

Chestnuts and Spring Chickens: Conflict and Change in Farmers Market Ideologies

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The taxonomy of farmers markets requires an update to encompass the expanding range of available options. Also absent from the literature is an appreciation of the connection between market types, ideological stances, social characteristics, and conflict—necessary for understanding the social processes, motivations, and expectations that create a farmers market. Our study of a long-standing farmers market on the verge of municipal revamping aims to unite these interests, with a focus on the diverse demographics and values of the social groups involved. We propose a synthetic two-dimensional scheme to classify U.S. farmers markets. Bourdieu's theory of distinction is instrumental in making sense of the diversity encountered.

KEYWORDS *farmers market, conflict, taste, class, Bourdieu, culture, modernity*

Local food movements have arisen across the U.S. in answer to one of the world's most pressing problems—the food supply and its availability to all. In this context, innovative farmers markets are emerging and well-established ones are being reinvigorated. The emerging markets tend to be dominated by a new generation of farmers with unique concerns, such as sustainability, natural and organic methods, health, social justice, and profitability, while the latter adhere to tradition with little interest in trends or competitive pricing. A farmer's market is not an isolated entity. It is inextricably tied to local politics, culture, and individual feelings and behaviors about food and community. Just as the farmer's market can be a site for community integration and bonding, it can also be a site of contention—especially when long standing traditions are threatened. Across the U.S., several cases of dispute and conflicting agendas have been documented in the development

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of local farmers markets (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002; Chrzan 2008, 2010; Jarosz 2008). Disagreements over policy changes that challenge producers' ability to make an income or customers' access to desired products have even escalated to outright violence (Guptill 2008). Such disruption can cause setbacks in market operations and even curtail the availability of local fare.

Ideational forces driving the construction of the two market types, modernity and tradition, may lead to misunderstandings and tension when a city government wishes to upgrade an existing market, as is the case in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where the Tuscaloosa Farmers Market (TFM) has operated for nearly a century, and city planners are pushing ahead with their project to relocate and revitalize the original market. As active participants in the local food movement, we have ethnographically observed the conflict from the perspectives of various actors, which motivated us to find answers to several questions: Why relocate the Tuscaloosa Farmers Market? Why are the farmers so upset about it? What is the likely outcome of the conflict?

THE SETTING AND HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

Tuscaloosa is a mid-sized city with a population of about 100,000. It is the service, industrial, educational, and cultural mecca of a wide area encompassing West Alabama and Northeast Mississippi. The Tuscaloosa Farmers Market is currently located near the river in the downtown area and is supplied primarily by vendors with deep ties to farming tradition. It is open for business two to three half-days a week from April to December. In contrast to more exclusionary modern farmers markets (see Govindasamy et al. 1998; Markowitz 2010; Slocum 2007), it serves a wide cross-section of the populace overrepresented by certain sub-segments such as the poor and elderly (eligible for United States Department of Agriculture [USDA] Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers),¹ African Americans, immigrants, university-affiliated, and alternative lifestyle types. The wealthy, the upper-middle class, and the young (with the noted exceptions), are not much in evidence.²

The city intends to relocate the original TFM about a quarter of a mile away as part of the city's Riverfront Development Project, with plans to convert the current location into a parking lot for a new amphitheater. Whereas the TFM is self-governing, with a one dollar annual lease from the City on

¹ The Farmer's Market Nutrition Program provides vouchers to senior citizens, food stamps recipients, and WIC participants for use at participating farmers markets. This has led to an increased reliance on farmers markets in local subsistence economies (Kunkel, Luccia, and Moore 2003; Payne 2002).

² For two years now, a hip, trendy weekly summer market, Homegrown Alabama, has opened on the edge of the University campus. There was initially some rivalry and misunderstanding but by and large both are supportive of the other, recognizing the need for more availability of fresh produce and their ability to tap different crowds. A few of the original Farmers Market vendors even sell at both markets.

a property of marginal utility,³ the new site would be managed by the City and space would be more costly to rent. City planners find it inexplicable why the design for the new TFM structure drawn up by a local architectural firm is being staunchly opposed by the farmers.

The research regarding the relocation and upgrading of the decades-old existing farmers market operation on which this paper is based has involved three years of participant observation, as well as open-ended, structured, and cultural consensus analysis interviews with 22 farmers, 104 consumers, and 6 of the city planners who are coordinating the effort. The Institutional Review Board of the University of Alabama approved the study protocol, with informed consent obtained from those interviewed. Questions centered on features of the proposed new market, including its architecture, administration and operation compared to the current market. The managers of 16 well-established modern farmers markets across the U.S. also were visited and interviewed.⁴ However, in this paper rather than presenting detailed results, our intention is to employ the overall findings to elaborate and refine a model of farmers markets in the U.S., inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu. The tension between traditional and modern farmers markets illuminates enduring fault lines within society structured by class and culture.

