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Eating local in a U.S. city:

Reconstructing "community"—a third place—in a global neoliberal economy

ABSTRACT
In this article, I explore a particular form of exchange in which food-selling farmers and food-buying urban consumers interact beyond simple economic terms at a U.S. urban farmers' market. By actively distinguishing their "alternative" exchange from the dominant capitalist exchange, participants objectify processes of production and consumption as well as their own "idealized form of being" ("liberal open-mindedness") while undermining the dominant ideology of the neoliberal economy. By co-constructing this market as a "third place" where basic distinctions between commodity and gift are blurred and transgressed, customers and farmers produce a "conceptual shift" from Marxian alienated exchange to Maussian inalienating exchange by infusing market transactions with new meanings and new spatial fixes. [*exchange, gift and commodity, farmers' market, U.S. city, third place*]

> Here it's much more fun to shop at an outdoor market! You can walk around and meet your neighbors while you shop. You can get to talk to the person who grows the food so you can get good answers about the food you are buying.
>
> —Jill, a young professional

> They [these customers] like to socialize. Yes, they do like to meet people here and relate with the food. That's huge. That will get people to come out here in the morning on Sunday . . . That's great. That's exactly what I would do if I lived here [in the city].
>
> —Joe, a young farmer

The anthropology of exchange has long focused on the theoretical models of Marcel Mauss (1925) and Karl Marx (1976), namely, on the realm of the gift—inalienable social relations—and the realm of the commodity—alienable market relations. These models have been used to distinguish traditional preindustrial society from modern industrial capitalist society. Many anthropologists, however, perceive this theoretical distinction to be oversimplified and draw on specific ethnographic insights to complicate the two models. They argue that whether it takes a particular capitalist or noncapitalist form, exchange is a highly complex and manipulative as well as morally and socially infused practice (e.g., Appadurai 1986; Bloch and Parry 1988; Bourdieu 1997; Carrier 1995; Godelier 1977, 1999; Gregory 1982; Herrmann 1997; Parry 1986; Roseberry 1997; Sahlins 1972, 1976; Taussig 1977; Weiner 1992; Wilk 1996).

Despite the seemingly "antiquated" insights of the Maussian and Marxian theoretical paradigms, however, as scholars, we should not conflate the utility of the theoretical distinction between gift and commodity with its phenomenological significance in the local contexts we study. As James G. Carrier reminds us, "'The market' is not what people do and think and how they interact when they buy and sell, give and take," but it is "a conception people have about an idealized form of buying and selling" (1997:vii) in a given political economy. The Farmers' Basket, a farmers' market in Center City, part of the metropolitan Washington, DC, area,

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demonstrates how the concepts we take as theoretical models are part of market participants' lived experience and can form the basis for what can be called their "ideo-praxis"—explicit and active ideologically charged actions. In the alternative spatial and temporal location of this market, urban middle-class customers and small-scale producer-seller farmers come to participate in exchange that they deliberately infuse with the logic of ideological distinction.

This article is based on 12 months of fieldwork in 2003 with small family farmers; interviews with dozens of farmers and market customers, organizers, and volunteers during that period; and subsequent visits and correspondence with farmers between 2005 and 2010. My fieldwork consisted of my active participation in the Farmers' Basket market, where I helped fruit farmers Mike, Stephan, and Joe and organic vegetable farmers Dominick and David sell their produce.[1] By foregrounding the experiences and voices of my informants, for whom buying and selling is infused with a sense of ideological and emotional fulfillment, I hope to convey market participants' particular creation of "value," a "fetishization of ideology" that extends beyond use and exchange values, through what Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann (2010:xix) refer to as "counter-hegemonic challenges" in the form of alternative consumption. The "fetishization of ideology" at the farmers' market, as opposed to fetishization of simple commodities, enacts participants' idealized forms of buying and selling,[2] and it also references a personally meaningful, idealized ethos of "liberal open-mindedness."[3]

The urban farmers' market emerges from a nexus of discursive and material transformation, as I elucidate by exploring the ideologies and practices underlying (1) its social demographics, (2) the historical and ideological construction of its space, and (3) the embodied synthesis of these elements in the weekly interactions of its participants. In doing so, first, I aim to show how people's transactional conceptions—that is, how participants conceive of and enact the theoretical distinction between Maussian and Marxian models—are an important part of their understanding of and experiences in the market. Second, I analyze how the market is emblematic of an emergent and modern physical, economic, and ideological "third place" or "third space" (cf. Featherstone and Lash 1999; Lefebvre 1991; Oldenburg 1999; Soja 1996; Venn 1999) in U.S. cities. It is in such alternative modern spaces that participants' subjective distinction between "commodity" space and "gift" space is blurred and transgressed through the phenomenological experiences of walking, talking, and exchanging. Lastly, I suggest that such ideologically meaningful practices of exchange are an important part of self-formation for participants, born out of a particular U.S. urban and economic history in the context of global neoliberal capitalism.

In short, I aim to show that the conceptual transformation of Marxian to Maussian exchange, whether purely discursive or reflected in practice (e.g., gifting, participants' mutual recognition in discussing agricultural production, etc.), can transform the farmers' market experience into an "alternative" one. In the process, this conceptual transformation among participants gives shape and meaning to a culturally powerful "idealized form of being"—a "liberal open-mindedness" that aims to go beyond or against what has been taken as mainstream and dominant—both despite and because of the ascendance of neoliberalism. It is this process of active distinction, alongside the reinvention of the U.S. farmers' market as part of a recent trend in "new urbanism strategies" (cf. Leinberger 2008) and the search for alternative economic geographies (cf. Leyshon and Lee 2003), that acts as a vehicle for suspending the dominant ideology while infusing the site with new moral meaning and new sociospatial relationships.

