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8 Drinking to Live
The work of ethically branded bottled water

Emily Potter

Introduction
The phenomenal growth of bottled water markets around the world has been one of the most notable success stories of the modern beverage industry. The 1980s and 1990s represent the heyday of bottled water, with the market expanding during this time from a largely boutique concern comprising mainly European mineral waters, to a multi-product, multi-billion dollar industry. Today, bottled water sales total sixty billion US dollars worldwide. Local brands, imported brands, still and sparkling varieties, and flavoured and ‘enhanced’ bottled waters jostle on refrigerator shelves, giving traditionally dominant soft drinks a run for their money. And despite a recent high-profile ‘backlash’ against bottled water in some Western countries, markets continue to boom across the world. Bottled water is the fastest growing segment of the US beverage industry, while in Asia and Australasia the bottled water market has increased by more than five hundred per cent since 1994 (Winnetu 2006). It is estimated that 154 billion litres of bottled water are now consumed globally each year.

A niche, but increasingly prominent, sub-market of the bottled water industry is ethically branded bottled water. As this chapter will discuss, this bottled water product takes one of two forms: either as a ‘grassroots’ brand solely established and marketed through its ethical credentials (what I will refer to as ‘non-for-profit ethical water’ brands, a tag under which many of these brands self-identify), or as a corporate owned bottled water product that, for certain periods of time, attaches itself to ethical activities as a manifestation of cause-related marketing. These forms appear to have significant overlap – and indeed, in part, this is what this chapter will be arguing. Both types of bottled water call on consumers to consider the ethical value of the product, and are branded in terms of social and environmental responsibility. Each also invites the consumer to undertake ethical self-fashioning and to connect to broad and often distant networks of ‘good works’ through their beverage choice. However, it is necessary to distinguish between the two, as the claims of each product seek to position their version of ethically branded bottled water in distinct ways. While the legitimacy of the ‘not-for-profit’ claim is open to debate and contested interpretations, especially when the brands sold under this banner operate within a market economy, I use this term here as a way of distinguishing those bottled waters that badge themselves entirely through altruistic purpose.

This chapter will go on to discuss the operations of both kinds of products, their conditions of emergence and their strategies for both enrolling consumers and positioning themselves as crucial technologies in global water provision and futures. It will engage with criticism of ethically branded bottled waters that sees such brand strategies as representing cynical or native attempts to redeem and retain the popularity of an environmentally and socially irresponsible product. While this charge has some traction in the context of cause-related marketing campaigns for well-known bottled water brands, I will argue that it is inadequate for fully understanding the work of ethically branded bottled water products, especially those which identify as ‘not-for-profit’ commercial beverages. Moreover, the chapter will contend, reading the ethical branding of bottled water, in whatever form, strictly in terms of capitalist profit motives is to narrowly interpret the neoliberal cultures within which these bottled water brands are produced and consumed.

In a move away from these critiques, the chapter seeks to situate the rise of ethically branded bottled water within the context of emergent forms of governmentality, under which the water producer becomes a deliberate and conscious player in what Nikolas Rose calls ‘the administration of life’ (2006: 57). Drawing upon theories of the biopolitical and neoliberal governmentality, in which humans live itself – ‘lived life’ (Cotter and Lukoff 2005: 25) – is subject to governmental practice, and where non-state actors increasingly participate in the regulation and production of civic life, it will argue that ethical brands of bottled water function as technologies in the project of ensuring human well-being. It is the context of crisis or an ‘emergency’, especially, which licenses the activities of these producers: an emergency widely interpreted as occasioned by the failings (both threatened and realized) of elected state representatives to adequately provide water to their population, thus legitimizing the interventions of private entities into the sustenance of life. I will draw on Agamben’s theory of the ‘state of exception’ (2005) as a means of understanding this invocation of emergency as initiating new roles for, and markets in, bottled water products. In terms of questions of ethical consumption, ethically branded bottled waters offer a particularly productive case study through which to gain insight into the participation of consumption practices in the emergence and operations of biopolitical cultures and governmental forms.

