Diversity and the Farmers' Markets of Central Iowa

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Farmers' markets have sprung up across the United States in record numbers over the past several decades. While they are all known uniformly as "farmers' markets," these markets are incredibly diverse. Some are large, featuring hundreds of vendors, while others have twenty vendors or less. Markets are oftentimes held in parking lots or on closed streets, although others take place in parking ramps or pavilions and buildings intended for the market alone. Some markets allow resale and others require all produce to be locally grown. Not all markets allow crafts, jellies, and other value-added products, but many do. No two markets are the same, but all are founded in support of the basic idea that local farmers should have a place to come together and sell their products to local consumers. The diversity inherent to markets has ramifications for their role as social arenas as well as various meanings that the farmers' market assumes for the vendors who sell there.

Markets represent the interplay of forces on a local, national, and even global scale. Markets embody their communities on a local scale, being primarily comprised of local producers, populated by nearby residents, and managed by a local citizen or vendor. They rely on good relationships with their host cities to facilitate street closings and advertising and depend on sponsorship by area companies for financial support. Markets must follow local, state, and national laws, demanding that they respond to these varied levels of authority. They are also affected by local and national moods about local foods and food safety and impacted by food safety scares and the supply and price of foods on a global level. This complex web of forces at work on markets reinforces their inherently diverse nature, presenting too complicated a picture for two markets to ever evolve the same way.

globalized food system that depends on shipments from all over the world to densely populated centers, has become the dominant food paradigm in the United States.

Farmers' markets continued to grow and change over time, although their evolution was uneven. Oftentimes markets experienced dramatic resurgences in one part of the country long before they flourished in other regions. In addition, markets experienced several seemingly universal ups and downs throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Most important for our purposes are the recent fluctuations in market popularity. Farmers' markets began to decrease in popularity in the post World War II era when technological advancements and improvements in transportation infrastructure such as improved roads and the availability of high speed transport changed the produce market irrevocably, undermining markets while supporting the expansion of wholesale networks (Brown 2001; Sanderson et al. 2005). This evolution distanced consumers from their food and laid the foundation for the globalized food system of today (Sanderson et al. 2005).

By 1970, only 340 farmers' markets existed in the United States, a testament to the destructive force of new technologies on markets (Brown 2001). Many people, such as Jane Pyle in her 1971 work *Farmers' Markets in the United States: Functional Anachronisms*, thought that farmers' markets would persist on a very small scale, sustained only by the protections given them by local agencies (Pyle 1971). However, with the passage of Public Law 94-463, the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976, markets began to rebound, aided by the new resources that the law provided (Winne 2009, p. 40). These resources include federal funds to be used by the Secretary of Agriculture and various state departments of agriculture to promote direct marketing by providing technical training to groups interested in starting a direct marketing operation, sponsoring conferences about topics relevant to direct marketing, and

compiling relevant laws and regulations pertinent to participants in markets, among other things. Farmers' market growth was also aided by the popularity of the local foods movement and other political forces during the turbulent 1960s and 70s (Brown 2001). As a result of these new developments, the past two decades in particular have seen phenomenal growth for markets as the estimated number of markets within the United States increased from 1,755 in 1994 to an astounding 6,132 in 2010 (United States Department of Agriculture [USDA] 2010).

Iowa has been heavily impacted by this increase. The number of markets in Iowa is thought to have increased 75% between 1994 and 2009, a figure which represents a significant shift in the availability of local food to consumers (Otto 2010). The number of farmers' markets in Iowa has outgrown that of most other states with an estimated 231 markets operating in Iowa last year, the most markets per capita in the nation (USDA 2011; Otto 2010). This is particularly compelling given the strong associations people hold about Iowa's relationship to row crops such as corn and soybeans and agribusiness. The presence of both industrial agriculture and small-scale farms on Iowa's landscape make the state particularly interesting as a site for the examination of farmers' markets. The augmentation of farmers' markets in Iowa indicates the growing impact they have on the areas they serve. Farmers' markets in the state generated approximately $38.4 million in sales in 2009 alone, with many secondary effects stemming from the employment of local labor and the indirect consequences of vendor profits being reinvested in the local community (Otto 2010). These figures are a testament to the increasing popularity of markets among consumers and the growing economic importance of farmers' markets to Iowa's food system. East central Iowa is particularly interesting given that the region contains several of the state's largest markets—those centered in Des Moines, Iowa City, and Cedar Rapids—as well as many local markets in towns of varying sizes.