HISTORY AND CONFLICT IN LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

While farmers markets have always been a part of the U.S. food landscape, their numbers began dwindling in the 1920s as they were replaced by brokers and supermarkets (Brown 2002). By 1970 agroindustrial dominance had made them an endangered species as their numbers dipped to 340. The rebound of farmers markets, attributable to a convergence of consumer interest in sustainable and local foods, producer motivations, and government support (Brown 2001, 2002), has the count at over 6000 and growing, more than half of them started since 2002 (Shaffer and Cox 2008).

The early farmers market's growth spurt coincided with the passage of the federal Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act 1976, which promoted the development of markets through modest federal funding incentives as well as encouraged the direct participation of the Cooperative Extension Service in each state in sponsoring and supporting them (Brown

³ The current Farmers Market site was built atop an old landfill. People in the downtown area had historically pitched their trash over the edge of a plateau into an oxbow pond formed by the river's meander. Thus, the footers for the current shed extend down 30 feet; with unstable ground and failed percolation tests, the area is not suitable for building anything more substantial.

⁴ We have studied farmers markets in these cities: Cullman, AL; Birmingham, AL; Baton Rouge, LA; New Orleans, LA; Atlanta, GA; Henderson, KY; Lexington, KY; Sanibel, FL; Miami, FL (2); San Francisco, CA; Iowa City, IA; Boise, ID; Seattle, WA; Portland, OR; Washington, DC. This information is supplemented by the numerous published articles and film footage on U.S. markets we have consulted.

2002). Consumers have shown increased interest in farm-fresh and regional specialty foods while producers search for more profitable alternatives to wholesale commodity markets (Atkinson and Williams 1994; Holloway and Kneafsey 2000).

In Alabama, after years of family farm loss due to federal farm policy and easy credit, the number of new farmers increased 55 percent (from 1,440 to 2,230) between 2002 and 2007 (USDA 2004, 2009), stimulated by job loss in other sectors and programs such as the USDA Farm Service Agency loans to beginning, younger small farmers. This was relative to a total increase in farms of only 8 percent. Many of these newcomers are small scale farmers who grow vegetables for farmers markets instead of practicing large-scale agrobusiness.

One example recently featured in the Birmingham news (Faulk 2009) is of new farmers who settled in Alabama in 2008:

Kim and Cricket Adams, a couple pushed from the Mississippi Gulf Coast by Hurricane Katrina . . . started a small vegetable farm on part of their land with \$70 in seeds. Kim Adams, 44, is a former flight attendant, and Cricket Adams, 48, sells irrigation and plumbing supplies on the side . . . In their first year they made \$8000 from their meager investment by selling their Certified Naturally Grown produce at three farmers markets around north Alabama. The couple is planning to expand their operation and eventually turn it into their main income.

In contrast, an example of a new entrant to the traditional mode of farming is Kyle Ross, 29. His trajectory was community college after high school, working at two John Deere tractor stores for a few years, then becoming a farm hand for some of the farmers he met there. Married with a child, he cites the farm family lifestyle as his incentive to finally decide to become a farmer himself. He planted his first 53 acres of row crops—corn—in 2007, and 150 acres of corn, soybeans, and wheat the following year. He planned to add peanuts the next year, as well as return to college for a degree in agricultural economics (Faulk 2009).

The traditional farmers market vendor is situated uneasily between these two trends. They continue to farm in the manner of their parents and grandparents, often cultivating the same land. They are not getting starter loans, nor are they interested in large scale monocropping.

American conservationist Wendell Berry (1977) identified two forms of agrarians: exploiters and nurturers. The former think in terms of output (the agrocapiatlist), the latter think in terms of quality, condition, and character (the small farmer). He wrote, “The care of the earth is after all our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope” (1977, 2). Late twentieth-century repercussions from the rapid growth of industrial agriculture and urbanization in the forms

of environmental degradation and ill health (Carson 1962; Shiva 2000) set the stage for conservation-minded activism and projects such as re-localizing the foodway. However, as our own example will illustrate, the idea that there could be problems or conflicts associated with local food movements is often overlooked or outright rejected, despite many documented instances of disputes, clashing ideologies, and contradictory expectations over municipal farmers markets (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002; Chrzan 2008, 2010; Jarosz 2008; cf. Bourdieu 1984, 56, on aesthetic intolerance and violence).

TYPES OF FARMERS MARKETS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Previous research on farmers markets focuses predominantly on practical aspects such as the logistics of operation and descriptions of different types of farmers markets. We have found a need to update the literature on farmers market taxonomies to encompass the expanding range of available options. What is also missing from the literature is an appreciation of the link between types of farmers markets, ideological stances, social characteristics, and conflict. Our study of a long-standing farmers market on the verge of municipal revamping aims to unite these interests, with a focus on the diverse demographics and values of the social groups involved. At the root of conflict about the ideal farmers market in Tuscaloosa, as elsewhere, is ideological difference.

