to you, your community, and your local culture?”

Gradually, he began to engage deeply with the platform, earning the official title of Couchsurfing ambassador in his city. As the interviewee comments:

I was the ambassador of my city in the Couchsurfing project. In this role, I ensured that only people who met the minimum security requirements were allowed to join the community, whether they were travelers or new members of the city. [...] To avoid fakes or bad-tempered profiles who would use the opportunity to do the wrong thing, like stealing. [...] People who enter the community with a different spirit. (Interviewee 4).



The engagement on the platform and the interest in hosting and helping tourists in his city led the interviewee to gain prominence both within the formal Couchsurfing network and within the local community. As he comments, “in addition to the platform there is a local community, which is as strong as the platform itself. [...] There is a network outside the platform that is voluntary and spontaneous”. “This attempt to develop even more cohesive groups outside the platform itself indicates a need to reinforce a sense of community and reduce the perception of risk in relationships” (Field Notes, 12/17/2019). Although he indicates that platform users have different orientations depending on their relationship with the network, interviewee 4 reveals the existence of what he calls the spirit of Couchsurfing.

The spirit of Couchsurfing is not just about hosting. On the contrary, the member intends to learn more about the culture and local customs where he is staying. [...] The spirit of Couchsurfing is not to receive payment in kindness. But the person can help you in several ways. [...] Nothing is charged, everything is spontaneous. [...] The biggest gain, I would say, is the exchange of experiences of the world. This is priceless.

“Spontaneity in times of social relations marked by calculus can represent a sharp departure from the dominant practices. Utilitarian rationality and its effects, therefore, may have been replaced by other forms of organizing social relations” (Field Notes, 12/17/2019). This idea is explored by interviewee 7 (Entrepreneur, 33). The interviewee commented, in a Couchsurfing experience at a researcher’s home, that the traditional experiences of accommodation, in hotels and inns, are generally the first alternative because of the maintenance of old customs and fear of the new. In Couchsurfing, on the other hand, other possibilities are open. As the interviewee comments:

It’s an experience thing, from what I understand. [...] For me, the idea is that you get to know the world, meet people at low cost, and exchange that with others. [...] And I see this as a cultural opportunity because you know people from all over the world.

The cultural opportunity, which Interviewee 7 refers to, is not related to the purchase of a mass product or service on a shelf, but a personal and unrepeatable interaction between host and guest. Initiatives such as Couchsurfing promote the emergence of new economies that address scarcity and interdependence among their agents through their own models. As pointed out in the field notes: “coincidentally or not, these relationships cannot be



capitalizable. Although the sharing of accommodations is still characterized as a form of economy, the market in this case is no longer the central operator of relations between its agents” (Field Notes, 01/16/2020).

Counterstrategies - Building a ‘Proper’

Some initiatives may represent forms of resistance to market strategies, even displaying some characteristics of the dominant orders. Such initiatives begin to postulate theoretical places of resistance, that is, systems and discourses shared by the community (De Certeau, 1984). However, although they begin to construct a set of beliefs that are distinct from market discourses, they can only be articulated through them. This is the case with permaculture and agricultural cooperatives, which stand out as forms of both practical and discursive resistance. They seek to build alternative economic models based on collectivism, which they call counter-strategies.

Opening her house to researchers, Interviewee 3 (Farmer, 42) presented the permaculture-related activities she develops. Since 2014, when she left her job as a nurse in the capital to pursue a lifestyle more in tune with nature, she has been dedicated to living entirely in tune with nature. According to her, “we try to imitate the way nature works, different from what man has been doing.” Following the precepts of permaculture in producing her own food and interacting with the community, she seeks to establish ways that differ from traditional market relations. Recalling the reasons that led her to change her life, she comments.

What made us [my husband and I] come to live here was the neighborhood. Everyone here works with or is connected to the concept of permaculture. The bigger the community, the stronger we get. The idea for us here is to have a dynamic of sharing surpluses or even exchanging. The important thing is to be nothing calculated, because one of the ideas we have here is exchange. [...] Exchange would not be the correct term, but to share surpluses. [...] Because it is nothing calculated.