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While scholars have partially remedied the academic void surrounding farmers' markets, several opportunities for studies remain. Much recent research has focused on the economic, rather than the social, meaning of marketplaces in various locales (Claro 2011; Otto 2010). Oftentimes, consumer motivations to support farmers' markets and other institutions focusing on local food distribution stem from outside the realm of economics. The allure of social interaction, community building and environmental responsibility may often be at the heart of consumer food choices. For instance, Nousiainen, Pylkkinen, Saunders, Seppinen, & Vesala (2009) suggest that farmers' markets enhance social sustainability, a benefit that is almost entirely independent of the sale of agricultural products. These types of studies suggest that other research should focus on the non-economic face of markets. Our aim is to understand some of these social dimensions, as well as untangle the motivating factors that cause people to sellala, moiot ofd

Farmers’ markets are diverse; each one is dist

results of these studies have been mixed (Sanderson et. al 2005, Hinrichs, Gillespie, & Feenstra 2004).

These economic benefits are shared throughout the community, with secondary effects of farmers' markets adding further to their profitability (Otto 2010). In 2009, Iowa's farmers' markets are estimated for have totaled $38.4 million in sales. Although this figure is thought to have benefited the five largest urban centers in Iowa disproportionately, with these cities netting 72% of the total, small communities have also seen farmers' market revenues increasing in recent years (Otto 2010). The survey estimates that including the indirect or induced effects of farmers' markets (the value of goods purchased by vendors to support their business plus household effects), the gross sales transactions total around $59.4 million. These figures prompt Otto to describe a multiplier effect of 1.55 for the money within the community. The vendors are investing in other parts of the local economy. Further, farmers' markets are believed to bring business into the area around the market, boosting sales for local businesses and creating more sales tax revenue for communities (Brown 2002). These represent just a few of the ways in which farmers' markets benefit communities economically.

Markets also provide communities with a valuable social arena. Many see the market as a meeting place for friends and family, as well as a place to form direct relationships with producers (Sanderson et. al 2005). This social component is likely the most important in deciding to shop at a farmers' market instead of a grocery store. The prices at farmers' markets are not always lower than at supermarkets, but the market provides a service that the big box store cannot with its space for social interactions (Brown 2001; Sanderson et al. 2005). Robinson and Hartenfeld (2007) once again provide excellent commentary on what markets mean to their communities:

> Based on an ancient hallmark of society, farmers' markets today sate a hunger not calculated in the FDA's recommended daily allowances. They incorporate patterns of community and exchange that feed us deeply. The recent resurgence of farmers' markets nationwide signals a desire among many for a sense of authenticity and locality that is not found in the high-tech supermarket experience. Buying local potatoes with traces of soil from a grower who still has the same dirt on his boots apparently provides a kind of sustenance not accounted for in the latest nutritional pyramid (2-3).

Farmers' markets are a place to connect with the local environment and the people who feed us. These beneficial links between the rural and urban communities promote understanding and offer city dwellers a chance to connect to their food in a very real way, a benefit recognized by Sanderson et. al (2005, p. 12): "The farmers' market provides a mechanism and atmosphere that

linked to social justice efforts that aim to increase the accessibility of fresh foods to lower income families (Winne 2009). Programs such as the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) and Women, Infants, and Children's Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WICFMNP) have brought in new customers and provided access to many families (Stephenson 2008). The advent of markets in inner cities and programs to support access to them has provided foods to neighborhoods and populations that otherwise go without.

These are only a few of the numerous benefits that markets provide. Their ability to support local communities makes farmers' markets an institution that any community should embrace and suggests that communities should be willing to fight for their survival. However, survival for a market is not guaranteed. Stephenson (2009) discusses many of the most common reasons for market failure. Many of them stem from poor management or inconsistent financial support. While farmers' markets have increased in popularity, their newfound recognition has not saved them all from the potential to fail. Understanding the qualities vendors seek in markets and the various ways in which markets can be run is important for ensuring their survival.

Methods

Due to time and resource constraints, we limited our study to the vendors and managers at five markets in central Iowa. Focusing on a small region ensured that we would be able to visit each market multiple times and limit our study to a unique geographic region. We used in-person or take-home questionnaires to interview 38 vendors and 6 market managers, administrators, or masters. We chose to use in person interviews for the project because of its strength in providing qualitative information and the extensive amount face-to-face interaction with the vendors. Surveys have also been the traditional form for studying markets, as demonstrated by Holeva

(2009), Otto (2010), and Hinrichs (2001a; 2001b). However, studies such as Holeva (2009) indicated that a poor response rate may become problematic when pursuing this strategy, and we felt that an in-person technique was the most promising for garnering a response. Thus, we chose to personally talk with the vendors about the project and their participation when at all possible. We also relied on informal conversations, research about the markets and the cities in which they are located, and participant observation in the markets. We took field notes about each market visit and in many cases the informal conversations we had were as rich as the formal interviews. These secondary methods allowed us to triangulate our results, improving our understanding of each market and the similarities and differences between them further.