The rise of ethically branded bottled water and neoliberal governmentality
The range and popularity of ethically branded bottled water have echoed the rates of growth previously seen throughout the bottled water market at large. While during 2008, sectors of the global bottled water market slowed from their previous exponential rise, sales volume of these ethically branded products bucked the trend, and even doubled in the UK market. The UK has proved a
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context, corporations and other non-government actors drawn into regimes of governance encountered rising expectations for them to meet both social - and with the prominence of green concerns during this period - environmental responsibilities.

Corporations have not been alone in this. Implicated in the emergence of new post-welfarist state forms is the individualization of the social realm, within which the responsibility of individuals to account for and cultivate their own ethical dispositions has seen a radical shift in the terms of citizenship, or belonging within a civic body. Both corporate and individual philanthropy have thus been foregrounded as elected governments retreat from welfare provision, giving primacy to consumption-based practices of “giving”. [Citizenship in the contemporary moment], argues King, [l]ess about the exercising of rights and the fulfillment of obligations and more about fulfilling one’s political responsibilities through socially sanctioned consumption and responsible choice” (2006: 73). Ethical products, in particular, promise to realize this cobaltification of individual and corporate responsibility towards the civic realm. For both producers and consumers, the value of their investments in the ethical product is tied to their enrolment in neoliberal paradigms of civil service and the demonstration of this participation through modalities of voluntary self-regulation. Consumers targeted by ethical goods are routinely invited to work on themselves as ethical subjects through their consumption of the product and simultaneously to monitor corporate behaviour as producers make their practices open to public scrutiny by way of “sustainability reports” and other devices.

By associating a company’s products with a certain ethical issue, cause-related marketing works to build brand loyalty, appealing to consumer desire to fulfill their ethical responsibilities while also ensuring the corporation’s own participation in regimes of social and environmental care. As Starbucks entrepreneur Howard Schultz puts it, “the consumer has begun . . . to perform an audit on what a company stands for in terms of its culture, its practices and the way it interacts with the people it serves” (Harrison 2003: 3). Ethical products are thus marketed to consumers as Calton et al. term “the economy of qualities” - the process by which goods are “qualified”, or rendered desirable and useful, by producers and consumers (2002: 197). “The characteristics of a good”, Calton et al. explain, “are not properties which already exist and on which information simply has to be produced so that everyone can be aware of them.” Rather, their qualities must be generated and revealed through various strategies of calculation, accountability and audit (198). Consequently - and as part of the corporation’s role within new systems of governance - networks of auditing services, international framework agreements, consultants, new marketing practices and the collaboration of non-governmental organization (NGO) partners are crucial devices for the project of delivering and measuring corporate social responsibility. Indeed, as Andrew Crane explains, NGOs are now super brands in their own right, thus providing valuable capacity for corporate partners. In Europe especially, Crane relates, NGOs “enjoy a much higher degree of trust (forty-eight per cent) than either government (thirty-six per cent) or business (thirty-two per cent)” (2005: 227).

particular success story for not-for-profit ethical water, with a variety of brands establishing themselves in prominent retail contexts across the country. These include One Water, Rich Water, Frank Water, Thirst Aid Water and Thirsty Planet. All of these donate a percentage of their sales to clean water projects in Africa and Asia, though other ethical water brands in the UK focus on different causes, such as the AIDS-targeted Hot Water. The US and Australia have also seen not-for-profit ethical waters enter into the bottled water market: Ethos Water, sold through Starbucks in the United States and established in 2001, provided the model for Give Water (also US-based), which, like Ethos, provides a portion of sales to charitable causes. Unlike Ethos however, which also directs its philanthropy to clean water projects in the Global South, Give Water supports local charities across a range of causes. Thankyou Water is a relatively new entrant to the Australian bottled water market, where the UK One Water also recently launched its product. Like One Water, Thankyou Water channels the entirety of its profits to clean water projects in Africa and Asia.