Farmers and urbanites: The social demographics of the market

Within a minute's walk from a major subway station, Farmers' Basket operates from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sundays. It is a producer-only market run by a small nonprofit organization and local farmers.[4] The organization is funded by two grants and receives a percentage of vendors' profits. Aside from buying and selling produce, numerous community events held at the market speak to the social consciousness of its promoters and participants. For instance, the market is the site of culinary events featuring local chefs and promoting restaurant tours; it hosts Mother's Day and Father's Day events, a celebration of diversity, and other activities.

About an hour after opening, Farmers' Basket falls into its usual Sunday rhythm. Many of the customers are neighborhood residents, predominantly middle-class professionals and are called "regulars" or "locals" by the farmers.[5] The market is in many ways a microcosm of Central City's metropolitan and cosmopolitan flavors, and its customers are diverse in birthplace, age, ethnicity, religion, occupation, and sexual orientation. Regulars include young and old men in jogging pants with cups of coffee, young women with yoga mats, transvestite men, extravagantly dressed men and women, government workers, NGO workers, researchers, university students and professors, foreign service officers, and a few homeless people. Nonregulars, who do not necessarily live in the neighborhood, include low-income city residents, tourists, and foreign news reporters.

As the combination of social activities and diverse customers implies, the vibrant space of the farmers' market offers participants a rich cornucopia of experiences. As I worked at the market, I learned some of the reasons they came to this particular market; individuals' comments revealed both a diversity of backgrounds and shared ideological motivations. One single regular customer,

Chris, expressed his motivation as buying "fresh produce and enjoying the ambiance and experience of the market." For him, coming to the market is a "highlight of the week," an occasion for him to see and socialize with many different people, including farmers. He also sees coming to the market as an "educational experience" because he can learn about a variety of foods, including exotic foods, knowledge that is not available at a regular grocery store.

Chris's comments were not unique. Lila, a young single regular customer, emphasized "the atmosphere" of the market and said that she could obtain "fresher and healthier food" there than she could elsewhere. Others, such as Pete, a young gay regular customer, asserted, "This is *our* market," emphasizing its location in his neighborhood. He also claimed that market food tasted better than grocery store food. Tim, a single regular customer, also stressed the quality of the organic food, knowledge about its production, and the opportunity to meet farmers as well as people from his neighborhood.

Many participants described the market's heterogeneous customers as "interesting people" or as "neighbors," and farmers see Center City's particular demographics as crucial to its success. Farmers often contrasted Farmers' Basket customers with customers at other farmers' markets where they sell their produce; for them, Center City customers are not only "affluent" but also "different," "diverse," and "social," whereas in other cities, "people are mainstream and family people." One of my main informant farmers, Dominick, explained to me how particular demographics, such as income levels and education, influence the way customers shop. He believes that "people who have money tend to be the ones more educated" and that this combination might account for why "eating local" is appealing to Center City customers. Customers also raised similar points, suggesting that the market's success is a "function of socioeconomics" and reflects a strong correlation among income, education, and the type of food sold.

Although Farmers' Basket simultaneously fulfills local, social, health, and experiential needs and educational sorts of "culinary tourism" (e.g., De la Pradelle 2006; Johnston and Baumann 2010; Zukin 2010), these aspects do not undermine the main economic function of the market. Without any middlemen, farmers can earn profits directly. For many participating farmers, more than half of their income derives from Farmers' Basket sales. Many farmers told me how difficult it is to survive through wholesale marketing: "Farming just does not earn enough money." Selling at the farmers' market can provide up to four times the profit that produce offered through wholesaling does. Dominick, who produces organic greens, emphasized how important this market is to his farm's survival in the "modern world." For fruit farmers like Mike, Stephan, and Joe, and second-generation fruit farmer Jim, the market is critical to covering the high cost of equipment, sprays, storage, trucking, and other expenses. They explained, "This market helps us *a lot* . . . fruit growing is a high capital business. The chemicals we use are unbelievably expensive, hundreds of dollars for a jar and it takes hundreds of jars to produce product."

At first glance, then, the dynamic Maussian–Marxian functions of the market seem to be split neatly along customer–farmer lines—the idea of alternative economic space operating mostly as "discourse" for the customers and as "ideology" for the farmers.[6] Yet, as I explore below, it is their shared consciousness of Marxian and Maussian paradigms that penetrates the thoughts and practices of both farmers and customers. Ironically, it is the embeddedness of the dominant ideology of global capitalism (often glossed as neoliberalism) in every act of social, material, and moral exchange that motivates and energizes the participants' "ideal form" of the alternative market both ideologically and economically. For both farmers and shoppers, then, Center City's market is more than just a place of business or a place for socializing; it is a unique and successful combination of the two made possible precisely because of its unique features in the modern urban context.

Market abstraction meets reverse practical abstraction

The use of theory in everyday practices like buying and selling is a historically driven process that has roots in the very conception of market abstraction and is implicitly bound up with shifts in agricultural and business philosophy and practices. Although farmers' markets have a long history in the United States, modernization of and technological innovation in the U.S. food system, the ever-expanding suburbs and car culture, and the rise of the middle class drastically altered their previous ubiquitous place in the U.S. economy (Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002; Brown 2002; Populoh 2003). Although the concept is much older, it was only around World War II that the "capitalist free market economy" first came to signify a "political icon or a formal economic abstraction" in dominant public discourse (Carrier 1997:1; see also the discussion of virtualism in Carrier 1998 and Miller 1998a). Moreover, this abstraction was not just a matter of economy but also of social relations in terms of community writ large (Ariés 1977; Sennett 1977).

In the 1950s, Max Lerner (1957) was already decrying the crisis of integral community in the United States, a prescient assessment that reflected how the rise of the middle class since the end of World War II had been accompanied by a geographical transformation of society itself. The increasing compartmentalization of the U.S. landscape into the new "domains" of work and home further rationalized social expression of what is "public" and "private" (Ariés 1977:228; Bauman 2001; Lerner 1957; Sennett 1977). Affluent Americans embraced a concept of "upward mobility" and "pursued life-styles predicated upon materialism and

self absorption" under the innovative idea of the "free market" (Oldenburg 1999:293).