We intentionally selected markets of different sizes in towns or cities with different population sizes and socioeconomic situations in order to create an interesting basis for comparison. This selection was based on our previous experience in the region. After selecting four markets—the Grinnell Fhe infxTs

generally busy and that some vendors can be busier than others, we decided to use a method of opportunistic sampling at the markets. We began at one end of the market and stopped at booths that were experiencing a lull in customers or that had more than one individual selling product. Pursuing this technique ensured that we did not prevent producers from talking with customers or selling their goods. We also organized several interviews with vendors we knew personally and the managers of the various markets outside of market hours to preserve time for vendor interviews and garner more information from market participants. While we were most interested in the reflections of produce vendors, we included all types of vendors in our study if they were willing. This ensured that we got a more representative sample of the various stakeholders in the market.

Upon selecting a vendor to speak with, we introduced ourselves and our project, offering them a card with our contact information and the project goal written on it. We then asked if they thought they might have time to talk with us, or if they would be willing to take home a copy of the questionnaire to complete in their own time. This method was by far the most successful at the smaller markets where an interrupted customer flow allowed for in-person interviews. Many of the vendors at the larger markets were too busy to consider any of the options. This method was least successful at the larger farmers' markets given their high level of customer traffic; nearly all of the vendors remained busy throughout the market day. Convenience sampling, while not perfectly random, did provide a mix of vendor types and was successful in securing interviews.

Each market day, we took field notes about our experience, noting valuable contacts and informal conversations as well as the character of the market itself. These notes, while not important for statistical analysis, provide an in-depth look at the market from day to day.

At the Marshalltown Cartwright Pavilion Farmers' Market, we had great success in garnering interviews. We conducted six formal interviews over two market days in late June and early July. We also informally conversed with several other vendors and talked with the two co-managers of the market on those days. Several of these vendors also sell at the Grinnell market and were interviewed there on different market days. We followed up with one of the market co-managers at the Grinnell market several times when questions arose about the market's structure. The market has 26 stalls total—the number of vendors actively selling is even smaller than that—so we decided to focus on the other, larger markets after finishing this set of interviews. During interviews at this market it became clear that there was an interesting dynamic between the three

sent it to her vendor email list, which covered all but 25 of the Saturday vendors. We only successfully carried out interviews with four vendors and two market managers on site, but we did get five additional questionnaires returned through the mail or via email. This sample is less representative than the others given that Iowa City has 118 vendors on Saturday mornings, but the interviews did give us good insights into the workings of this popular market.

We visited Downtown Des Moines Farmers' Market

Each market in our study is unique. They all have different policies, histories, and vendors. Examining these structural and managerial differences is critical to understanding the diversity of markets in general and contextualizing the opinions and motivations of the market vendors.

The Grinnell Farmers' Market is run by the Grinnell Area Chamber of Commerce and takes place on the outskirts of the town's central park each Thursday evening and Saturday morning. There are two market masters, one for the Thursday market and one for the Saturday market. The market also receives support from the Chamber for advertising and logistics. The

efforts. The market has space for a total of 26 vendors, 22 under cover and 4 outside. The given number for any day is not to exceed 26 vendors, and only 9 of them can sell baked goods. The cost for a stall there is $125 for the season. This equates to only $2.60 per market day for season vendors. This figure is very low relative to many of the other markets. The weekly fee is a slightly higher $10 per day, but still remains lower than at other markets. During our visits, there were empty stalls, although the market has enough vendors paid in full to fill the stalls on a market day when all are present. The Marshalltown Market generally maintains a wait list, however this year their wait list has gotten smaller with the presence of a Thursday market located on Main Street.

The Iowa City Farmers' Market is run by the Iowa City Department of Parks and Recreation. It occurs Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings in the Chauncey Swan Parking Ramp. One full-time Parks and Recreation staff person is charged with organizing the market on top of several other responsibilities within the department. There are also four part-time employees who put in a combined 60 hours per week for the market, including being on-site during market hours. The farmers' market is fairly autonomous, although the managers must consult the Parks and Recreation Commission in the case of large changes. In Iowa City, there are 142 stalls for the Saturday market, although the manager reported that there are usually only about 118 vendors at the market. The stalls are generally all full, however, because of the number of vendors who rent multiple stalls for a market day and the efforts of a part-time employee who dedicates between 10-15 hours per week to filling stalls. The Wednesday market is markedly smaller with approximately 60 stalls. The daily stall fee for either market is $11, or just slightly higher than the $9 per day that season vendors pay. The fee is $234 for 26 markets on either Wednesday or Saturday, or $468 for both days. Iowa City maintains a wait list in