As I have indicated, it is important to distinguish between the ethical branding of bottled water as the sole rationale for a product and as a cause-related marketing (CRM) initiative that attaches to pre-existing and market dominant brands. Not-for-profit ethical waters are generally marketed through a “grassroots” narrative, although they tend to enjoy the investment and patronage of established business and cultural elites. Further, their market share is very small compared with that of the big bottled water brands which, around the world, are owned by some of the largest multinational food and beverage corporations. As the environmental and social consequences of bottled water have more widely circulated, and a “backlash” against these products has gained pace in certain quarters - something that I will discuss in more detail later - many of these companies have sought to promote the health and well-being contributions and environmentally responsible aspects of bottled water production and consumption. Marketing strategies frequently frame the bottle as contributing to the crucial task of “personal hydration”, as well as providing a much healthier alternative (as “zero calorie” products) to other beverages on the market, particularly soft drinks, and emphasize the water conservation strategies of the company, or the recyclable nature of the PET plastic bottles used. Other strategies employed by large bottled water manufacturers have involved CRM campaigns that explicitly position their bottled water products - in concert with consumers - as agents of social change. CRM campaigns around bottled water gained traction during the 2000s, as CRM in general and discourses of corporate social responsibility (CSR) found increased ubiquity. However, as scholars of CSR have noted, the drive to associate private capital with charitable causes is not new (Frankental 2001: 20), particularly as public unease with the size, facelessness and shareholder culture of corporations (where corporations are legally responsible only to the welfare of shareholders) has heightened. Yet the pre-eminence of neoliberalism and its manifestation through the 1980s and 1990s in waves of privatization and public-private ‘partnerships’ brought private capital into very public arrangements of civic practice that positioned corporations as social stakeholders. In this
The marketing of ethically branded bottled water

In recent years, the belief that consumption is a means by which individuals pursue "meaning in their lives", and 'connect' to broader social networks, has come to influence marketing strategies across Western economies (King 2006: 11). Various this consumer imperative is interpreted as a result of social alienation in the wake of neoliberal change, and as a manifestation of an invigorated consumer-citizen culture. For both producers and consumers, then, the benefits - both economic and socio-political - of "altruistic" practice are very much a part of ethical marketing discourse. "Values are an asset" writes consultant Chris Arnold. 'Brands that come top of many surveys live and breathe some form of ethics' (2009: 21, 17). Cause-related marketing campaigns around bottled water evidence this, as they both attach ethical credentials to the company at hand, and offer to consumers the capacity to ethically fashion themselves through their purchase. Subtextually, it can be argued, they also offer to 'offset' any environmental or social concerns that consumers might have regarding the product, although bottled water is never explicitly positioned in these terms.

Popular bottled water brands that have attached themselves to ethical causes are the internationally marketed Volvic water (owned by Danone), and the various bottled water products belonging to Australian company Coca-Cola Amatil (CCA). Volvic's '1 for 10 Litres' campaign, slated to run between 2008 and 2010, promises to provide ten litres of potable drinking water to communities in Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Zambia, Ethiopia and Niger for every litre of Volvic natural mineral water and Volvic "Touch of Fruit" flavoured bottled water sold. This will be achieved through the donation of funds towards building wells and community education programmes on water management, to be delivered by World Vision. More complex is CCA's portfolio of CRM initiatives attached to its bottled waters in Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea (PNG), South Korea, New Guinea, Fiji and Indonesia. These include Nature's Own bottled water, sold in PNG, which raises funds for HIV/AIDS research through the National AIDS Council of PNG, and New Zealand's carbonated flavoured water brand, L&P, that sponsors the Prostate Cancer Foundation of New Zealand.

In Australia, CCA's signature bottled water is Mount Franklin, launched in 1989, which dominates market share, particularly among women, who are its targeted demographic. Forty-three per cent of Australian women identify Mount Franklin as their favourite bottled water brand. In line with other bottled water producers, CCA has striven to associate Mount Franklin with health, well-being and environmental sustainability, and a variety of CRM campaigns have put the brand to work in this way. One of its most high-profile campaigns, an alliance with the Australian National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF), was initiated in 2007 and continues to run. Different strategies have been employed by Mount Franklin during this campaign, such as financial donations to the NBCF, awareness-raising initiatives, and 'positivity' programmes for breast cancer sufferers and survivors. All of these enrol the consumer as actively involved in the philanthropic process, both as its co-constituent and as its potential target. The 'Well of Positivity' website that operated through 2007 invited consumers to leave a message of support for those affected by breast cancer. CCA pledged to donate $1 to the NBCF for each message left, up to a total of $250,000. Meanwhile, the 'Pink Lit' campaign, which runs each year in October - breast cancer awareness month - is funded by CCA as a mode of community service; explains Director of Media and Public Affairs, Sally Loome, "You walk into any supermarket and you see this wall of pink [labels] and immediately women think "it's breast cancer month, I had better have a mammogram" (2009).