“The concerns with natural resources and social relations indicate the presence of a critical reflection by the community on the traditional dominant reference system. As a result, they seek to construct an interconnected lifestyle: the culture of the land complements the culture of social relations” (Field Notes, 05/14/2022). Thus, they form a community of practices organized around the denial of dominant sites of power. The concern with



the natural and social environment, however, does not exempt the community from developing activities with a commercial destination. As the interviewee explains:

We develop courses and workshops related to permaculture: phytotherapy, phytocosmetics, bread-making, and slow-fermentation bread. Everything is connected to natural life. [...] We have an opening for free activities. But we must be realistic as well because we have expenses here. We take some inputs from here for our own consumption, and others to sell. We go to biweekly fairs and sell our products as we can.

The sale of her products at street fairs, for example, does not provoke dissonance because, according to her, it is not intended for accumulation or profit but subsistence and the development of community activities. As part of this development, her community is enrolled in the WWOOF initiative, through which volunteers from around the world seek to learn more about agricultural techniques. In addition to disseminating permaculture, another reason for engaging in the WWOOF initiative was the shared values it embodied. “WWOOF is for diversity, there should be no lifestyle restrictions. [...] Farms must not discriminate, choose who goes, according to sexual orientation, ethnicity, or skin color” (Interviewee 3).

Like permaculture, the agricultural cooperatives investigated in this research (Movimento Sem Terra [MST]) also seek to build differentiated economic relations among their members, following a reference system that questions individualism and the traditional capitalist trade circuit. Throughout conversations with Interviewee 10 (Cooperative member, 48), the importance of a collective organization of commerce and local production is emphasized. According to the interviewee, the grocery store is not intended to accumulate profit, like a traditional company, but to improve the quality of life for cooperative members. To this end, the grocery store must operate on three fronts.

The [grocery store] market here works in partnership with the settlement's producers. [...] It serves as a purchasing platform for cooperative members, including agricultural products, sheep farming, and higher-value goods such as handicrafts. All this at favorable prices. [...] The commerce [grocery store] here also serves as a community bank, because we pay the producers before the harvest or the slaughter of sheep. [...] The payment is made sometimes two or three



months after the harvest or slaughter periods. [...] And we also act as a distributor, because in addition to buying products from other settlements and cities to sell here, we sell the products of our settlement in other locations.

“Although it is not possible to classify this economic system as a gift economy,¹ its members subvert the social relations forms based on individualism – common in traditional trade circuits” (Field Notes, 10/11/2019). According to the Interviewee, everything they do in the cooperative is linked to a larger project that aims to build a society free of inequalities and to promote human dignity through work.

In the neighboring cooperative, about 10 km away, Interviewee 9 (Cooperative member, 52) also emphasized the importance of collective values for the community. For her, the cooperative foundation (established on September 7, 1996, following the discovery and expropriation of a large unproductive latifundium) and its development were the result of the union of local families.

People from various locations in the region came to the settlement. [...] Here, in the beginning, it was a seven-month struggle. This vision of collectivity unified these people in discussing a settlement built so that everything we were going to experience would be collective. Everything we were building was collective, collective land, collective housing, agricultural production, and livestock production. Besides, the entire structure of the settlement is collective.

However, this collectivist view, which prioritizes community values over financial gains, may limit the development of Brazilian cooperatives, as noted by Interviewee 12 (Manager, 47). For the interviewee, who serves as a manager at a cooperative complex in Mondragón (Basque Country), this attempt to unify cooperative concepts and universal solidarity can harm the competitiveness of cooperatives and the market entry of their products. In Mondragón, on the other hand, “all economic dynamics within the cooperative itself are stipulated within contracts”. Although they are not entirely based on formal contracts, the counterstrategies employed by the initiatives depicted in this section share a need to build something of their own. MST and permaculture initiatives have a more structured discourse, which, similar to a ‘proper’, seems to guide collective practices firmly.

¹ See Mauss (2002).

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Appropriating collective productions, the market functions as a reference system that structures individuals' positions and practices, guiding their behavior in other social spheres. It represents what De Certeau (1984) calls the place, i.e., a game of stable and univocal positions that determines a way of being in the world. Even outside market circuits, individual or collective actions remain submerged within general market principles, which maintain social cohesion and intensify the morphology of capitalist markets. Although the instrumentality of market exchanges may represent a teleological reference system, individuals face choices and conflicts when crossing the boundaries of their structures. Market resistance arises over this dominant place.