A good place to begin is Payne's (2002, 7) basic definition of a farmers market as "a common facility or area where multiple growers gather on a regular basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, and other farm products directly to customers." However, a sole term does not suffice to define all types of markets. Brown (2002), recognizing there is no agreed upon classification system, and that many different direct-marketing activities end up under the umbrella definition of farmers market, proposes a classification system that distinguishes between wholesale- and retail-type distribution markets. It includes: Terminal Markets, or those markets in which large quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables (and sometimes meat) are sold wholesale but to which farmers are denied access; Public Markets, which are various forms of retail food markets that do not enforce regulations about product origin; and, Farmers Markets, where several farmers sell their own products, of which there are two subsets: (1) Wholesale Farmers Markets, where trade is wholesale but farmers are admitted; and (2) Retail Farmers Markets, in which all the types of market may be counted together, regardless of reselling policy. This classification system highlights the degree to which the marketed products are a part of the local food system. However, Brown acknowledged that additional subgroupings need to be developed to account for grower-only versus those allowing resale

of produce. The typology falls short for the purpose of analyzing the social processes, motivations, and expectations that form the ideological foundation of a farmers market.

Coster and Kennon (2005, vi) further identify farmers markets as either a “new-generation market” or a “mixed-market.” A new-generation market is essentially a producer-only market found in a focal public location that operates regularly. In contrast, mixed-markets sell both food and non-food items with no restrictions on vendors having grown or made their own products.

Tiemann (2008) then delineated producer-only markets into two specific types: indigenous and experience markets. Indigenous markets are typically found in small towns, and are frequented by a much older clientele. A limited variety of staple crops, such as corn, potatoes, and tomatoes, are offered at low prices. Vendors at indigenous markets tend to be retired or have another source of income. Experience markets, on the other hand, are found in larger college towns with vendors who rely on the market as a substantial part of their income. Therefore, the vendors pay particular attention to the display of their goods to maximize their sales. Their range of products is much greater, including items such as meats, cheeses, and non-food items such as crafts and homemade soaps (Tiemann 2008, 471–473).

A nuanced conceptualization of farmers market types is needed to understand and predict conflicts that might prevent access to fresh food for all sectors of society, one that takes into account the historical development of individual farmers markets that shapes their ideology and practical management. To this end, we propose a synthetic two-dimensional scheme to classify farmers markets in the U.S. that belies an either-or taxonomy and captures the complexity of this phenomenon. Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of distinction is instrumental in making sense of this classification.

THE SOCIAL SPACE OF FARMERS MARKETS

The Tuscaloosa Farmers Market is a century-old producer-only traditional, or “indigenous,” market that serves a broad segment of the population, inclusive of low-income, African Americans, and Asian and Latino immigrants, as well as an educated middle-income, largely university and artisan, crowd. The TFM prohibits the resale of products grown or made by others. The City’s planned new RiverMarket is projected to be a mixed-market venue combining commercial and “experience” elements. This type market, with all its positives, tends to be frequented by members of the economically and socially middle-class, that is, primarily the white, well-educated and financially secure (Allen et al. 2003; Slocum 2007).

Bourdieu’s notion of social space refers to the position, in terms of ideas, prestige, characteristics, even geography, that an actor or institution

occupies vis-à-vis others, and is determined by the types and quantities of capital commanded by them, a position which the actor can never fully apprehend (1984, 169). Bourdieu's figure 5, *The Space of Social Positions*, and figure 6, *The Space of Life-Styles* (1984, 128–129), work uncannily well as blueprints on which to plot the social space of farmers markets and vendors. Figure 1, adapted from Bourdieu's figure 5, organizes the salient characteristics of farmers market types in two dimensions: (1) on the horizontal axis are traditional (or indigenous) versus modern (or experience), and (2) on the vertical, grower-only (aka producer-only) versus commercial; the choice on the first axis does not necessarily parallel that of the second. Both are of concern here for different reasons, as will be shown. Of particular importance to note is that the “modern/experience” market is situated in the right half of the graphic, whether in the upper right grower-only quadrant or the lower right quadrant of the mixed-market, where commercial vendors are also welcome.

TRADITIONAL VERSUS MODERN MARKETS

The TFM farmers, on the one hand, are traditional in that most continue to farm in the manner of their parents and grandparents, often cultivating the same land. They are happy with the current market arrangement and see no need to move. They operate out of a simple shed, with themselves in

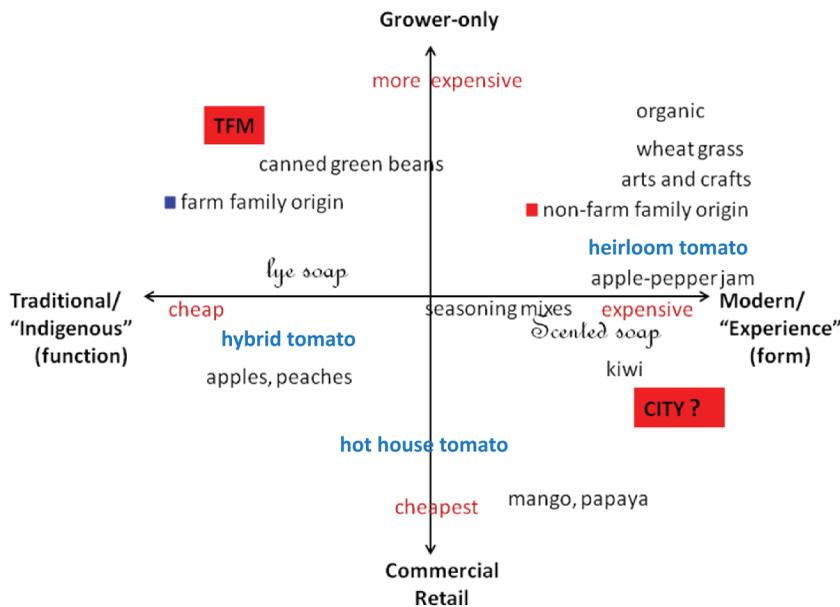


FIGURE 1 The social space of growers and products in the various market types (following Bourdieu 1984, 128–129; color figure available online).