Table 1: Basic characteristics of the markets in our study

Market	Hours	Location	Fee	Number of vendors
Downtown Des Moines Farmers' Market	Saturdays 7 am - Noon	Court Avenue District in Des Moines	~$46/week, but variable based on goods sold	200
Grinnell Farmers' Market	Thursdays 3 – 6 pm			

occurred each week at every market that we visited. At Grinnell, the music began near the end of the market day each Thursday and took place in an adjoining park. The Downtown Marshalltown Market similarly started the live music later in the market day in the grassy area around their courthouse, although the market also had a radio broadcast playing throughout the market. Iowa City's music was also set apart from the vendor stalls, in an area with benches and tables outside the parking ramp every market day. In Des Moines and at the Marshalltown pavilion the music was more integrated into the market itself. Marshalltown had music only on Saturday mornings, but the musicians play in a stall within the market. Des Moines similarly has musicians operating at various points throughout the market, many of them mixed in with the other vendors or playing prominently at street corners.

At both Grinnell Farmers' Market and the Marshalltown Cartwright Pavilion, music was

The management at Marshalltown's Main Street market, the Grinnell Farmers' Market and Des Moines' Downtown Farmers' Market acknowledge that they strive to create an experience for their customers, while maintaining an emphasis on sales. As one manager told us: "The market is about commerce. We want customers to come down ready to buy and support their local farmers. Commerce is number one for us." At the same time, however, they reported wanting customers "to have a town square event… I want them to feel like they're in a small town. Everyone is invited….It's a place where people go to meet up with neighbors, friends, family. We have crafts, kiddie activities, cooking classes. It's more of an experience- more enticing to visit." The market is an important economic tool, but has the potential to set the stage for much more than that. The management of these three markets explicitly refers to the market as a "community event" or "special event." While that belief may be implicit in the management styles of the other managers, the special emphasis on its status as an event clearly has ramifications for the way the market is treated.

witnessed this and it seems more like an omission from the rules than a real practice. In Des Moines, however, resellers are present, which frustrates some vendors who sell at markets that "keep the produce local, unlike in Des Moines." It should be noted that Des Moines has limits on the number of resale vendors each year, just as they limit other types of vendors such as produce or meat, and that vendors reselling items represent a small minority of all vendors.

The mix of customers and producers is also important to vendors when selecting a good market. Vendors value markets that have a balance of loyal consumers and diverse vendors. Good customers are perceived as regulars at the market who are educated about food, appreciate quality, and are willing to buy. Vendors particularly mentioned that Iowa City and Grinnell had a well-educated, very supportive customer base. Vendors also appreciate having a diverse pool of fellow vendors who are consistent and support conviviality at the market. One of the stark differences between the two Marshalltown markets we visited is the presence of more diverse types of vendors at the Main Street market. As one vendor who is familiar with both markets told us, the Wednesday market "doesn't change" and has had the same product mix, mostly produce and baked goods, year after year. At the Thursday market, however, "they have people selling candles up there- candles, meat- they had a guy selling stained glass last week. They had someone selling soap." He thinks that this changing mix of products brings in new consumers and will allow the Thursday market to grow. At the same time, however, he sees room for both markets in Marshalltown and does not think either of their futures is in question. As one Marshalltown patron told us: "It's not either/or, it's and/both."

vendors reported that they had sold at Des Moines in the past, but did not currently sell there. Respondents also reported that they prefer markets that make efforts to enhance the social

vendor motivations and experiences, differentiates the markets from one another, and has significant ramifications for the markets' atmosphere and success.

ten-year plan for the market and test different means for the market to expand, such as moving the market downtown, expanding the market an additional block, and eventually building a permanent location on the riverfront. The market's current location gets extremely crowded and has limited room for the market's expansion, even though it is popular with market vendors. The

traffic than the small markets, and are likely more stressful for the vendors. Des Moines, with its 200 vendors and 18,000 customers, is a carnival relative to the 30 vendors and several hundred patrons at the Grinnell Farmers' Market. These large markets in city centers seem to draw people in from around the state. One Marshalltown Main Street vendor confirmed this by telling us that nearly all of his acquaintances in Marshalltown make the drive to visit the Des Moines market each year. Vendors are simply busier on market days and must have a different way of interacting with customers given the size of the crowds. We believe that the poor response rate may be due to a depersonalization of the market at a larger scale. As the markets increased in size, we got less of a response. It may be that a market like Des Moines becomes too large for it to function as a social sphere in the same way markets do in smaller cities, even if it functions perfectly well in the other capacities of a market. Perhaps the bonds between producer and consumer are less strong, as consumers treat it more like a traditional shopping experience.