Consequently, resistance cannot be characterized as casual disturbances with which the social order must deal, but as spontaneous deviations that challenge it. While these tactics do not fully overturn the dominant economic order, as the research findings suggest, they follow unpredictable paths that do not align with established structures (De Certeau, 1984). The empirical category, Dominant Power Places and Resistance, illustrates this dynamic by showing how participants engage with the unavoidable structuring of market forces while simultaneously questioning those assumptions. Rather than positioning resistance as an external rupture, the findings reveal that it emerges within the market through deviations that unsettle its calculative rationality, the rigidity of exchange, and the prioritization of individualism. This aligns with De Certeau's (1984) argument that resistance does not primarily confront power directly but rather operates through subtle displacements within dominant structures.

As the experiences in the field reveal, resistance is not a uniform process of fighting against or gaining power from the dominant pole. On the contrary, these experiences are mainly associated with creating and disseminating diversified alternatives against that dominant economic order. Admitting the possibility of fighting on several fronts, from a Certeauian perspective, resistance would be characterized as a multi-discursive position that deals with sites of power by manipulating the practices they establish. Even under the same socio-economic model, each participant took a different position, thereby subverting or at least questioning some aspects of the market's hegemony. This is why we identified practices oriented towards multiple foci, such as sustainability, the denial of profit, the defense of reciprocity, and the search for social inclusion.

The category Pragmatic Cunning further strengthens this interpretation by providing empirical evidence for De Certeau's concept of tactics. Participants utilize market instruments, such as platforms, pricing mechanisms, and organizational structures, not to reinforce market dominance but to redirect them towards reciprocity, sustainability, or collective benefit. These practices are not guided by a coherent ideological project, but rather by improvisation in specific situations, practical intelligence, and responsiveness to everyday constraints. In this sense, resistance emerges as a form of lived, pragmatic agency rather than as an overt political stance, reinforcing the notion of resistance as an integral part of everyday life.

Resistance tactics use elements of the market itself to varying degrees. This happens, among other reasons, because the markets are constantly appropriating even the forces and elements of resistance (Ferraro et al., 2023; Jones & Hietanen, 2023). This apparently inescapable character of the markets opens new possibilities of resistance. As the findings indicate, it is not necessary to leave the market to oppose its structures of domination. There is no central focus, but heterogeneous orientations. Resistance tactics are always present in economically conditioned contexts, guiding the formation of different socio-economic initiatives and models. In this process, it is possible to transcend traditional market structures and develop entire alternative economies.

Although De Certeau typically describes resistance tactics as ephemeral and opportunistic, the category Counterstrategies – Building a 'Proper' reveals how they can acquire relative durability. Initiatives such as cooperatives, permaculture projects, and solidarity-based platforms demonstrate how actors can collectively stabilize their tactics, creating alternative socio-economic arrangements that partially institutionalize resistance. However, these counterstrategies do not fully escape market logics. Instead, they selectively appropriate these logics, combining market exchanges with redistributive, political, and ethical commitments. This finding extends de Certeau's framework by demonstrating how tactics can become more structured without becoming dominant strategies themselves.

Taken together, the three categories articulate resistance as a multi-discursive process. Resistance is neither a unified movement nor a struggle for the same position of power, but a constellation of practices that manipulate and decommodify market logics from within. This perspective supports abandoning a narrow focus on consumer resistance in favor of a broader notion of market resistance that encompasses diverse actors embedded in economic relations. As a theoretical contribution and complementing De Certeau's (1984) thesis, this study reveals that practices that transcend

market power can develop not only in daily life, seemingly distant from market hegemony, but also within various initiatives, including alternative market models.

Some contributions can be highlighted for managers of traditional enterprises. Rather than viewing alternative economies as merely marginal or oppositional, firms can learn from their practices of reciprocity, sustainability, and collective engagement to reconfigure their own value propositions. This involves moving beyond corporate social responsibility and embedding alternative logics directly into core operations. Enterprises can, for example, adopt hybrid business models that balance profit generation with social and environmental objectives, create participatory governance mechanisms that empower stakeholders, or integrate community-based pricing and exchange systems that reduce transactional rigidity. The findings also suggest that managers should view markets as dynamic places, where the tactics of consumers and producers constantly redefine the boundaries and expectations. By recognizing that resistance can arise from customers and local communities, organizations can proactively channel these forces into constructive collaborations, co-creating products, services, and experiences that respond to the growing demand for inclusivity, sustainability, and ethical production.