control of management. The consensus opinion is, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” (i.e., they wish to remain in the upper left corner of figure 1). On the other hand, the rapid growth in farmers markets nationwide is primarily accounted for by the opening of new “modern” markets, fueled by growers and buyers alike who subscribe to an ideology of sustainable, green, local, and/or organic lifeways. These growers would prefer to be in the upper right quadrant of social space, but may find themselves in the lower right corner, to their competitive disadvantage.

The City envisions the new RiverMarket as a modern market of the mixed-market variety, which invites commercial retailers (lower right quadrant of figure 1). As with most cities, Tuscaloosa’s leaders adhere to an ethos of modernity that Giddens (1998, 94) would define as a set of attitudes towards the world that sees it as infinitely open to transformation by human intervention, based on economic institutions such as industrial production and a market economy. Thus, a social practice associated with newness, rationality, and progress that has a profit motive as its foundation—that is, a “farmers market” with industrially produced food—seems a progressive step for the city rather than something to be alarmed about. The proposed new farmers market is just one of the City’s many revitalization projects in the works.

Tuscaloosa’s 40-year-old mayor, well-equipped with a master’s degree in public administration, has in his first years in office attracted millions of federal, philanthropic, and private dollars to rebuild crumbled city infrastructure and initiate new business and industry, giving due emphasis to the neglected African American “Westside.” A 12-block section of the old downtown has been razed to host a new complex including a federal building and transportation hub. A separate Riverfront Development, of which the new RiverMarket is a portion, consists of over a dozen major projects, including an amphitheatre, visitor’s center, boat dock, riverbank stabilization, and public park. The mayor is bright and personable—a true “policy wonk” who is highly accessible to the public. He is popular enough that—although a Democrat in a very Republican district—he ran unopposed in his reelection bid. Despite this, he, though more accurately the other city leaders delegated with the task of relocation, are unaware of the national trends and competing ideologies regarding farmers markets, and themselves are not frequenters of, nor more than vaguely familiar with, the TFM. While they hold up other cities’, especially Little Rock’s, new farmers markets as models to emulate, they are unaware of the forces that created or contest them. (The featured downtown market in Little Rock has competition from Argenta and other markets that bill themselves as locally grown only. See Galiano 2010.)⁵ They are too invested in economic capital formation and distracted by other

⁵ The city of Tuscaloosa over many decades has been shifting from a backwater to an urban character; it occupies that liminal size and state between town and cosmopolitan city. Tuscaloosa is

matters to appreciate what seems to them a pedantic difference between the market types. They appear to have no concept of the degree to which they have enraged the TFM vendors by only meeting with them sporadically, then disvaluing the farmers concerns. The farmers have revolted, and threaten to open their own market on a private site. We will demonstrate how this disvaluing is not so much intentional as borne of differing class values and dispositions.

GROWER-ONLY VERSUS COMMERCIAL MARKETS

The other important taxonomical distinction between market types are those of grower-only (aka producer-only, grower-vendor, or direct-to-market) and commercial, referring to retailers of wholesale purchases. The current Tuscaloosa market is of the former type, as are many (but not all) of the popular new modern markets throughout the U.S. The TFM Association polices their members by visits to members' farms to assure that, as one association officer put it, "if they are selling green beans, they have green beans growing on vines." Commercial resale of fruits and vegetables mass-produced by others, even imported from Mexico and elsewhere, is characteristic of a different type of market, which tends to be open daily. A commercial business effectively out-competes any local farmer in price, and thus the two types cannot coexist easily. Also, since local farmers are the ones growing the produce they sell, it is impossible for them to tend a market stall daily, as they need days off to be working in the fields or at other jobs.

Starting from Commercial Markets and moving clockwise on the graph (figure 1), products become increasingly more expensive.

DISTINCTIONS AND TASTES

Following Bourdieu, one can read the farmer–City disagreements about the type of market to build as arising from unspoken but quite real class differences. On the one hand, the traditional farmers are plain-spoken, not as a rule well-educated, and concrete in their thinking.⁶ With a few exceptions, such as a lawyer who sells honey a few weeks out of the year, none are professionals. While none are full-time farmers, many are from multi-generation farm families and base their identity on these roots. The new green ideology

very proud of its progress, which earned it an All American City designation in 2002. It is understandable, then, why City leaders want the sheen of a modern cosmopolitan-style market. The thinking seems to be, if Little Rock, of a similar size, has achieved this, so too can Tuscaloosa.

