ABSTRACT

Throughout the United States, there is a fast growing movement centered on locally produced food. Consumers, farmers, and farmers’ markets are central components of this local food movement. In this study, we examine the local food movement in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex (DFW) and use farmers’ markets to understand DFW’s developing local food system and foodsheds. We also analyze how notions of place and community are manifest in DFW’s local food system. Research methods include interviews with farmers, customers, and farmers’ market coordinators and an analysis of the spatial distribution of three farmers’ market networks in DFW. Our findings show that community is important to the identity of DFW’s local food movement and that farmers’ markets serve as nodes for community. Thus farmers’ markets are not only important for local farming economies, but also stimulate notions of place and community in rapidly suburbanizing areas.

Key Words: community, farmers’ market, foodshed, marketshed, place, local food.

INTRODUCTION

Initially a small alternative movement focused on environmental sustainability, today’s local food movement is widespread throughout the United States. Increasingly popular among “foodies” (who place high value on food quality), the movement also focuses on taste, origin, the environment, and the humane treatment of animals (Nonini 2013). The growing popularity of local food has also attracted corporate grocers who increasingly co-opt the idea of organic products and use labeling designed to make food appear “local” (Johnston et al. 2009). Even the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), long considered a staunch advocate for the industrial food system, has recently taken interest in the local food movement,
and began collecting data on farmers’ markets as part of the agricultural census in 1994 (USDA 2013). Indeed, the proliferation of farmers’ markets in recent decades and their spatial distribution throughout the United States illustrates the popularity and spatial extent of local food movements (Fig. 1). In this paper, we explore the relationship among farmers’ markets, local food systems, and notions of community and place.

Farmers’ markets continue to pop up throughout the United States. The number of markets listed in the USDA National Directory of Farmers’ Markets has increased nearly five-fold since 1994, with a 3.6% increase between 2012 and 2013 alone, bringing the national total to 8,144 (USDA 2013). The growth in popularity of local food has been uneven, however, with high densities of markets in certain areas. For example, New York City and the Northeast had a vibrant local food culture as early as 2000 (Payne 2000). The West Coast, particularly the metropolitan areas of Seattle and Portland, also had mature local food movements by 2005 (Selfa and Qazi 2005). On the other hand, Texas and much of the South, despite having long traditions of county fairs and local production, have been slower to join the local food movement, making the contemporary farmers’ market a relatively new phenomenon in Texas cities.

The Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex (DFW) is the fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States, with a population of 6.4 million, and an annual growth rate of 2.0% (USCB 2012). DFW’s population is expected to double by 2050 (OSD 2013). However, despite its size and rapid growth, DFW’s local food movement is relatively new compared to other large US metropolitan areas such as Seattle,
Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco and Portland that have hundreds of local producers (Brown 2001). Although DFW is growing fast in terms of new local producers and new farmers’ markets, many details of production and consumption remain unclear. For example, how many local farmer/producers operate in the region? Where are they located? Where and how many farmers’ markets exist? And who is producing, marketing, and buying the local goods produced in the region? In this paper, we answer these questions and identify foodsheds and marketsheds within DFW’s local food system. As well, we examine how place and community are conceptualized within this system.

One way to understand specifics about local producers and farmers’ markets is to examine elements such as “food miles,” “foodsheds,” freshness, pesticide and fertilizer use, and consumer pricing (e.g., Brown and Miller 2008; Mirosa and Lawson 2012; Norberg-Hodge 2002; Peters et al. 2008; Born and Purcell 2006; Coley et al. 2009). As well, geographers and anthropologists have analyzed local food systems in terms of sense of place and community (e.g. Feagan 2007; DeLind 2002), and the reasons people engage in local food systems, including the feeling of participating in a community (Trauger et al. 2010), or the sensation of eating food that is linked to a particular place or person (Hinrichs 2000). Farmers’ markets do not represent the entirety of the local food movement present in DFW, but they are a useful proxy because they are gathering places for producers and consumers. In this study, we build on Feagan’s (2007) analysis of food communities and their places, and Kloppenburg et al.’s (1996) concept of foodsheds to analyze DFW’s local food system with regards to two questions: 1) What is the role of farmers’ markets in DFW’s local food system? And 2) how do local food producers and farmers’ market customers experience community and place in DFW’s local food system?