This shift in consciousness had both social and physical repercussions. Social critics blamed the transformation for destroying the loose and spontaneous mediating social fabric of community (cf. Ariés 1977; Sennett 1977). Liberal societies were seen as dominated by the hegemonic forces of the market economy (Harvey 1990; Lefebvre 1991), sweeping away age-old interstitial places—places that were neither purely private nor purely public and that were free from political and economic forces (Oldenburg 1999). Economic ideologies such as the free market were seen as having a significant effect on U.S. informal local community life and individual consciousness, and the rise of the middle class and the spread of affluence due to modernization and industrialization came to be seen as the antithesis of community building and maintenance.

Farmers' markets in the area of Center City were no exception to this trend, which Carrier (1998:2) calls "practical abstraction" (see also Taussig 1977). It is within the context of the historical processes contributing to this trend that Center City market participants' idealized form of buying and selling and notions of money, gifts, and goods are situated and enacted.

Since the 1980s, awareness of U.S. farming in general and of family-farm production around Center City in particular has increased and people have started actively concerning themselves with the local economy and locally grown food (Populoh 2003). Direct marketing by farmers to customers through farmers' markets has reduced the distance between food producers and food consumers, who were previously divorced from one another in the global capitalist economy. Unlike the farmers in New York's large Greenmarket, which Zukin (2010:119) explored, those in Farmers' Basket are self-producers, whose often family-owned farms must be small in scale (20 acres or less). At producer-only markets like Farmers' Basket, food is produced by the same farmers who sell it only hours after harvesting it.[7] Organizers explicitly require participating farmers to come from within a 150-mile radius of Center City, a requirement customers are aware of. This requirement is ideologically framed in stark contrast to "nonlocal" farmers' markets as well as to the conventional food system, in which food purchased in supermarkets travels an average of 1,500 miles from field to table.

This phenomenon can be conceptualized as a kind of "reverse practical abstraction," whereby participants actively reshape—even reverse—the market experience vis-à-vis both the dominant capitalist ideology and the dominant phenomenological experiences of capitalist exchange in everyday urban life. At a practical level, the market experience is not reversed in the sense of a return to previous modes of consumption and production but, rather, in terms of motivations; it is a citation and reappropriation of previous practices of smaller-scale markets to address modern challenges of capitalist abstraction in which both of the parties to exchange feel that they are increasingly losing touch with the reality of production.

It is out of these contemporary shifts in affluence, consciousness, and community that the ethos of liberal open-mindedness has created the momentum for a "return" to an ideal(ized) form of buying and selling through social spaces like farmers' markets. In recent years, along with the movement known as "walkable urbanism" (Leinberger 2008), U.S. farmers' markets have gained popularity in urban centers such as Boston, New York, and Washington, DC (cf. Andreatta and Wickliffe 2002; Brown 2002; De la Pradelle 2006; Tiemann 2004, 2008; Zukin 2010). Reinforcing this reinvented "traditional" practice of buying and selling at local outdoor markets, particular kinds of consumers, such as self-claimed "foodies," have increasingly valued fresh and organic produce and having access to nearby farmers' markets (Johnston and Baumann 2010). This recontextualization of the farmers' market, along with a revival of communal consciousness in local urban settings, is promoted by the dual forces of ideological and economic trends at large and their particular articulations at the local level in globally embedded metropolitan centers. The "idea" of an alternative, walkable, local, and communal institution is particularly pronounced among upper-middle-class, urban Americans like the shoppers in Center City.

Meanings of consumption: Market versus supermarkets

> We live in a world of polarized opposites. As supermarkets get bigger and impersonal, the desire for connection becomes greater. The farmers' market is the polarized opposite.
>
> —Ben, a middle-class professional

My fieldwork led me to experience firsthand the intersection of economic and ecological ideologies that underpinned the sociality of Farmers' Basket. At one point during my fieldwork, I sold a particularly expensive product, hydroponic tomatoes. Knowing how expensive they were, I was originally reluctant to sell them. Despite my concern, many customers still came to the stand where I worked to buy tomatoes every week, and they often praised them. Only a few customers were deterred by the price.[8] Occasionally, when young customers put large numbers of tomatoes in their bags, I could not help mentioning the price. Some customers looked offended and replied, "Well, I know that. So?" Indeed, many Center City customers were not price shopping, underscoring that this market was not a "traditional" small-town market.

After investigating more than 60 farmers' markets in the United States, Thomas K. Tiemann (2004, 2008) classifies them into two kinds: "indigenous markets" and "experience markets."[9] According to Tiemann (2004), in the more common small-town "indigenous markets," generally older or even retired farmers offer traditional varieties of foods to generally older customers. These markets are sponsored by a wide variety of organizations, and their prices are much lower than those at regular grocery stores. In contrast, at "experience markets," relatively young farmers offer younger customers wide varieties of nontraditional food items produced in more sophisticated farming regimens. Tiemann argues that informal sociality is more saliently promoted in the experience markets and that prices at these markets are well above the prices at indigenous markets partly because of the more sophisticated production and partly because the markets are a principal source of income for vendors. Although descriptively compelling, Tiemann's classification overlooks the crucial element of the farmers' and customers' motivations for their actions—their own ideological framings of their economic participation (cf. Dolan 2009; Helleiner 2000; Johnston and Baumann 2010).

Both customers and farmers contrast Farmers' Basket with ordinary fast-food restaurants and supermarkets. Similar to the "local currency movement" that Eric Helleiner (2000) describes, whose advocates oppose the dominant economic ideology of neoliberalism by deploying their consumption as "a political tool," Farmers' Basket customers describe buying and selling at supermarkets as purely economic, a socially alienated arena in which individuals are primarily private consumers rather than public citizens.