⁶ For instance, three of the oldest farmers declined to be formally interviewed for the survey portion of our research, as they found it difficult to answer questions, especially hypothetical questions about future alternatives.

farmers, in contrast, are more highly educated and motivated by social concerns, and are likely to be first time farmers. City officials, distinct from either farmer type, are of the more dominant social ranks, with college degrees and a certain social capital typical of those who would seek public office.

Bourdieu's three types of capital are useful here: Social capital refers to social network connections within and between social networks (who you know), cultural capital to accumulated educational, social, and intellectual knowledge (what you know), and economic capital to accumulated wealth and resources, with power over others inherent in it (what you own). Leaving aside the issue of whether one inherits capital or achieves it, the distribution of capital differs from one class, or class fraction, to another ranging from the powerful to the deprived. The priority which drives the concerns of the traditional farmers market vendor is social capital, and that of a modern farmers market vendor is cultural capital, while that of the City is economic capital. We have identified the relationship of the farmers market actors and their dominant form of capital to their primary concerns (table 1). For instance, is the goal to supplement family income, make a living, or economic development? TFM farmers have a strong desire to maintain family tradition, modern farmers to reconnect to the land, and city planners to pursue urban renewal. Traditional farmers want to continue serving a clientele that is lower to middle class, while new farmers market vendors seek to attract upper middle income families (Jarosz 2008, 232). The City is concerned with its status vis-à-vis other cities and is not cognizant of the demographics of market patrons. Profit is not as high a priority for the traditional farmers as for the other actors (also see Trauger 2004; Slocum 2008). As one senior TFM farmer put it, "We don't do this to make money, we do this because of the farming. But when it costs more to grow than you make all year, it's just not going to be possible to do anymore."

Bourdieu (1984, 137–150) details how, when educational credentials inevitably devalue, the cultural capitalists, in order to avoid downward mobility, either have to retool their skills or look for new niches to innovatively exploit, often in the less rigidly class-coded sectors of the market. In recent years in the U.S., especially with the downturn in employment opportunities for all classes, small business and individual entrepreneurship is one of the few solutions. The rise in the social value of homegrown, local, and organic food has provided an entrée into a theater of production that has historically been relegated to the most unskilled of laborers, the farmer who vends at the market.

THE TASTE OF/FOR LOCAL PRODUCE

Understanding the origins and contours of taste is also key to deciphering this conflict. According to Bourdieu (1984, 28, 99, 257), taste, especially as it

TABLE 1 Farmers Market Actors, Their Dominant Form of Capital, and Primary Concerns

| Traditional—social | Modern—cultural | City planners—economic |
|--|--|--|
| Supplementing family income | Making a living; or supplementing family income | Economic development |
| Accommodating new, younger generation of vendors, esp. offspring | Recruiting appropriate vendors to build new market | Attract as many vendors as possible, indiscriminately |
| Maintaining reputation | Establish reputation for quality | Enhance civic/city pride |
| More advertising, through conventional means (billboards, ads in paper, downtown sign) | Innovative marketing strategies (Internet, etc.) | Ethos of progress |
| Maintain family farming tradition; “farm like taught to” | Create family traditions, which hopefully can be passed down | Urban renewal; part of master plan to upgrade appearance of downtown |
| Grower only (direct market) | Usually grower only | Commercial and grower mix |
| Serve community, esp. by keeping prices low | Serve elite segments of the community, while making a profit | Serve community, make profit from rents and fees |
| Maintain long term connection to family farm | Reconnect to land | Preserve local farm family traditions |
| Cash exchange | Introduce technology (card scanners) | Introduce technology |
| Maintain lower to middle class vendors and consumers | Recruit educated/upper-middle class growers and consumers | Keep up with other cities; competition to stay even, if not ahead. |

regards food preferences—and also art, styles, speech, political views, and the like—shows the hidden class construction, as well as class conflict, inherent in what is seemingly a natural or innate disposition. Two dimensions of taste that inform this conflict involve form versus function and leisure versus sustenance.

Form versus Function

For Bourdieu, the privileging of form over function is class-specific (1984, 6,30). The working and middle class are most concerned with the function fulfilled by an activity and look to it for sensible pleasure, as in “of the senses” or “sensual.” For art, the important questions for these folks are, *does it faithfully represent* (i.e., signify) *its subject?*, and, *what does it do for me* (e.g., evoke emotion, sympathy)? For cooking, the question translates to, *does it taste good?* In contrast, those of the dominant strata of society, when viewing any artistic or aesthetic expression, maintain an emotional distance from the work or cultural product rather than losing themselves in it, and assess it upon its form, that is, its relation to other similar objects, its history, its unusual qualities, and so on. That is, they must analyze it rather than simply enjoy it for what it is, with the tools of analysis socialized into them from inheritance (i.e., family of origin), and superior education. To boil it down to a phrase, when applied to food and eating the working class wants value for its dollar, a full belly and no surprises, while the elite prefer dishes of high quality and small quantity, the more exotic the better.