The scale of the market also has implications for the level of control that vendors exercise over the market's operation. All of the markets we visited have some mechanisms for vendor input, but they vary immensely. The Marshalltown Farmers' Market is entirely vendor run, making it unique in our sample and also ensuring that vendors have complete control over the market. While not all vendors exercise the same level of control, only people who are vendors have authority in the market. In Grinnell, there is an annual meeting, where the market masters, the Chamber of Commerce president and personnel, and the vendors all discuss the market season and potential changes. While the Chamber of Commerce does have decision-making power and can sometimes prevent vendor policies from being instated, the vendors generally have control. They decided to limit the market to its current level and they decided the fee structure for the market. Many of the policies of the brand new Farmers' Market on Main in

Marshalltown are not entirely set. The market master explained that he believes they will have a vendor meeting at the end of the season, but since this is the market's first year of operation, it has not happened before. There were some vendors involved in the planning stages for the new market, but it is unclear how much power they will have.

In Iowa City and Des Moines, vendors still have some power, but it is limited. The market takes on more of a life of its own, especially with the presence of full-time market directors. In larger markets, there is a large enough pool of vendors that the opinion of each single vendor is somewhat diluted. Iowa City has an annual vendor meeting and does take vendor opinions into account. However, the major decisions regarding the market are made by the Parks and Recreation Department as well as an advisory body to the city council. This includes decisions about the fee structure of the market and the market's location. While the managers are working with vendors to make the market experience good for them, something that they are successfully doing, according to vendors, the vendors themselves do not get decision-making power.

We have less information regarding the power of vendors in the Des Moines market, but what we do know suggests that they also do not have direct decision-making power. When the Des Moines market managers changed the market's fee structure in 2009 they did take the ideas of the vendors into account. It was important to the market administrators that the vendors were in agreement with the new structure. That year they held a meeting with what ended up being about 75% of their full-season vendors to discuss the fee changes. This is an example of a high level of vendor input on a serious market issue. However, it seems as though an annual vendor meeting is not the norm and that 2009 may have been a special case. While the market administrators have honest relationships with vendors that help them gauge the popularity of

certain policies, the market managers are going to act in a way that supports the market's

Des Moines, with 200 vendors, it is unlikely that 100 produce vendors could all sell out their goods. By diversifying their products, vendors make a unique niche for themselves and increase the draw of the market to interested consumers.

This ability to support niche marketers also likely expands over time and as markets grow in size. As established markets of a reasonable size continue to mature, they need to evolve in terms of product diversity to maintain interest and continue to grow. Simply adding more vendors is not an option. To do so, particularly at smaller markets, is dangerous because it threatens to disrupt the critical mass that the market has, with enough vendors to entice customers and enough customers to draw in old and new vendors. If this balance is disrupted markets can "often experience a *circular condition* in which they cannot attract sufficient customers because they do not have sufficient vendors, but they cannot attract sufficient vendors because they do not have sufficient customers" (Stephenson 2008, p. 6). The Grinnell Farmers' Market, already rather large at 30 vendors in a town of 9,000, is trying to avoid this problem now. As a Grinnell market administrator told us:

> The place where I see [the market's] potential for growth is really in the artisan area. We have that issue of critical mass. We're not a town of 100,000, we're a town of 9,000 and half of them are too old or too young to come down- you know with the nursing homes and the people with young children. We can't add more produce vendors to the market. The expansion to be had is in the artisan area.

The size of Grinnell as a town prevents its market from supporting ten additional tomato vendors, but the market may be able to expand to offer interesting art or house wares that are not available anywhere in town without hurting the business of the existing vendors. This type of expansion may actually enhance the market further by drawing in new customers based on the

existence of the specialty product. Iowa City has experienced a similar evolution in the past several years. The market administration does not see a clear path forward to increase the number of vend

market). Several other vendors used to sell at Grinnell, Des Moines, or Iowa City in years past, but had stopped, generally as a result of scaling back because of age or other commitments. Many other vendors also sell at their local farmers' market in places such as State Center, Albion, Mount Vernon, or Oskaloosa. Two of the vendors we interviewed attend as many as five different markets over the course of the market season, but no one attended that many different markets in a given week. The average number of different markets attended over the course of the season was 1.9, although 19 of the vendors only sell at one market over the course of the season. Some of the markets, such as the Marshalltown Pavilion, Grinnell, and Iowa City have more than one market day in a week, and as such nearly all vendors attend more than one market day in a given week. One interviewee reported selling at markets 8 times *per week* in his heyday, although he has since had to cut back due to health concerns. These figures demonstrate a highly varied picture in the lives of the vendors. Half of the vendors are only selling at one market, a sign that they are likely not depending on it as a sole, or even major, source of income. While this may be a result of our low response rate from Des Moines, a market where high profits can be realized, it is still unlikely that anyone can make a living wage working at only one market. Others, selling at three or four markets per week over the course of five or more days, seem to take the markets more seriously as a livelihood.