Interestingly, farmers often told me that modernization was a "societal mistake," and they nostalgically talked about the practices of buying food from local street-corner vendors as finally "coming back" in the form of the farmers' market. Tim, a customer, echoed such farmers' views of "lost tradition," claiming that "the freshness of the produce and the local production, and the opportunity to get to know the farmers are all lost in the supermarkets."

Valuations that support alternative practices and local farmers are deliberately played up in the market. Catherine S. Dolan (2009:168) analyzes the "ethical consumption" of Kenyan fair-trade flowers in the United Kingdom and argues that it is part of a growing social movement that articulates "moral principles" and "ethical sensibilities."[10] Though morality in consumption is nothing new in capitalist societies (Wilk 2001), conversations at Farmers' Basket at times invoke something deliberately "ethical" and political, recalling Dolan's analysis. The large U.S. companies that embody the ideology of global capitalism and exploitation, such as MacDonald's and Wal-Mart, are constant targets of attack in both farmers' and customers' discourse. Stephan explained the difference between capitalist sellers (including "organic" supermarkets) and market vendors like himself, emphasizing that "we do *not* rip-off [customers] like most organic stores do." Victor, a retired neighborhood customer also shared the sentiment that part of the idea behind farmers' markets is something fundamentally "antiglobal": "We should support local small or independent farmers rather than agribusiness."

Kevin, a volunteer at the market, similarly talked about today's agricultural system as favoring large-scale producers and commodity crops such as soy and corn and destroying the nation's agricultural fabric of small-scale farms. He explained why he thinks it is important to develop a relationship with those who grow his food:

> I personally believe in more local "inefficient" production [in the Keynesian sense]. It will *never* happen, but I think as much as possible we ought to get food and other goods from local producers—it helps combat the leveling of local differences that you get when everything you buy or eat is mass-produced and the same all over the country, or even the world.

Thus, beyond their economic and utilitarian exchanges, both buyers and sellers express, on many discursive levels, shared valuations of food production and consumption as well as an awareness of the situation of local farmers and farming in the context of contemporary economic conditions. Although customers are aware that local, "inefficient" production will never happen, they often justify their efforts ethically and ideologically by asserting that "this market is good," "we are supporting local farmers," and "we care about what we eat."

Like those involving Helleiner's (2000) local currency advocates, Dolan's (2009) British fair-trade consumers, and Johnston and Baumann's (2010) U.S. foodies, all of whom distinguish themselves through what they consume, Farmers' Basket's exchanges are physical and economic as well as social, ethical, and ideological. However, compared with many fair-trade consumers and foodies, who focus on the meaning of discrete ethical consumption by imagining others in a globalized world (see also Miller 1998a),[11] Farmers' Basket customers more closely resemble the local currency advocates, as their motivations for exchange reflect a particular longing for locality (cf. Helleiner 2000). Moreover, the meaning of exchange for customers in Farmers' Basket is reinforced through the concrete actions of walking and talking with each other and with the producers themselves—through the "phenomenology of exchange" (Robbins 2009) at the market. In this way, participants succeed in reversing the Marxian abstract economic consumer–producer relationship within their own daily lives.

Examining exchange among the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea, which fits neither Maussian nor Marxian model, Joel Robbins (2009) still considers using such theoretical categories of value as useful. He argues that it is

the "mutual recognition" of individuals in exchange that marks the phenomenological experience of Urapmin transactions as Maussian reciprocal exchange and that analyzing exchange "as a system" overlooks this. At Farmers' Basket, the "phenomenology of exchange" for those involved is precisely the ideological "feel-good" nature of physical participation—walking and talking—which have become disconnected from modern U.S. life. Both farmers and customers explicitly view the products, sociality, and space of the market in contrast, ideologically and physically, to global neoliberal capitalism and the mainstream U.S. consumer landscape, a view that produces renewed spatial relationships and a renewed moral meaning for them.

Sociality of the market: Searching for the human touch

The new spatial relationships and moral meanings opened up within urban farmers' markets are made possible precisely because of the social embeddedness of Marxian ideology, which provides a basis from which farmers and customers can enact desired forms of being and practices of selling and buying. As Katherine E. Browne lucidly argues, "Unlike societies organized around gift exchange that impose strict norms on the behavior of individuals, capitalist economies privilege the choices of individuals and, therefore, allow for a wide range of moral outcomes" (2009:30). The very embeddedness of such a "dominant ideology" allows individuals to question what is given and to construct alternative and ideologically driven, morally loaded choices of meaningful exchange; and it is precisely in the space of the capitalist economic environment in U.S. metropolitan areas that this sort of multiple morality can meaningfully thrive.

While it is also crucial for the Farmers' Basket to function economically in the interests of the small-scale farmers, the self-consciousness of the participants reveals it as a space where economic and social desires and forces are constantly and consciously negotiated through a multiplicity of physical and moral dimensions. Sometimes this even leads to redefinitions, or at least socially framed individual justifications, of what makes "economic sense." Such redefinition–reframing of "economic sense" undergirds the end-of-the-day exchanges among farmers and the relationship-building reciprocity between farmers and customers and was apparent in how they talked with me about the personal meaning of the market. Furthermore, the discourse among farmers' market participants shows that these negotiations are themselves made possible through their discursive and practical distinction from the dominant economic model.

As in any exchange, the strength of ideologically driven and morally loaded exchange does not come without challenges and contradictions. The co-construction of local community by farmers and customers is a marked feature of many farmers' markets (e.g., De la Pradelle 2006; Zukin 2010). My interviews revealed that, although customers almost always view socializing positively, considering it a great opportunity to "connect" with farmers, farmers themselves do not always share such a positive valuation of market sociability. The problem, as farmers expressed it to me, is that "we are really here for four hours of *business,* not for *social* hours." Such comments reveal that they feel constrained by the powerful role played by the local idea(l) of this market as a space of renegotiation that can incorporate seemingly antithetical domains of business and sociality.