Taste implies the antithesis of function and form, quantity and quality, matter and manners (Bourdieu 1984, 177). This function/form distinction epitomizes the difference between traditional and modern farmers markets in general, and tracks with a differential valuing of quantity and quality. The current TFM exists to supply hearty quantities of low-priced vegetable matter to those who do not grow their own, especially the elderly, low-income, and working families. The market shed and stalls are plain and unadorned, as are the presentation and the items. Sacks of common vegetables and fruits, eggs, honey, and sometimes meat, are sold by the pound, with other traditional items such as homemade lye soaps, jams and jellies, and homemade baked goods rounding out the offerings. Seldom are other events occurring in conjunction with the market. The market starts early, around 6 a.m., with the best goods gone within a few hours.

Compared to the traditional farmers, with their heaping mounds of food that virtually fly off the tables to satisfy working peoples consumptive needs, new modern markets, in keeping with the dominant disposition which they represent, have dainty stalls and petite displays to satisfy the whims and appetites of a leisure class. In contrast to the staid traditional farmers market, the new farmers market has a more carnival-like atmosphere, with live music, kids activities, and other draws that pull in the casual shopper looking for something to do on a Saturday morning (also see Andreatta and Wickliffe

2002, 171). The setting is usually an unused downtown space in a large urban environment. Starting time is usually 8 a.m., long past the rush hour of the traditional market. Items for sale range from the traditional to the exotic (also see Slocum 2008, 857). Instead of classic Big Boys (a step up from the commercial hot house variety), one can find heirloom Pink Girl or Golden Gem tomatoes (see figure 1). Organic goat beats cow milk, and naturally scented herbal soaps get higher billing than the lye soaps grandma made. Eggs may be turkey or duck rather than chicken, or if the latter, blue or chocolate brown. Boutique and artisanal cheeses are popular. Meats include organic and prepared products like sausage or jerky, and may extend beyond the conventional beef, pork, poultry and fish to the uncommon, like ostrich and buffalo. Hand-made crafts are more in evidence, including woven clothing and purses, as well as kitchen implements of ceramic, wood, or copper. Shoppers are often looking for novelty, and do not tend to cart off large bags of produce. The bulk of the vendor's wares is often less than at a traditional market—even the tables tend to be smaller—eliminating the need to haul it there by the truckload.

One unmet polysemic demand of the TFM farmers—to allow space for their trucks—embodies the totality of their distrust and unease with the City's proposed new market. During peak season, TFM farmers may sell up to 1,000 pounds of produce in a day. Currently, farmers back their truck tailgates up to the market shed within a few feet of their display table so that they can restock quickly and conveniently; the truck also provides a place to sit and to store incidentals. The farmers are adamant that any new market configuration retain this feature. Despite their constant pleas, the City instructed the architects to create a plan that omits truck space, that is, that privileges form over function. The City has told farmers they can offload their goods before the market begins or cart it over as needed by golf cart (the City having already acquired some carts for this purpose), insisting that other (i.e., *experience*-type urban) markets do not provide truck space. To the farmer's view, the time and effort they would need to go to and from an off-site parking space to restock, possibly leaving no one to tend the table or money, would be considerable, not to mention physically taxing, and thus virtually unthinkable. This disagreement has created a rift that has the TFM Association scouting a new site that they would operate independently, with a local businessman agreeing in principle to back their efforts to secure the necessary land. The market architects, after being flown along with city officials and Farmers Market Association representatives courtesy of a local businessman to see a "model" market in Little Rock, Arkansas, and listening to the farmers during the visit, saw the need for the truck space and revamped their drawings to include some spaces.⁷ However, it is unclear to

⁷ The architectural firm also implemented in their blueprints the eight design features requested by the farmers that we had summarized in a previously-submitted report to the City, including sufficient parking, overhead fans, handicapped drive-up access, space to back trucks in, and several others.

date if the revisions will stand, as the City Council rescinded them due to worries of cost overruns.

Whereas the trucks on-site are a necessity to farmers, they are an aesthetic problem to those in City Planning. A city official, upon seeing the new plans that accommodated the backed-in trucks, was unhappy: “I was at the Farmers Market last week and there were these *big, old muddy trucks!*”⁸ Bourdieu defined distaste as disgust provoked by visceral intolerance and found that the unconscious origin of taste results in one finding others’ tastes disgusting (1984, 56). The big 4-wheel drive, a key signifier of the working class southerner, was clearly found *disgusting* (Latin *dis* = not, *gust* = taste, or “not to one’s taste”). For city officials, attending the market is not their “class” of activity. Most have no comprehension of how a farmers market works, although they would change the market from a place they have never frequented to an event they would gladly consume, that is, from ordinary to aesthetic consumption (Bourdieu 1984, 100). This class-based appreciation of form over function—that is, aesthetics over substance—informs this continuing core dispute and threatens to derail the project.