Mount Franklin's 2007-08 'Buy me, plant a tree' campaign similarly sought to "enable" consumers. According to Loome, CCA's customers want to "help the environment" but are unsure of how to do so - "they might switch off a few lights but they don't necessarily go out there and plant a tree" (2009). During this campaign, consumers of Mount Franklin were invited to visit the CCA website and enter the barcode of their bottle: on doing so, consumers would have a tree planted in their name. Such a discourse of ethical engagement and of working on the self implies a form of individual auditing that mirrors the companies' own attempts to model themselves as responsible citizens. It is a discourse very much employed, too, by brands of for-profit ethical water that seek to differentiate themselves from the large corporate producers of bottled water. The purchase of ethically branded products is strategically situated as part of a set of ethical calculations that a consumer undertakes in neoliberal regimes of self-monitored conduct where the question of "how to live?" is put at stake (Coller and Lahoff 2005: 33). Altuv a Sorg describes this as characteristic of new citizenship forms, in which "the security of citizens, their well-being and quality of life, are increasingly dependent on their own capacities as free individuals to confront globalized insecurities by making calculations and investments in their lives" (2006: 501). While these for-profit ethical water brands routinely describe their practices in contrast to the interests of big business, they commonly draw attention to the very personal ways in which their products come to be, thus emphasizing the individualized ethical awakening embodied in these bottled water products.

For brands such as Frank Water, One Water, Give Water and Thankyou Water, for instance, narratives of a transformative experience experienced by the product's (always youthful, thus conveying energy and cultural change) founder/s are key to the marketing of these products. On the website of each, and in media coverage and other PR materials that accompany the bottles, are prominently placed stories of the product's origins, usually involving its founder's realization that while drinking water is plentiful in the West, it is a scarce resource for many millions around the globe. For Katie Acland, a trip to India and a case of dysentery in her twenties was her inspiration to launch Frank Water, "a water bottle brand that would fund clean water projects where they were most needed" (Frank Water 2009). Similarly, One Water founder and CEO Dannen Goose started his bottled water initiative "after seeing [developing countries' water] conditions first hand... while on a two-year motorbike voyage around the world" (Asher 2009).
Routine positioning of its ethical credentials as a tool for individual civic participation, the ethically branded water bottle can be seen as an active device of what Kersey Hobson calls ‘techno-ethics’ – a form of anti-consumption consumption (2006: 331) – where the consumer in concert with this technology endorses the social and individual work of a ‘sustainable citizen’ (317). ‘Drink Give. Do Good’ announces the Give Water website. Despite the language of action employed here, implicit in this ‘consumer-led’ philanthropy is the lack of extra work required by the bottled water drinker. In the act of choosing (and buying) the bottle alone, the ethical work is undertaken. Duncan Goose explains again in relation to One’s launch in Australia: ‘We are not asking people to give money or trying to grow the Australian bottled water market, we are just asking current buyers to make an educated purchase and simply choose One in the knowledge that as they drink water, so does Africa and Asia’ (Palmer 2009). Ben Lewis of Give Water expresses a similar sentiment: ‘Our goal is to turn consumers into philanthropists without changing anything in their daily lives’ (Give Water 2009). Thus the language of consumer enablement is shared by the CRM endeavours of large-scale bottled water manufacturers and the makers of not-for-profit ethical waters.