When I asked what he thought about market customers, Stephan first responded dismissively:

> Aside from "avant-garde show-off type" customers who show off their gourmet and food knowledge, we also have a lot of lunatics in this market. They walk down the street aimlessly and look over to see a bunch of people. And then they walk into your life, and start, you know, for a dollar they want to buy a piece of fruit and think that gives them the right to go into *your* life. "If you don't want to buy it, don't buy it; but *stay* on that side of the table." I don't want to get political at a farmers' market!

Of all the farmers, the young fruit sellers Joe and Mike may be exceptional in their ability to juggle both aspects of the market, engaging, as they work, in a great deal of interaction with customers: answering questions, exchanging greetings, chatting, and providing semiformal "consultations." Mike views socializing with Center City customers important; however, he also shared with me that he sees it as one of the problems of Farmers' Basket, which "became so popular that you stopped having conversations with some of your best customers. And customers recognize that. It's so busy, they come up, 'Hey, how's it going?' And you go 'Ohhh, just great. . . ' And then somebody [another customer] sticks a bag in your face, and it's like, 'Oh boy,' then you lose the human touch, you know."

Farmers often engage in a lot of conversation with customers while working. However, it can actually be a burden for farmers to engage with each customer, and sometimes they feel guilty about not being able to do so, especially in the busy season, from June to September, when they are handling a lot of produce and many customers. Thus, ironically, the nonabstracted nature of the farmers' labor of producing and selling subjects them to even more "emotional labor"—the strains of needing to be sociable and sharing their lives with customers, even when they feel they cannot spare the time (Hochschild 1983). I found selling during the winter, when we had less produce and fewer customers enjoyable, because we could focus on interactions with each customer. But after June, when the market became very crowded and busy, I was constantly looking at

produce and change and unable to engage with customers. As a function of this level of busyness, as sellers, we became somewhat analogous to a regular grocery store, the kind that farmers and customers were opposed to: the epitome of a Marxian model of pure economic exchange and no social exchange. Even when busy, experienced farmers still try to acknowledge regular customers, as they recognize that this interaction is the fundamental strength of Farmers' Basket.

Farmers revealed to me in their comments and actions that they take customers' ideas and ideology seriously, as they are what bring people to Farmers' Basket. Farmers and volunteers are all aware that customers are drawn to the idea(l) of more "social and personalized" exchange. I witnessed many instances when farmers spent their time not only explaining production processes to customers but also talking about aspects of their personal lives, such as leisure activities, birthday parties, or foreign countries and restaurants they had visited.

Appearing to downplay economic interactions also distinguishes the farmers' market in Center City. Farmers often give "personalized" discounts to regulars and share snacks with customers.[12] I witnessed many occasions when regular customers got extra items and discounts from farmers. Such interactions are not limited to farmers and customers, either; they also occur between farmers. During market hours, many farmers came to the stand where I worked, chatted with us, and brought their food to exchange with ours. At the end of the market day, fresh produce sellers such as flower vendors, greens sellers, and bakers always exchanged their extra items or leftovers for our vegetables and fruit. Such exchanges reinforce the market as a site where both customers and sellers situate their exchanges outside of capitalist profit seeking by actively cultivating social networks of recognition and reciprocity.

Regular customers also occasionally bring items to exchange with vendors to express appreciation or to confirm a mutual recognition that goes beyond simple "economic" terms. An older Asian woman sometimes brought homemade Korean savory in a paper dish. A young amateur hippie musician distributed his CDs to vendors, and we gave him fruit in return. A young male chef who regularly purchased from us once baked us a huge pie using our fruit. Some customers occasionally gave Mike and Joe items like football game tickets and wine and extended dinner invitations to them. During the busy summer months, a few close customers sometimes even volunteered to help us sell.

However exceptional, some customers really did become close to farmers. For instance, Victor, a customer, sometimes invited Stephan, Joe, Mike, and Mike's girlfriend, Eleanor, for dinner at his flat, cooked for them using their produce, and listened to them describe the "reality" of farming and its lesser-known business aspects. Similarly, Julie, a government worker who was concerned about small farms and who became friendly with market vendors, started volunteering on Sundays. One hot day in the summer of 2003, the farmers expressed their appreciation to her by presenting her with a large, beautiful lidded glass pitcher full of their fruit, mixed with vodka. Caught completely by surprise, Julie dissolved in tears. Mike called it "the human touch," stressing that "you shouldn't lose the human touch. I mean this is why we do [this business]. You can sell produce all day to stores [rather than individuals]. This isn't the same." On a later occasion, Stephan, who was initially dismissive about customers, nuanced his first impression:

> There are also sincere people here. Most of them [sincere customers] are really good and understand this family business, you know . . . I respect that people come, and it's great when we get the opportunity sometimes after market to go have a beer, or when it's slow, maybe in the spring, fall and winter, we talk all the time; talk, talk, talk!

Thus, although farmers' view of sociality can be ambivalent, they never dismiss the consciousness of Center City customers and their own consciousness of being small farmers selling to individuals rather than stores—"the human touch," as Mike eloquently calls it. They recognize that "people in Center City like to socialize—they like to meet people and they like to relate with their food." This is, as farmers stress, what "gets people to come out in the morning" to the market. More so than customers, though, farmers are caught between the social and economic tensions of the market. This "business" for farmers entails a sociability that they cannot ignore, precisely because of this market's juxtaposition within or alongside the dominant economic model of efficiency and globalized capitalist production.