Leisure versus Sustenance

The ability to develop elite “tastes” in the first place, to be able to privilege form over function, is predicated upon having the leisure time and sufficient capital—economic, cultural, and social—to devote to the pursuit of scholarly study and/or the accumulation of goods and social experiences. Experience markets cater to those who think of food as a marker of social distinction (Bourdieu 1984, 213). In contrast, the person of modest income does well to produce and reproduce, two activities that rely on fulfilling basic biological needs, such as nourishment. The traditional farmers market exists to distribute food commodities, while the modern version exists to entertain urban families on their day off.⁹ Of course, experience markets can and do combine these two goals, though a leader in MarketUmbrella.org (a national organization that promotes economically sustainable, socially engaged and healthy communities through local farmers markets) notes in critique: “There are festivals and there are markets. One is recreation and the other is the authentic thing. The farmers market is *not* a festival. You don’t bring your bags to a festival” (Darlene Wolnik, Director of Marketshare, personal communication).

City planners lack an appreciation that the Tuscaloosa Farmers Market is not simply a leisure activity for those with “spare time” on their hands,

To better his plan, the principal architect actually engaged in some ethnography by visiting the market on a busy day and photographing client and vendor parking and flow.

⁸ This was the city planner’s first visit, after repeated invitations by the TFM Association.

⁹ Vendors at the Minneapolis Farmers Market have dubbed these market tourists “basket kickers,” since they come to look but not buy (Slocum 2008, 859).

and that the farmer's livelihood is at stake. This became painfully apparent when a city planner, discussing the multi-use intentions (triathlons, weddings, dances) for the new site, stated dismissively, "Well, the farmers will just have to accept that four or five times a year they won't be able to have their market there." This comment also shows little regard for the seasonality of the market sales (April to November), though the labors to prepare for it are year-long.

Social Space and Its Transformations

Social space may be defined as the abstract representation, not unlike a map, that gives the "point of view on the whole set of points from which ordinary agents. . . see the social world. . . which depend(s) on their position within it and in which their will to transform or conserve it is often expressed" (Bourdieu 1984, 69). The primary differences in the conditions of existence derive from the types and volume of capital that one possesses (Bourdieu 1984, 114). Whether one inherits one's capital or achieves it (a difficult feat), the distribution of capital differs from one class to another. The conditions of existence construct the social space of lifestyle that one, as a member of a group, occupies. In brief, cultural capital consists of accumulated educational, social, and intellectual knowledge as assets, whereas economic capital refers to accumulated wealth and resources, with the power over others inherent in that command.

With a debt to Bourdieu's graphical insight on food space (see figure 9, 1984, 186), the current social space of the various types of farmers market is illustrated by their clientele (figure 2). Clients low in both cultural and economic capital favor the traditional market. They are looking for bargains on filling, nourishing foods. The modern, experience markets tends to attract clients of high cultural and economic capital who prefer lighter, refined, foods and often seek local and sustainably grown items as well (also see Slocum 2008, 857). Those of high cultural but low economic capital frequent both types of markets in their quest for healthy and natural products.

TFM farmers feel threatened by the prospect that their social space may be transformed if they are physically relocated, though of course they do not use these terms. How will the client base change in the new location? The City talks repeatedly about "attracting new customers." We don't think they mean at the expense of current, especially African American, customers, but that is what will likely happen (Allen et al. 2003). Currently the Tuscaloosa Farmers Market serves those without any capital, and those with cultural—but modest to no economic—capital. Will a relocation cause "unintended exclusion" (to use Slocum's [2007] term), that is, a gain of higher status customers and loss of lower income patrons, in the process destroying the farmer's livelihood? This may occur due to higher prices, exotic rather than

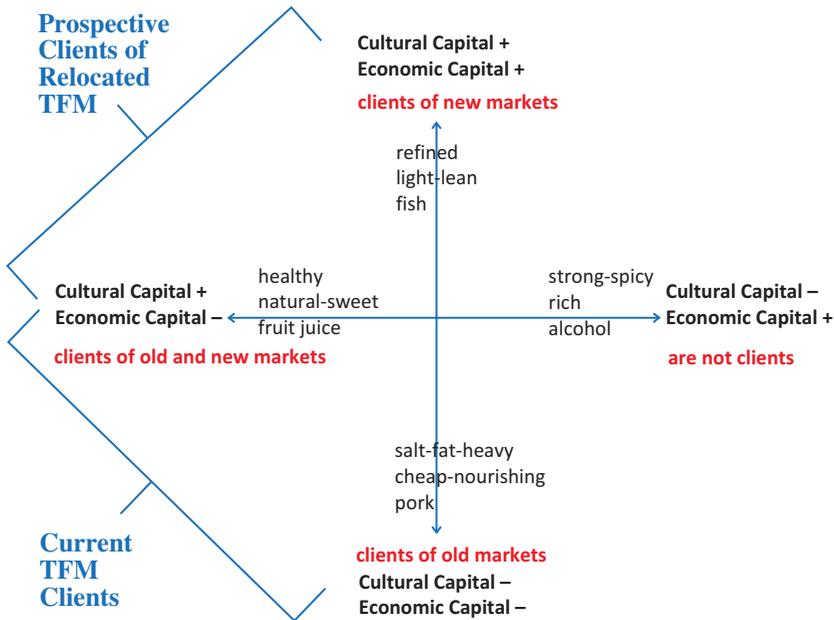


FIGURE 2 Social space and its transformations: Market type and clientele (adapted from Bourdieu 1984, 186; color figure available online).

conventional selections, and an environment that makes some people feel out of their element.