We asked vendors if they rely on any sources of income beyond farmers' markets for their livelihood. No one in the sample was making a living selling at farmers' markets alone. As one vendor said "You can't be supported by it- by Grinnell alone. Some of the value added people might be able to do it but selling produce there's simply no way that you can make it work." Three of the vendors were living entirely on farm income from a variety of sources including community-supported agriculture (CSAs), wholesale, row crops, or Conservation

Reserve Program (CRP) contracts. One of these vendors told us that the farmers' market was third on their list of sources of income, after their CSA and wholesale. Five additional vendors relied on other income from agriculture (CSA, wholesale, etc) to make a living, but also relied on a job or other non-farm income for their livelihood. On top of these five, thirteen other vendors worked at least part-time, with eleven working full-time jobs. In fourteen cases, or 36.8% of all the vendors we surveyed, the vendor or their spouse was retired and relied on retirement savings, a pension, or social security. Two of the vendors also relied on real estate investments to support them, although only one of these vendors cited his property rentals as his only other income aside from the market. One of the vendors, the youngest vendor in the sample, had no other source of income but is still partially dependent on her parents. Two of the interviewees were full-time farm employees during the growing season.

When asked the question "What keeps you selling at farmers' markets?" the answers of the vendors were diverse. We counted each vendor's answer under all the categories in which it fell, so while 35 vendors responded to the question, the number of answers for all the categories adds up to more than 35. The top reason for their continued presence l

Vendor Motivations and Their Importance

The diverse responses to several of our questions about the market lend insight into what farmers' markets mean to the people who sell there and what motivates their participation. In assessing the markets' importance to the vendors we looked closely at the answers to several questions on our survey:

- Why did you first choose to sell at the farmers' market?
- Do you or your family have other sources of income? (what?)
- How important is it for you to be directly involved in selling your products to customers?
- What keeps you selling at the farmers' market?
- How well do you like the farmers' markets at which you sell, and for what reasons?
- Is your approach to production affected by your views about the environment or your religious beliefs?
- What role do and should local foods play in the U.S. food system?

Our interviews indicate that the motivations for selling at farmers' markets are incredibly varied. However, parsing apart the various motivations of the vendors lends specific insights into the ways in which vendors view the market and the plurality of meanings that the market takes on for its vendors. In evaluating the ways in which vendors view the market, several dominant moitvation types begin to emerge which we will refer to as: social sellers, businesspeople, lifers, hobbyists, and idealists. The majority of vendors tend to have some characteristics of several of these types, however there are a few vendors who exemplify each given category. These

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For these socially driven vendors, the market functions as a social gathering. It brings them personal satisfaction because of the human contact the market provides. This is perhaps unsurprising given the historical role of markets. For centuries marketplaces of all kinds have acted as a meeting place. Farmers' markets in particular have achieved this social function by linking urban and rural residents. One vendor told us: "You get out and you meet people. You gotta understand that when I was a kid I lived on a farm. I knew my mom, my dad, my brothers and sisters, my aunt, uncle, and their kids. You didn't get out to see people." This vendor is recognizing something that others have also noticed-

Lifers

Some of the vendors we interviewed are what we term lifers. They were raised in farming households and made the decision to stay in the business on their own. At least two of the so-called “lifers” reported that their parents were in the truck farming business, while several others had parents who raised row crops or livestock. Either way, these vendors have made the decision to stay in the farming world. They keep coming to markets because they are “addicted” and it’s “in [their] blood.” They learned the secrets of farming, gardening, or crafting from their parents and have always kept it up, even when they held other full-time commitments. One of the oldest people we interviewed, a 76-year old man who still lives on the farm he grew up on and sells at markets twice a week, told us: “When I was teaching I prepared for this. I wanted to stay active physically and mentally.” He always wanted a hobby for his retirement and his lifetime on a farm taught him “the work ethic” to keep gardening. He gardened throughout his teaching career and continue(h)-4(i)-6(s)( )-10(a.n(s)( )-)( )- Tw -4(g)esyo of the li r-2(s)-1(a)4(r)-7(e)-2(ol)--2(e)4(a)]TJ 62.2

Others gave indications of mildly agrarian patterns of thought by advocating that industry should be locally based and that supporting any part of the local economy is worthwhile. This aligns with the agrarian belief that "any manufacturing enterprise should be formed and scaled to fit the local landscape, the local ecosystem, and the local community and that it should be locally owned and employ local people" (Berry 2001, p. 74). Agrarianism is unsurprisingly present in the belief systems of the vendors at farmers' markets.