Common interests, common minds: "The third place" in a neoliberal economy

> People kind of get together over here, you know . . . I don't have "farmer envy" or kind of what we used to refer to as "the agrarian myth" when I studied big themes in American history . . . But there is something of the good life, the pure life, the good people live out on farms. There is something inherently corrupting and disorienting about the cities like this.
>
> —Victor, a retired neighborhood resident

Crucially, this juxtaposition of social and economic models does not always line up with the "traditional–modern" market distinction that contemporary exchange theories attempt to construct. Not all "traditional" or "local" market experiences are so positively social. Ironically, it was, again, farmers' comments that made this reality clear. Reflecting on his childhood experiences helping his dad sell fruit at

the local gas station, Mike suggested that sociality was not a central concern at that time: "I grew up selling stuff. When you were kids selling things, customers were there to buy stuff. All you have to do is sell. They were just customers. They were not just there to hang out. They were there to buy . . . But here in this space, often they wander around and don't buy anything. Many customers came just to say hello to me, even if they cannot buy things [due to their travel schedules]."

The comments of Bill, a young middle-class professional customer, also reveal how the elements of space and ideology are crucial to the market:

> There is a community aspect to it. I have noticed this in other places I have lived. Part of what builds community is having common spaces where you run into people you know regularly, without having to call them or make arrangements. I don't see that many people I know here, as I did in smaller towns where I have gone to farmers' markets [e.g., Ann Arbor, Michigan] but it does tend to draw people who have some common interests in the quality of their food, and some who might be politically progressive in other ways, having thought about the politics of the production and distribution of the food that they eat.

As his phrase "common interests" suggests, a shared sense of "interest" plays an important role in the making of "community" in the Center City market. Despite the particulars driving people toward certain idea(l)s and ideology, a shared sense of ethos is expressed in this loosely structured physical and temporal space.

The success of the Center City market "community" relies on the particular construction of the neighborhood landscape. Both customers and farmers emphasized it as a "well-connected community." The neighborhood encompasses the city's finest museums and historical homes as well as an array of ethnic restaurants, cafés, bars, and art galleries. The neighborhood is also "home" to the hippie and gay and lesbian countercultures. Many customers think of Farmers' Basket as "the product of its neighborhood," and for farmers as well one crucial factor in its success is how "the neighborhood really welcomes the market."

In constructing the market, the organizers put a lot of thought into local geography and demographic, educational, and income factors, which helped them create a meeting place for common interests. Although the market site shares many crucial features with Ray Oldenburg's (1999) "third place," his "great, good place," it differs in that it is a particular strategic construction of U.S. urban locality and is home to relatively newly arrived (hometownless) urban middle-class residents. It is perhaps ironic that these demographically diverse, educated newcomers are the most active in trying to re-create a sense of locality and sociality in a metropolitan setting.

Sylvia, a volunteer and organizer at the market, explained the key considerations in creating Farmers' Basket:

> We wanted to make sure that low-income neighborhoods have access to good food, and we all agree [on this]; but the farmers also need to make money. And in instances where markets were placed in communities where it's just low income, farmers can't stay in it because they just don't make any money . . . Then, this was a good place to go because the demographics are good and the income bracket was good. People are here on Sundays; they're walking around, they have money in their pockets. They're going to bakeries, cafés, or bookshops, and they'll just come right by this market.

For organizers, then, from the beginning, the buying and selling at this farmers' market has relied on two major phenomenological practices that Oldenburg characterizes as missing and even avoided in U.S. landscapes: walking and talking.

The decline of "walking and talking" is precisely what Richard Sennett (1977) noted in the disappearance of "public man" in the context of the changing geography of 19th-century North America. For Sennett, people's attitudes toward space, particularly public space, shifted. As capitalist reorganization of social life progressed, more and more people gradually saw public space as something to be moved through and minimized rather than as a place for living, working, and communicating. Crucially, whereas Sennett ascribes such a changing (or shrinking) sense of public space to the rise of capitalism, in Farmers' Basket it is precisely highly developed capitalism that provides the framework for encouraging people to rethink their economic and social practices and to aspire to recontexualize and to revitalize their sense of public space in an urban setting. More so than Oldenburg's third place—the café, bowling alley, or other spatially and temporally fixed space—this farmers' market is not a location to which people drive and then enter. This market, held on Sunday—a day symbolically reserved for family, leisure, and communal gathering—also speaks to the particular alterity and liberal open-mindedness of Farmers' Basket participants. The market is thus located in the interstitial space and time between their cafés and homes, workplaces and supermarkets, where they walk on their way to other places on certain days and during certain times. This freedom of movement and of thought, of participation and social interaction, is a reminder of the importance of its location in both time and space for the social lives of its participants; indeed, some customers simply hang out at the site, occasionally making a purchase or talking to farmers or neighbors, enjoying their "modern, urban freedom" as "public individuals."

Stephan explained how "these urbanites go out and about and do not sit inside of their apartments letting their world go by. Gay or straight, people are here outside at the

café or in the park. That's the way they know their neighbors." Likewise, for a customer like Ben, Center City is the "local healthy community" where "this [slow] food can stop the chaos," as "people are challenged by the hyper-speed world we live in, looking for ways to slow down and enjoy the present and gain significance."

For many, this market acts as a third place, where they do not "remain lonely within the crowd" (Oldenburg 1999) but feel a sense of "community"—the opposite of the anonymous "non-places" discussed by Marc Augé (1995). Indeed, farmers would notice when regular customers were absent one week, and later those customers would come back to the market and talk about their experiences while away. The market is in some ways a constant, open, informal, and yet loose association of acquaintances for both customers and farmers, a place to do "slow" walking, chatting, and shopping, to recharge, and to maintain a sense of connection to both local community and global lifestyles, even if only sporadically.

In contrast to regular customers who engage in ideologically motivated practices of buying—in the ideopraxis of the farmers' market—low-income nonneighborhood customers also come to the market with food coupons given to them by children's hospitals. Their purchasing practices and ways of being in the market space differ from those of regulars, as they usually come with specific aims—to purchase items within the limits of the coupons—and they do not walk around or sample as much as the regulars do. Farmers are aware of their constraints and are willing to accept their coupons despite the smaller purchases and minimal profit. In fact, farmers often tried to accommodate these customers by giving unspoken discounts and making additional offers, because the coupons do not cover much produce. Farmers also actively tried to encourage these customers to sample, as they often did not know they could do so for free.