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS (LFS)

What began in the 1960s as the alternative food movement is known today as the local food movement, where the emphasis shifted from a movement focused on combatting industrial food to a quality-driven movement that focuses on values, relationships, and methods surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food (Coit 2008). To Starr (2010), local food movements operate within the constraints of seasonality, regionalism, and the desire to have close attachments to specific markets and farmers. Thus, the classic agricultural constraints of limited growing season, climatic uncertainties, fluctuations in manpower availability, and distance to market are the defining characteristics of local food movements. And as such, these characteristics are the means by which local food producers market their products in opposition to those produced via the industrial food system (Starr 2010).

For consumers, local foods are generally regarded as being healthier, more environmentally sustainable, and of higher quality than conventional foods (Dunne et al. 2011). However, the knowledge of where food comes from and who grows it can also take on a moral, spiritual and educational dimension for local food consumers (Cone and Kakaliouras 1995). Pietrykowski (2004) summarizes that local food movements revolve around taste, quality, human interaction, and the pleasure of consumption. In this way, local food movements distinguish themselves from the corporatized organic food industry, or “supermarket organics,” that market products on their taste, quality, and health benefits, but remain silent on long supply chains, farm labor exploitation, and lack of farmer-consumer interactions (Nonini 2013).

Among local food movements, consumers and producers come together in a variety of arenas, including farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture groups (CSAs), greengrocer distribution networks, alternative food chains, and farm pickups
Consumers, producers, and the various points of exchange comprise local food systems (LFS). Most LFS can be found within or near urban areas (Selfa and Qazi 2005). LFS found at the urban fringe around cities often innovate in niche production and specialized distribution methods (Beauchesne and Bryant 2002). Moreover, the definition of what is local may vary from producer to producer, making LFS highly variable. Ultimately, however, the underlying themes of LFS are shorter food chains, more contact between consumers and producers, and an overall higher quality of food products (Dunne et al. 2011).

**FOODSHEDS**

Local food is inherently a geographic phenomenon, as distance between farm and market plays an important role in how people define “local food” in addition to connections between specific products and places where food is produced and consumed (Coit 2008). The use of the word local implies that space and locality are important to the identity of this movement. There is some disagreement, however, about what constitutes “local” (Dunne et al. 2011), particularly with regard to how far food travels from producer to market. Food miles are one way to differentiate between different forms of production and to identify LFS (Born and Purcell 2006; Coley et al. 2009).

Distance is an important limiting factor for LFS. It affects communication levels and transportation costs (Nyusten 1963) and affects the distribution of farms in relation to customers and markets (Selfa and Qazi 2005). Indeed, von Thünen's classic land rent model details an idealized arrangement of different forms of land use around an urban market area. Building on von Thünen, Sinclair (1963) argued that modern urban land use is also affected by urban expansion and that agriculture is arrayed further away from the city center than all other land uses. Thus, Sinclair's (1963) thesis on urban expansion produces the opposite effect of von Thünen's land rent model, creating what Beauchesne and Bryant (2002) refer to as the “urban fringe.” Today, the urban fringe immediately surrounding cities is an area of innovation and the location of most of the local food production for urban centers (Beauchesne and Bryant 2002). In fact, many LFS in the United States and Canada follow this layout (Dimitri and Greene 2000; Payne 2000). Distance still remains a deciding factor, however, as Selfa and Qazi (2005) indicate that LFS arrayed too far from urban centers suffer from a lack of consumer demand and the absence of infrastructures provided by urban areas. Therefore, the infrastructures present in urban areas serve to embed LFS in particular networks (Hinrichs 2000).