Moreover, while the individual grassroots narrative is a key device for the branding of not-for-profit ethical water, both these products rely upon similar networks of expertise, cultural status and association. For each, statistical data, sites of concern such as impoverished African villages or medical research, new technologies, celebrity endorsements and the participation of other crucial actors such as NGOs and business sponsors, are assembled in order to produce or stabilize (Barry and Slater 2002: 181) the bottled water product and to secure its prospects in the market. One Water in the UK, for example, prominently displays the celebrity endorsement of its products on its website and in its advertising campaigns. Hollywood star Minnie Burton, and UK actors David Tennant and Claire Goose, sister of One Water founder Duncan Goose, call on bottled water consumers to ‘Switch for Africa’, while Duncan Goose himself has become a celebrity, voted ITV’s Greatest Living Briton in 2007. In Australia, Thankyou Water is endorsed by super-surf Mick Fanning and celebrity chef Donna Hay, and has been supported by companies such as packaging manufacturer Viva, which donated 30,000 PET plastic bottles to the initiative. Thankyou Water also hired a ‘social media advisor’ to enable their product promotion through social networking technology – something that CCA, too, is experimenting with in the latest iteration of its breast cancer campaign, inviting Twitterers to turn their avatars pink in support of the cause.

Active in these assemblages, too, for all forms of ethically branded bottled water, is the water bottle itself as a material technology that is employed in deliberate ways. The pink lids of Mount Franklin are echoed by the four differently coloured labels of Give Water products, which allow the consumer to choose – much like Kedjere, the cafe cited in the introduction to this book – which cause their purchase will benefit. As a review of Give Water explains, ‘[s]ales of blue bottles support children’s causes; pink bottles support breast cancer research; green bottles support environmental causes; and orange bottles support muscular disorders research. “Consumers want choice,” the entrepreneur [behind Give Water, Ben Lewis] says. “They want to choose how they give back, and they want to give back locally.”’ (Stassman 2009). Consumer choice consequently entails ethical as well as commercial decisions. Moreover, these material features of the ethically branded water bottle invoke the very material concerns to which it seeks to connect: the pink lids of Mount Franklin bottles, for example, that trigger a woman’s awareness of the need for a breast check. Not-for-profit brands targeting clean water projects similarly materialize the link between the product purchased by the consumer and the ‘good work’ that this purchase will do. This link is water. The images and information attached to these brands elide the privately purchased and consumed contaminated water (in general, a luxury item in the West) with the public water infrastructure that will be provided to poorly resourced communities in the global South. All water is thus put on an equal footing, as a common denominator of life.

It is from this premise, of water as a marker of what Coller and Lakoff term “other life” (2005: 25) – the bottom line for human well-being – that ethically branded bottled water finds its further and more complex rationale. Again, this is a provenance shared by not-for-profit ethical waters and their corporate counterparts. Threaded through discourses of individualized ‘self-realization’ (Pringle and Thompson 1998: 240) and responsibilized consumption around these bottled water products is the context of the ‘emergency’ in which the bottle is mobilized by new state actors in an artificial act of sustaining life. The critique of ethically branded bottled water as a strategy of redemption amongst market mediations in a growing bottled water backlash is consequently an insufficient frame for understanding the logic of these products. This is what I now go on to discuss, before returning to the ‘emergency’ as a legitimizing context not just for ethically branded bottled water markets, but for the participation of their producers in contemporary governmental practice.

**Bottled water backlash**

A high-profile turn against bottled water in affluent Western countries is frequently cited as the reason for the rise of ethically branded water, particularly the linking of ethical associations to already existing bottled water brands. As bottled water has gained market share so too has it accrued negative press for being both environmentally and socially unsound. The PET plastic bottles used to contain water since the late 1980s are a particular source of concern, drawing on fossil fuels and generating hundreds of millions of wasted bottles every year which pollute water ways as well as contributing hugely to landfill. The plastic ‘sturdies’ (plastic resin beads) that form the base of PET plastic bottles have gained much publicity for ending up along coastlines and in the stomachs of fish and birds. Bottled water is also criticized for consuming vast amounts of energy in its bottling and transportation process. Brands sold worldwide such as Fiji Water, Volvic and Evian accrue many ‘water miles’ in the movement of a single
bottles from source to consumer. Additionally, bottled water has come under fire for generating distrust in public water supplies, particularly in light of marketing campaigns emphasizing the health benefits and reliable nature of bottled water. As a result, bottled water has fallen out of favour in certain circles. While the consumption of bottled water, particularly of European and other imported brands, as well as ‘high-end’ products such as the US Bling H2O bottled water (sold in a Swarovski crystal-encrusted bottle and retailing at close to US$40), was once particularly associated with social status and taste, the fashion conscious now turn against the bottle. *Time* magazine proclaimed ‘The War on Bottled Water’ as number four on its list of the top ten food trends of 2008: wrote columnist John Cloud, ‘bottled water is now unforgivably “90s”’ (Cloud 2009). Campaigns against bottled water have been endorsed by high-profile figures such as one-time London Mayor Ken Livingstone, US celebrity chefs Mario Batali and Alice Waters, and actress Sarah Jessica Parker, who ‘lapped up kudos for sipping a glass of New York tap water in aid of a UN fundraise’ (Polaris 2009a). At the more everyday end of the spectrum, too, reusable bottles like the Sigg aluminium bottle have risen in popularity due to their environmentally friendly nature, and local community groups which campaign for the return of publicly available water to public city spaces have sprung up.