In much the same way Bourdieu understands the working class’s low esteem for abstract art stems from their judgment of art primarily for its use value (“it’s stupid, I don’t see the point of distorting things,” “now that’s good, it’s almost symmetrical”; 1984, 33, 41), TFM consumers showed a consensus in their aversion to the exotic, innovative, and novel when they agreed with the statement, “The Farmers Market is fine as it is—there is no need for change.”

CONCLUSION

“Why Don’t the Farmers Appreciate What We’re Doing for Them?”

According to Bourdieu (1984, 228), the expression of taste has as its ultimate, if not conscious purpose, the increase of one’s capital volume or profits. “Why don’t the farmers appreciate what we’re doing for them?” is an oft-heard lament of city officials, unconscious of the different value systems, ideologies, and stakes involved in opening a market. They would have the farmers shuck off their inherited dispositions and adopt a new cultural capital instantly, not understanding that this would be self-defeating if not impossible. The city planners see a new market as a boon to the

city's reputation and income. TFM farmers are anxious because both their economic and social capital are at stake. They intuit, if they cannot articulate, certain risks to a market transformation:

- Following Bourdieu (1984, 100), taste determines the value of a product, and consumers help to produce the product they consume. Old customers may not follow the market to its new location and a new upscale crowd may not have the “taste” for the simple produce the local farmers offer. The result could be a shift from “ordinary” vendors to ones matching new aesthetic consumptive demands. (The farmers vaguely worry about whether they will fit in in the upper right side of social space; see figure 1.)
- The TFM Association will likely lose governance of the market. The City plans to hire an independent market manager. If the new market follows the model of the modern supermarket and becomes a daily rather than bi-weekly event, as city planners intend, this will necessarily entail the entry of commercial retail sellers with whom the local farmers cannot compete. Retail sellers, liberated from field labor, can occupy a stall at the market on a daily basis, whereas those who grow their own produce can only spare a few hours a week away from their fields and other jobs. Also, mass-produced fruits and vegetables are cheaper, based on an economy of scale. Discussions with numerous farmers market managers across the country confirm that commercial and small farmers cannot coexist in the same space (also see Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002, 173). (The farmers keenly fear finding themselves in the lower-right quadrant of figure 1.)
- If the local farmers lose their livelihood, more precious than the economic capital that will be lost is their cultural identity as farmers, and the valued social connection they have with their customers (also see Slocum 2008, 864). Market vendors only earn a portion of their income from their sales and often hold other jobs (also see Jarosz 2008, 233); they are not agrobusiness giants. Perhaps what they gain more than anything, repeated throughout their narratives, is the personal relationship they have with their customers, and the rite of intensification that is experienced a few times a week when the salivating crowds surge and laugh and praise. Despite the humbleness of their occupation, farmers who vend at the TFM achieve a local fame, a quasi-rockstar status that nourishes them in other dimensions—socially, psychologically and spiritually.

Ironically, one way “distinction” might work to help save the farmers' enterprise, if it can be impressed upon the city planners,¹⁰ would be if

¹⁰ As we explore the tensions and growing pains related to the proposed TFM relocation, we will continue to advocate privately with farmers and City Officials and publicly at City Council Meetings, and to issue our reports, the findings of which so far have been considered and in large part implemented. We believe our first report, on architectural features, has helped by prompting the city and architects to implement or change critical features, and by keeping the issues on the table. Our upcoming report will

the new market's organizational structure follows the national trend of the modern farmers markets of restricting it to grower-only stalls (Slocum 2008, 858). If not, the farmers will surely form their own market elsewhere, as they have repeatedly threatened.¹¹ They might find they can coexist with modern farmers in a grower-only experience market; however, the likelihood of their long-term survival in a mixed market with commercial vendors is slim.

The type of market installed by the City of Tuscaloosa has certain implications about who can participate, for vendors and consumers alike. The Tuscaloosa Farmers Market provides a desperately needed and largely undervalued social service in that they offer low-cost, fresh, wholesome food for an economically strapped segment of a population that battles virtually the worst obesity problem and lowest fruit and vegetable consumption in the U.S. (Levi et al. 2010). The attempts to "do good" by renovating the market may backfire by unintentionally excluding the more marginal segments of the clientele, such as African Americans or the poor (Markowitz 2010; Slocum 2007). In pitting the farmers' livelihood and lifestyle against the inexorable march of progress, what will be won and lost?

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address the organization and management of the potential new market. The RiverMarket project, held up for several months due to a delay in Federal funding, is slated for completion by January 2012, proceeding forward despite the preceding April 27 tornado's devastation of the City.

¹¹ This is not an idle threat, as many of the farmers are well aware of a similar conflict in nearby Cullman County, where farmers rejected a new municipal market and successfully constructed and operate their own widely-admired timber frame in a better location. Other similar cases exist throughout the U.S., such as the rebuilding of the Findlay Farmers Market in the Over-the-Rhine area of Cincinnati. The increased number of resellers drove off the original farmers.

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