One vendor who exemplified this idealist type was working at a corporate job before he "got sick of it," quit, and started his own operation. He thinks that "food is a mission," that "food should not be trucked in from 1,000 miles away," and that farming is about "making sure food is healthy and feeds you, not just fills you up." These beliefs arose on top of his ideas that organics have been co-opted by the same large corporations that control conventionally produced food and that nothing but knowing the producer can ensure that food was produced satisfactorily. There were several other vendors who clearly viewed the market as an outlet for produce or other products that they view as created in a superior fashion. Even vendors who did not take the ideology as far as the man above almost always had something to say on the topic of the environment or local food. When asked the question "What role do and should local foods play in the U.S.?" we received thirty-five responses, with all of them overwhelmingly supportive of local foods. Nineteen interviewees began by saying that local food should have a larger role than it currently does. Nearly every respondent provided multiple reasons for the growth in the importance of local foods. However, the most popular was that local foods support the local economy and their community, an answer given by 34% of respondents. Other answers included improved taste and eating fresher, more nutritious foods. Several respondents also pointed out

the unsustainable nature of the conventional food system, at one point calling local foods "the only sane way into the future!"

The farmers' market is a symbolic place for these ideological vendors, a place that represents resistance to conventional food supplies and corporations and a means to live out their ideologies. Many Americans are alienated from the dominant food system as a result of its dependence on industrial production methods. However, this disaffection is not felt equally among all members of the population. We argue that the idealist vendors at farmers' markets, especially those selling fresh produce, feel this alienation more poignantly than most. Even these advocates of the local foods movement, however, seem disproportionately distressed by some sectors of the globalized markets. Farmers' markets are an apt response to the most stressful component of the globalized food system for these vendors: the fresh fruits and vegetable market. These vendors have taken steps to act out their beliefs, through the local production of fresh fruits and vegetables and the marketing of that produce through farmers' markets. The symbolic resistance of vendors at farmers' markets, along with the increasing popularity of farmers' markets, makes them an important site for the resistance of industrialized food. After discussing why globalized food is so alienating, we will attempt to explain the ways in which farmers' markets respond to the conventional food system and why ideological vendors in particular are responding to industrialized food.

We asked vendors for their thoughts about the importance of local foods. Nearly every vendor clearly articulated the appeal of local foods in contrast to their globalized counterparts, which in some sense is not altogether surprising. What was more interesting was that when vendors talked about "foods shipped in from 1,000 miles away" they were often talking about fruits and vegetables. Complaints about "apples from Chile" and "tomatoes from Argentina"

reclaim it. Farmers' markets are inherently local, and vendors take pride in telling the stories of their food. More than once, vendors offered to give me tours of their gardens or fields, proud of where their produce comes from. No such story can be told for produce from grocery stores. Farmers' markets return the history to our food. They ensure us that the tomato we purchased today was picked yesterday and has not been processed to give the appearance that it is fresh off the farm.

Farmers' markets and the other venues for farmer-to-consumer interactions are reactions to our globalized, industrialized food supply and the things that it represents, namely, the loss of our food's history and the lack of control over and knowledge of the growing process. This loss of history is inevitable in an industrialized food system:

> One of the primary results- and one of the primary needs- of industrialism is the separation of people and places and products from their histories. To the extent that we participate in the industrial economy, we do not know the histories of our families or our habitats or of our meals. (Berry 2001, p. 64)

Farmers' markets restore the relationships between producers and consumers that industrialization disrupts, allowing people to meet the vendor responsible for their food and hear from a person's mouth the story of its existence. As farmers' markets have grown in popularity, the vendors who sell at them have become "the vanguard of the local food movement, veritable while nights in the battle against the industrial food system" (Winne 2009, p. 46). They have come to be recognized as a haven for local foods and alternative production methods. This status has likely contributed to the widespread success of markets and their phenomenal growth over the past several decades.

non-farmers to stress over the seeming lack of balance in our food system, helping explain the prominence of the local foods movement in society at large.

Geertz writes that the mechanisms through which ideology provides an outlet for social stresses are multiple. Three of his explanations are likely pertinent to the case of farmers' market vendors. The first, his "cathartic explanation," suggests the construction of a unified enemy in globalized food. Geertz believes that "emotional tension is drained off by being displaced onto symbolic enemies," a role fulfilled by agribusiness and transnational corporations in this case (1973, p. 205). This explanation describes one of the deeper purposes of the local foods movement; it represents a unified front against agribusiness and provides an outlet for people harmed or distressed by the industrialization of food. Farmers' markets are a gathering place for local foods enthusiasts of all kinds and celebrate the advantages local foods have over a symbolic enemy—the industrial food market.