A recent spate of well-publicized bottled water bans has also contributed to this shift. In the US, San Francisco city prohibited the purchase of bottled water by its own departments and agencies in 2007. Similarly, municipalities in the UK, Australia and Canada have also phased out internal bottled water purchasing. Cities such as New York, Salt Lake City and London have run campaigns promoting the quality of their tap water, while in Canada ‘bottled water free zones’ have been set up across universities and colleges (Polaris 2009b). Australia has seen the first instance anywhere in the world of a water bottle ban across an entire town in the small regional community of Bundanoon, New South Wales. Taking effect in mid 2009, Bundanoon’s ban was seen as sparking off a worldwide debate about the social and environmental effects of bottled water that has put the beverage industry on the defensive” (Foley 2009).

According to bottled water campaigners, such strategies have succeeded in reducing global bottled water consumption. The Polaris Institute, a Canadian NGO that monitors and agitates against the bottled water industry, relayed in February 2009 that Nestlé, which owns seventy bottled water brands across the world, had announced a 1.6 per cent drop in sales of this product during the previous year (Polaris 2009a). According to the Polaris Institute, global sales of bottled water have consistently fallen since 2003. In the UK market, a reduction in bottled water sales has also been noted, with segment analyst Zenith International reporting a decrease of 3.5 per cent across the UK in 2007 (Merrett 2008).

Yet a correlation between these statistics and the bottled water backlash is not straightforward. Zenith also reports that, in this year, ‘poor summer weather was identified as [a] key reason for [the] overall . . . decline in UK sales volumes’, while the ‘global financial crisis’ of 2008 has also been cited as a reason for this. Moreover, Zenith sees cause for continued optimism in the strength of this product.

‘Despite such a disappointing summer’, they continued, ‘the role of bottled water in emergency situations and the surge in ethical waters highlighted new areas of consumer resonance’ (Merrett 2009). This reference to ‘emergency situations’—specifically, as I will explain, situations in which human life is at risk by the inadequacies of the state—flags a key rationale for bottled water manufacturers in general, and one that ethnically branded bottled water has particularly attached to: the role of bottled water in sustaining and administering life.