The findings reveal that resistance to market hegemony does not require leaving market structures but can instead be achieved through their own mechanisms. In the context of the sharing economy, this means designing platforms that prioritize reciprocity, sustainability, and collective benefit over pure profit maximization. Initiatives such as cooperative ownership models, solidarity pricing, and skill-sharing systems demonstrate how market tools can promote social inclusion while remaining economically viable. Similarly, actors in the social and solidarity economy can institutionalize these tactics by adopting hybrid arrangements that combine market exchanges with redistributive practices, channeling surplus towards community development and political empowerment. Permaculture projects and cooperatives, for example, illustrate how engagement with markets can support socio-economic inclusion, environmental stewardship, and the defense of reciprocity. Across these models, resistance emerges not as external opposition, but as an adaptive, multi-discursive process that uses the market's own instruments to subvert its dominant logic.

CONCLUSIONS

Aiming to analyze the organization of resistance tactics and market strategies within alternative socio-economic models, the research demonstrates

that market resistance emerges through ordinary, situated actions that manipulate and decommodify dominant market logics from within. Rather than rejecting markets outright, actors engage in practices that challenge their utilitarian, individualistic, and profit-oriented assumptions while remaining economically operative. Based on the findings and in response to the research questions, practices that fall outside the purely market spectrum can be developed through a diversified repertoire of resistance tactics. There are different ways to operate scarcity and economic exchange besides traditional market relations. Alternative economies can be developed by addressing the interdependence among social agents through community-based relationships. These economies, however, are not based on the exaltation of profit or private property. Comprising a wide spectrum of tactics, ranging from pragmatic cunning to counterstrategies, these new economic initiatives claim space on a social terrain marked by individualism to establish the status of the collective.

The analysis shows that such resistance unfolds through a diversified repertoire of practices articulated across three empirical categories: pragmatic cunning, dominant power places and resistance, and counterstrategies – building a “proper”. Pragmatic cunning captures the tactical improvisations through which individuals creatively use market tools without fully subscribing to market rationality. The category of dominant power places and resistance reveals how markets operate as structuring places, yet remain vulnerable to deviations that question their stability. Finally, counterstrategies illustrate how some tactics gain relative durability, enabling the partial institutionalization of alternative economic arrangements grounded in reciprocity, sustainability, and collective engagement.

Another element present in alternative socio-economic models is the rejection of the *Homo Economicus* assumption. This assumption establishes the market’s power, claiming to represent humanity’s ultimate essence and thus (re)organizing social relations while suppressing symbolic aspects. However, the ordinary man’s pre-discursive nature, seen in the practices throughout this research, represents the pillar on which market resistances are based. In addition to the absence of capitalizable practices and utilitarian rationality, a third factor seems decisive in shaping resistance tactics: the absence of formal contracts. Contracts are elements that formalize market relations, establishing symmetry and equivalence between commercial exchanges. On the contrary, most of the relations identified in the research are based on logics that do not require contracting to operate.

The present study has limitations, particularly regarding the scope of its empirical basis and the temporal dimension of its analysis. While the reliance

on a relatively small set of interviews and field observations yielded rich qualitative insights, it inevitably constrained the diversity of perspectives and limited the representativeness of the findings. A small sample size limits the ability to capture the full range of practices, tensions, and counterstrategies that may characterize resistance across different alternative economies or market contexts. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of market appropriation, whereby dominant economic structures continually absorb, reconfigure, or neutralize elements of resistance, introduces an additional challenge. The investigation provides only a contextual snapshot of observed tactics and countermeasures, without fully accounting for how these relationships may evolve through processes of co-optation or the emergence of new forms of opposition.

Future research in this field would benefit from a larger and more heterogeneous sample. A longitudinal design would also be valuable for deepening understanding of the evolving interplay between resistant practices and the market's adaptive mechanisms. Additionally, we suggest a deeper analysis of the connections between Michel de Certeau's practice approach and Marcel Mauss's anti-utilitarian perspective. This theoretical endeavor could encompass and shed light on emerging and alternative socio-economic models, helping academics and practitioners delineate their conceptual boundaries. Similarly, understanding the ethical foundations of new ways of making markets, such as the practices of collaboration and cooperation present in the sharing and solidarity economy, would not only point to new directions and business models but also subvert the abstract, timeless utilitarian rationality. In this sense, more debates involving the two theoretical perspectives are needed, addressing other research contexts that have shown empirical prominence in the social scene.

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