As the exchanges among farmers and between them and different kinds of customers reveal, the market is infused with common interests that are constantly negotiated and fore-grounded through all participants, through a "liberal open-mindedness" of inclusion and curiosity and an ideologically charged passion and involvement. It is the coalescing of such consciousness in this place—however much it may seem "self-serving" at the individual level—that produces an almost "collective effervescence" of personally and politically charged meaning and value in the exchanges that take place. Or as Arjun Appadurai notes, "Politics (in the broader sense of relations, assumptions, and contests pertaining to power)" and political consciousness are "what link . . . value and exchange in the social life of commodities" (1986:57). It is the "massification" of individuals' political consciousness that makes this market possible, successful, and "ideal" for participants.

The attempt to create a common ethos at the farmers' market became powerfully clear to me one humid summer day. While working at Mike's stand, I watched one frequent visitor to the market, a legless homeless-looking man, moving around and receiving food from the greens sellers, bread sellers, and fruit sellers. He had a little money and some leftover flatbread from a Middle Eastern restaurant to exchange for produce. Soon he came to me and asked me if he could have some fruit for his flatbread. Seeing my look of confusion, he asked me to speak to Mike. Mike noticed him from the other side of the stand and said, "Fine!" winking at me. Later Mike told me that the man is from Afghanistan, and that "despite his hardship in the war there, he now helps homeless people in Center City." As this man helped others in the city less fortunate than himself, Mike also helped him in any little way that he could.

From a cynical standpoint, in many ways such "liberal open-mindedness" must be self-serving to a certain extent. At the same time, as the interaction with low-income nonneighborhood customers and the Afghani man revealed, that cultural ethos is not free from sociopolitical and socioeconomic ideologies but is, in fact, encouraged by them. When I asked one elderly regular customer to comment on what he does in everyday life and what he does to help the small-scale farmers on Sunday, he speculated, "I see many people are also drawn to the idea of helping the farmers . . . I think, some of the engagement is this kind of desire, probably on both parts. They have certain aspects of their life missing this kind of engagement."

Though participants' individual motivations are never free from sociopolitical issues, Farmers' Basket's success as a local institution depends on its appeal to their longing for the "ideal form" of small local market. Whereas the "ethical consumption" of the U.K. fair-trade consumers symbolizes the particular construction of their ideal being, which "is theologically informed by Christian virtues of love, honor, integrity, and social ethics" (Dolan 2009:174), what marks many consumers and producers in Farmers' Basket derives from the particular historical construction of the U.S. landscape and U.S. virtues, namely, the idea of small "family farms" or small-scale noncapitalist farming, what Victor, above, characterized as "the good life, the pure life, the good people [who] live out on farms," where exchange is more socially engaged and less alienated than in the capitalist marketplace.

The mutual recognition, social exchange, and symbolically charged economic exchanges of the urban farmers' market resemble what Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Edward Soja (1996) define rather abstractly as a "heterotopia" and Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (1999) and Couze Venn (1999) see as the "hybridity" of the third space, which can act as an alternative or counterhegemonic economic space.[13] It also incorporates aspects of Oldenburg's (1999) conception of "third place"[14]—a loosely defined space that

has many informal social functions and associations, serving especially as a retreat from the primary (home) and secondary (work) places people occupy. In truth, the thickness of human and ideological interactions in the market problematizes any easy categorization according to the theoretical spaces delineated by Lefebvre and Soja, the functionally hybrid spaces of Featherstone and Lash and Venn, and the spatial construction of Oldenburg. However, these distinctions can help us to see the market site as an alternative and modern third place that offers an explicit framing for participants' physical–material and ideological retreat from home and work as well as from the dominant discourse of global neoliberalism. And it is out of the rich physical and social soil of the third place of the market, tilled through weekly interactions and nurtured by the fertilizer of the capitalist market, that the most compelling aspects of its ideological and practical functions take root and flower in the cracks of concrete urban sidewalks and supermarket parking lots.

Conclusion

> When September 11th happened, we had the market four days after that. We weren't sure if we should have it. "Are people even going to come?" you know, and "What's it gonna feel like?"... And despite the strange atmosphere in the city, we had the highest number of people that day, of the whole year—after September 11th. Because people just wanted to be around something familiar and they could talk to people that they knew.
>
> —Sylvia, a young volunteer

This urban farmers' market reveals the participants' own particular formulations of an "idealized form" of exchange that combines both socially and economically productive functions. More compellingly for anthropologists and scholars of modern economic life, the participants' experiences at the farmers' market do not deny the theoretical contrast of Marxian and Maussian exchange or the theory of Marxian exchange as a dominant economic model. The market exchanges take a commodity form, and monetary values for fresh produce there are often higher compared with those at supermarkets or other farmers' markets. In addition, the very spatial and temporal "boundedness" of the farmers' market's alterity or "counterhegemony" does not challenge the dominant ideology of global capitalism itself. Nonetheless, it does create an alternative space of social, ethical, economic, and ideological exchange—a third place or third space—where participants can suspend the dominant ideology through their ideo-praxis, that is, through enacting their idealized forms of ideology and practice, reversing what they see as dominant motivations and globally pervasive modes of production and consumption through their situated shopping, selling, and socializing.

In fact, their economic and ideological engagement in the farmers' market reveals their active employment and creative reworking of the Marxian–Maussian theoretical distinction as practically meaningful "responses" to the hegemonic model (and dominant social discourse) of the Marxian paradigm. Dolan (2009:174) cogently argues that considering the particular "spirit of relationality" alters fair trade, turning it into the "subject" rather than the "object" of exchange. Similarly, it is not so much the practical validity of any distinct Marxian–Maussian dichotomy but, rather, the consciousness of the participants, reinforced and protected by the phenomenological experience of the market as a spatial and temporal third place, that creatively articulates the meaning of exchange and transforms the alienated exchange of commodities into less alienated, symbolically charged activity.