The emergency and the administration of life

Critics of ethnically branded bottled waters as redemptive exercises in ‘green-washing’, ‘blue-washing’ or ‘pink-washing’—depending on which ethnic cause the brand addresses—fail to account for the significance of neoliberal governmentality and its employment of non-governmental actors in political practice, and thus tend to read its attention to public and environmental health concerns as solely opportunistic. Yet, private capital cannot be disentangled from the state and its commitment to secure the well-being of its population which, as Foucault argues, is the biopolitical object of modern governmental practice. Governmentality in this understanding, writes Judith Butler, is a ‘mode of power concerned with the maintenance and control of bodies and persons, the production and regulation of persons and populations, and the circulation of goods inssofar as they maintain and restrict the life of the population’ (2006: 52). Given this, it is productive to consider the rise of ethnically branded bottled water not as a technique for redeeming shabby markets, but rather more broadly as a means for initiating and expanding new markets in the service of life. These “diverse logics of the market” for which profit maximization cannot fully account (Bakker 2009: 178) are certainly shadowed by some very public concerns raised over the privatization and corporatization of water. Water activists routinely oppose the marketization of water provision through the argument that water, as a fundamental need of human beings and a freely available resource, should not be owned by any one entity or individual. ‘The necessity of water to life is why, under customary laws, the right to water has been accepted as natural, social fact’, writes Vandana Shiva (2002: 21). Water’s privatization, whether through containerized water production, or through corporations moving into the management and provision of public water supplies, is therefore regarded by its opponents as antithetical to every individual’s claim to clean, accessible water. For these critics, water provision is considered to be the ultimate responsibility of the state. Shiva, for example, describes the encroachment of private capital on established traditions of water rights as a ‘clash of cultures: a culture that sees water as sacred and treats its provision as a duty for the preservation of life and another that sees water as a commodity; and its ownership and trade as fundamental corporate rights’ (2002: x). Yet the task of providing water to those in need (as Zenith suggests bottled water is doing), and thus ensuring the right to water, is exactly what the producers of ethnically branded bottled water also claim.
Zanith is not alone in referring to bottled water as an emergency technology: bottled water manufacturers and advocates commonly frame the product in these terms. In a media release titled ‘Bottled water companies support Australians in time of emergency’, the Australasian Bottled Water Institute—a lobby group representing bottled water producers in Australia and New Zealand—claims that ‘bottled water is a vital part of Australia’s natural disaster and terrorism emergency response’. Australia’s bottled water companies have already donated more than $2 million in product to community agencies and emergency services during Victoria’s bushfire crisis [of February 2009]. . . The effect of bush fires on municipal supplies means that Victorians will continue for some time yet to rely on bottled water for their personal consumption and the industry is committed to meeting this need’ (Gentile 2009). Sally Loane from CCA similarly positions the company’s water bottle products, in a defence against anti-bottle water movements: ‘I think people have got to sit back and think, well, it’s actually something that we need in Australia. We are signed up with the government’s emergency response plans, which means that in the event of contamination or something happening to the dams or the water supplies, we are then able to supply the populace with bottled water. We do that all the time’ (Staight 2008).

While on the one hand, this discourse of emergency appears a strategic move to situate the bottle as a crucial technology on a par with, and even superior to (for its implied reliability), municipal water supplies—given the criticism of bottled water as a superfluous product in developed countries especially, where tap water is largely of consistently good quality—it also invites further reflection. Loane’s reference to CCA’s integration with state emergency response strategies speaks clearly of the corporation’s contemporary role in biopolitical practice. Given the multiplicity of actors in neoliberal systems of governance, the state’s responsibility to ‘optimize’ the capabilities of its population (Bull 2007)—understood by political theorists such as Martha Nussbaum as its central role—is consequently diffused, as private interests become simultaneously defined as ‘agents of development’ (Sadler and Lloyd 2009: 616).

Agamben’s theory of the emergency, or crisis situation, as triggering new manifestations of sovereign power is a useful frame for thinking through the interventions of water bottle producers in the administration of life. Here, biopolitics is played out in the declaration of the ‘state of exception’, under which usual law is suspended and the ‘bare life’ of citizens (akin to Collot and Lakoff’s ‘sheer life’) excluded from their previous political rights, is centralised as a site for the operations of sovereign power. While Agamben’s concern is particularly the production of the biopolitical body through sovereign power—what Bull calls ‘the true awfulness of sovereignty and our abjection before it’ (2004)—his attention to the governmental forms that are initiated by the state of exception and its origins in the emergency, point to sovereignty as a practice rather than a stable point of authority or, as Butler puts it, a ‘unified locus for state power’ (2006: 53). Thus, for Rabinow and Rose, reflecting on the implications of Agamben’s theory, ‘sovereign power is no longer confined to those who are explicitly agents of the state—it apparently extends to those who have authority over aspects of human vital existence’ (2006: 202).

This is something that not-for-profit ethical water brands also assert—their role in modes of sovereign power where the state is perceived as inadequate or failed, and in need of non-governmental enterprise. The language of crisis or emergency peppers the rhetoric of these bottled water producers, providing further entanglement with the ethically branded corporate waters from which they seek to distinguish themselves. It is a matter of interest that both anti-bottled water campaigners and not-for-profit ethical water companies cite the same or similar statistics concerning the poor water conditions of many communities in the global South, indicating the interventions of both in the politics of life.