Another important component of his argument is his "morale explanation" for ideology. Here he explains that ideologies are capable of "[sustaining] individuals (or groups) in the face of chronic strain either by denying it outright or by legitimizing it in terms of higher values" (Geertz 1973, p. 205). It henemain e (or9roup

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1. How did you initially learn farming skills? (family tradition, social networks, publications, organizations, state extension service, other)

2. What sources of information about farming or production methods do you rely on at present?

3. How is the labor for your operation accomplished? (self, family members, volunteers, hired help, other)

4. Do you participate in any cooperative arrangements with other producers?

5. How important is it for you to be directly involved in selling your products to customers? (how important is the social interaction aspect of the farmers' market to you?)

6. Is there information you do not have that would help you better market your products?

C.Values:

1. What keeps you selling at the farmers' market(s)?

2. How well do you like the farmers' markets at which you sell, and for what reasons? (cost, convenience, rules, ambience, etc.) Do you think that some markets are better than others? If so, what makes for a better market?

3. Is your approach to production affected by your views about the environment or your religious beliefs?

4. Have government programs or regulations affected your participation in farmers markets?

5. What role do and should local foods play in the U.S. food system?

Appendix 2: Questionnaire and Interview Questions for Managers

Farmers Markets in Central Iowa

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study of farmers' markets in central Iowa. Please respond to the following questions. You may skip any you do not wish to answer. We hope that the information gathered from this study can be used to understand the value of farmers markets in Iowa and the ways in which they could be improved for vendors.

A. Manager Profile

1. What is your age/gender?

2. Where were you born? Where do you currently reside?

3. How long have you been managing this market? Did you manage any other markets before this? If so, which ones and for how long?

4. How did you first get involved in the farmers' market? How did you become manager? Were you ever a vendor? If so, what did you produce?

5. Who runs the downtown market?

B. The Manager Position and Market Logistics

1. Who "hires" the market manager?

2. What are your responsibilities as market manager?

3. Are there other employees that work on the farmers' market?

4. Are you at the market each weekend?

5. Is the manager position paid? If so, who pays the salary and who decides the amount?

6. Does the manager answer to the needs and requests of a particular group or organization?

7. How many vendors sell at this market? Is this the number you would like? Is there a waiting list? Do you have plans for expanding the number, and if so, how would you do this?

8. Are there limits on the number of each type of good at your market?

9. What is the cost for a stall per season and per week? What are the fees used for? Who decides these costs? Do the vendors have any influence over the process to set the costs? Do you think these costs are appropriate and/or good for the market?

10. Is there a budget for the farmers' market? Who creates the budget and where does the money come from?

11. Is there a formal set of rules for vendors? If so, is it possible for us to have a copy?

C. The Market

1. What do you like about this market? What could be better about it?

2. Have you noticed a change in the popularity of this market since you became involved here? Have you noticed a change in the popularity of farmers' markets in general since you became

Well-known in the community and advertised well

Low stall fees

Negative:

Need a lot of stock to succeed

Ramp can get crowded

Ramp is not a picturesque place for a farmers' market

Des Moines Downtown Farmers' Market

Positive:

An entertainment venue for customers

High sales

Heavy traffic

Negative:

Don't appear to enforce Iowa Grown rules

Need to park far away and haul in goods

Generally a bit disorganized/difficult to find vendors from week to week

Variable attendance based on weather

High fixed costs

Profit-chasing mindset

Less organic

Neutral or Mixed Response

Widespread availability of finished goods and prepared foods

Full-time non-vendor management

Grinnell Farmers' Market

Positive

Popular with vendors

Supportive administration

Enforces locally grown rules

Good traffic and a diverse customer base

Assigned stalls

Adjacent to Central Park

Easy parking and good setup

Good size at 30 vendors

Diverse base of goods

Vendors oftentimes know their customers

Close to Grinnell College

Grilling and music in the park

Reasonable cost

Centrally located

Trees give good shade at some times of the year

Negative

Vendors oftentimes do not sell out/oversaturated

Some trouble with market administrators

High weekly stall fee

Subject to weather

Less profitable than some

Music comes too late, some people don't stay

Marshalltown Pavilion Farmers' Market

Positive

Easy parking

Assigned stalls

Pavilion space is free to the market

Good location in town

More vendors than the smaller Marshalltown market

Good customer base

Roof

Has enough vendors to draw customers

Close to home for many of the vendors

Most vendors accept WIC

Negative

People don’t linger

Has not evolved in recent years

No support from city or another outside organization

Poor management structure

Don’t find space for new vendors

Negative

Difficult parking

No assigned stalls

Marshalltown Linn Street Farmers' Market

Positive

No fee

Negative

Few vendors

People do not come

Appendix 4: Area Farmers' Markets

Following is a list of farmers' markets in central Iowa. This is not a complete list, but represents all the markets we were told about or visited over the course of our study.

Des Moines

- Downtown