In a deterritorialized world, it might seem that place matters little and that the utility of exchange is everything. But the complex discourse and phenomenology of Center City's farmers' market shows that the desire for place and connection still matters despite—and, indeed, because of—deterritorialization and intensified mobility under globalization. The particular strategic production of locality as an alternative modern third place reflects and refracts participants' particular sense of idealized forms of being in the context of a "noncapitalist" community-like market. And it is against the grindstone of these local ideological and phenomenological experiences that theoretical conceptions and distinctions—namely, Maussian and Marxian theories of exchange—are honed, rendering them both practically ambivalent and phenomenologically meaningful across space, over time, and between individuals in contemporary U.S. life.

As my conversations with them make clear, Farmer's Basket participants are clearly aware of the dominant mode of exchange—namely, commodity exchange—and talk about their market as a unique reification of such exchange. Third places like the farmers' market are thus key sites for analyzing the "embeddedness" of Marxist and Maussian tools that have worked their way into social life and its spatial relationships through individuals' ideo-praxis and that add meaning to their active promotion of social and environmental justice as well as a certain cultural ethos and certain ideals.

At the end of the market day, the combination of farmers' and customers' mutual recognition and ideologically oriented consciousness constructs a theoretically driven yet very real phenomenological sense of Maussian reciprocity within a context of Marxian-framed economic exchange. But most importantly, the market's idea(l) of exchange reveals how such theoretical concepts themselves become the explicit framework for participants' moral and economic consciousness and practice. And though scholars must always be mindful that the theoretical distinction between

Marxian and Maussian exchange can obscure the realities of local experience, we must also keep in mind that the way in which theoretical distinctions bleed into ideologies of lifestyle and into individuals' practices is also a social fact that warrants close ethnographic analysis.

Notes

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1. In this article, all names of people and local places are pseudonyms. In addition to Farmers' Basket in Center City and farms, I visited DC metro area farmers' markets in Georgetown and Mt. Vernon. I also visited markets in Connecticut, Illinois, Maine, and New York several times from 2002 to 2010.

2. The phenomenon of fetishizing discourses around objects in this market represents what Carrier refers to as "transubstantiation"—"a kind of reverse fetishism of commodities" (1990:33). Fetishism is, at its heart, a matter of individual consciousness. Thus, it is fundamentally up to the individual consumer to transubstantiate the meaning of exchange in a particular space.

3. I use *liberal open-mindedness* to describe the deliberately broad yet ideologically charged consciousness that drives many of the participants—both sellers and buyers—in this market. This particular construction of consciousness resonates with an attitude that historian Kristin Hoganson locates among U.S. households during the late 19th and early 20th centuries; she describes shoppers of that time as "cosmopolitan consumers [who] regarded their homes as loci of interaction with the wider world, as manifestations of open-mindedness and cultural receptivity" (2002:83). In contrast to Hoganson's cosmopolitan consumers, however, I also emphasize the active and informed, sociopolitically charged ideology of "liberalism" that motivates the "open-mindedness" of the participants at Farmers' Basket.

4. According to Sharon Zukin (2010:129), among New York customers, management by nonprivate organizations and the use of nonprivatized space are crucial to constructing the sense of a market's authenticity.

5. I recognize that the term *middle class professional* is rather broad (see Stearns 1979 for a discussion of "middle class" as a category of analysis), but it seems applicable to most of my informants, who are economists, government workers, and businessmen and women.

6. On the distinction between the "affects" of discourse and ideology, see Purvis and Hunt 1993.

7. The element of self-production is crucial in this market. In fact, once a year, a member of the nonprofit that operates Farmers' Basket goes to each vendor's farm to check that the products marketed are actually produced on that farm.

8. Those who did were usually middle-aged white women who were buying for their households.

9. Tiemann draws on the somewhat oversimplified distinction between the formal, Fordist–Keynesian economy (the first-world economy) and the informal, illegal, black-market economy (the third-world economy), yet he argues that "farmers' and flea markets in the first world are also . . . informal markets that operate in ways that are similar to third world street markets" (2004:44).

10. According to Dolan (2009:167), such "moral principles" and "ethical sensibilities" encapsulate the notions of "justice," "economic rights," and "moral personhood."

11. Daniel Miller (1998b:3) argues that seemingly individualistic, hedonistic, and materialistic shopping among North London housewives is, in reality, dominated by an ideological and affective dimension—devotion—through their imagination of others.

12. Not all producers actively engage in such exchanges. Processed-item vendors such as cheese vendors and soap vendors, for example, are less inclined to do so. One reason may be that their products are relatively nonperishable. Thus, even in the same loosely defined Sunday market space, differences between vendors of fresh and nonperishable goods seem to correlate with very different market dynamics of sociality. This makes the very nature of exchange—between sellers and customers and among farmers themselves—particularly striking as a microcosm of larger market trends. In this sense, the exchanges among the fresh produce sellers necessitate both Marxian commodity and Maussian gift exchange to maximize economic and social functionality. In other words, despite the anticapitalist ideological and social discourse promoted in the market site, the third place of the farmers' market is still implicitly embedded within the dominant logic of commodities and capital at large.

13. The term *heterotopia* was first used by Michel Foucault (1986) to refer to a wide variety of spaces, not just economic or public; I also draw on Lefebvre's concept of "heterotopia" and Soja's (1996) concept of "third space" to talk about the "lived geography" of the particular space of the farmers' market.

14. Tiemann (2008) also draws from Oldenburg's notion of "third place" to talk about the kind of "status" farmers' markets have for farmers. The interstitial space I examine in this article is analogous to Oldenburg's notion of a "third place" in the sense that it is a particular construction of locality and is loaded with many different economic and political ideologies drawn from relatively new urban middle-class residents.

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