1.1 billion people in the world . . . don’t have access to safe drinking water’, states the Polaris Institute. ‘Yet in the self-indulgent West, we’re mired in an argument over our precious bottled H2O’ (Polaris 2009a). This kind of moralism is crucial to the marketing of not-for-profit ethical waters and all employ it to a greater or lesser extent. The One website puts the problem in these terms: ‘One billion people without clean water; two million deaths each year, but did you know that the bigger problem is actually that people spend an average of five hours a day walking to collect water? . . . Imagine what your day would be like if you spent five hours walking to your local shop for a drink?’ (One Water 2000); while Thankyou Water reports its alignment with the UN’s ‘Water for Life Decade’ initiative, naming its mission as ‘funding solutions to the developing world’s water crisis and in turn reaching out to those who cannot reach out for themselves’ (Thankyou Water 2009).

Conclusion

Implied in these claims of not-for-profit ethical water brands is the insufficiency of the state to supply adequate and accessible water to its populations, and although none of these companies seeks to address this issue through the supply of bottled water in the locations it targets, the bottle is employed within its markets as a device through which the water crises of the global South can be addressed. The bottle of not-for-profit ethical water, just like the ‘ethical’ CRM initiatives of corporate-owned bottled waters, is thus firmly situated as a participant in governmental strategies, both domestic and global. Furthermore, in these arrangements of consumer and producer intervention into the biopolitical realm, bottled water is valorised as a technology of water provision and as an agent for the secularization of sheer life; as Duncan Goossens affirms, ‘people have recognized that water is water; why wouldn’t you opt to buy a brand that changes people’s lives?’ (Fry 2007).

The rise of ethically branded bottled water has witnessed a proliferation of products striving to differentiate themselves as agents of social change, mobilizing the bottle of water to ethics-political ends. However, in their strategies, logic and enrolment in neoliberal governmentality, ‘grassroots’ not-for-profit ethical waters and ethically branded bottled water owned by large corporations
can claim no moral high ground over the other. Indeed, to talk in such terms is to overlook the complex operations of neoliberal cultures in which these products participate, and through which the ethical brand can be understood as an active force. Foucault's articulation of the biopolitical agenda of modern governmental practices, within which the responsibility of the state to ensure life is now diffused among a host of non-state actors, and Agamben's insight into the role of the 'emergency' in generating and legitimating new forms of sovereign power, offer instructive means of contextualizing the rise of ethnically branded bottled water in ways that give meaning to these products beyond conventional commodity logic. Both forms of ethnically branded bottled water discussed in this chapter are situated within local and global arrangements of personal and civic administration, where the ethical project of managing the self connects to broader social and political programmes. If the 'ethicalization of existence' (Roes 1989: 263-64) puts the question of how to live at stake, then there are a host of actors who contribute to its answer. As a technology of intervention and provision in global water futures, ethnically branded bottled water makes its claim to life as an always-vulnerable entity to be sustained by the 'good work' of ethnically oriented production and consumption.

Bibliography


9 Ethical consumption - sustainable product and wine

Paul Starr

Save Miguel

The global cork industry, especially the flow dominated by Portuguese producers. Comparing market share of the wine closures market success of alternate ‘technical’ closures, such drive the switch to technical closures is the contaminate wine with trichloanisole (TCA), enough to oxidize and spoil wines, change the wines) and sometimes be a vector for mould consesus on failure rates for cork-sealed wines between 2 per cent and 10 per cent of all corks impacted by their closure and not present to by the producer. Cost savings to producers but the key factor has been product quality into cost reductions (including to retailers) a products.

The cork industry has taken many different correcting product quality issues, or attacking approaches involved a viral marketing campaign where were seeded with mystery teasers about YouTube video, starring American comic Rob as Rob travelled to Portugal on a quest to find needed saving. The video eventually reveals provides many good things for many good environment, is actually a Portuguese cork oil parody of the lack of snob value in opening an occasion, the campaign did generate press attentions much of it negative.

What was particularly interesting about Save between the cork industry and the World Welfare (asking consumers to stop buying screw that the underlying problems with cork closure) were elided. Instead, a sustai