The “foodshed” is another tool for imagining a bounded area indicative of locality (Kloppenburg et al. 1996; Peters et al. 2009). Geographers and local food activists use foodsheds to delineate a physical space within which some kind of food production and consumption occurs (Kloppenburg et al. 1996; Peters et al. 2009). Foodsheds are also used for community and LFS planning purposes. The foodshed provides a visual relationship between the place of production and consumption, and gives consumers a precise knowledge of where their food originates. Moreover, foodsheds embed LFS “in a moral economy attached to a particular community and place, just as watersheds reattach water systems to a natural ecology” (Starr et al. 2003, 3). In this manner, the foodshed is a way to delineate the spatial extent of the networks of local food, and to embed local food networks in a particular locality.

The networks in LFS can be understood in terms of their “connectiveness” (Nyusten 1963). Various distribution methods, including farmers’ markets, CSAs, greengrocers and other places where producers interact with consumers, form nodes within the connective network of LFS (Ilbery and May 2005). Escobar (2001) conceives of nodes as localities that are enclosed within a porous boundary – the porosity of which leads to regional connections and forms a network between
localities. Localities can also give rise to a sense of place and community.

**PLACE AND COMMUNITY**

The way in which communities and individuals interact with and conceive of place may be termed a "sense of place." Anthropologists, geographers, and philosophers have long studied sense of place (e.g., Heidegger 1962; Relph 1976; Kant 1950 [1787]; Casey 2001; Feld and Basso 1998; Escobar 2001; Nyusten 1963). Identified as the feelings, memories, and knowledge linked to a particular location, "sense of place" is a key aspect of many cultures (Feld and Basso 1998). Place is also an important part of food and the experience of eating. For example, the French conceive of "eating well," as taking place in the French countryside, while the Swedish conceive of eating well as occurring in Mediterranean regions (Biltgård 2013). Frake (1998) indicates that places can even form social battlegrounds with two sides scrabbling for control of the heritage and cultural memory of a place, which indicates that knowledge of and connection with place is a crucial part of being a member of society.

Relph (1976) conceives of certain locations as "having place" and others as being "placeless," indicating that there are certain localities that do not gather memories and ideas. Casey (2001) critiques this notion, stating that no location can be placeless, instead arguing that the postmodern "sense of place" identifies selfhood with "thick places" and "thinned-out places," where "the densely enmeshed infrastructures...[lack] the rigor and substance of thickly lived places," where the "place/self-relationship is... as highly ramified as it is intimate" (2001, 2). Thinned-out places correspond to a "fickle self" in which the person is easily distracted, and not connected to any one place (Casey 2001). In the realm of LFS, Relph might refer to a supermarket as placeless – where many different seasons, cultures and growing regions are contained within one location. Casey, however, would refer to the supermarket as a "thinned-out place" where the seasons, cultures and products present are not representative of the surrounding environment. In only a few steps down a supermarket aisle, the "fickle consumer" moves between multiple seasons, locales, cultures and places. Because of the lack of connection with any specific locality, industrial food chains are unable to generate "thick" attachments to place (Casey 2001). Conversely, farmers' markets and other nodes of LFS are more representative of the surrounding environment through connection with specific localities and people, and thus, generate thick attachments to place.

Like conceptualizations of places of local food versus places of industrial foods, scholars also have posited local food movements as communities of resistance. For example, Herbert (2005) argues that local food communities form in response to the failure of the government to protect them from social or environmental problems. Similarly, Morgan et al. (2006) suggest that advocates of LFS and industrial food are rivals locked in a conceptual/political battle over the perceived qualities of their respective products. Although community is often embedded in place (Duncan 1994; Pratt 1991), with the growth of global communication networks and political/social movements, the concept of community also must acknowledge larger collections of individuals along the lines of gender, sexuality, political affiliation and environmental issues who are not bound by geographical proximity (Massey 1994; Harvey and Williams 1995).

Indeed, key tenets of the local food movement, such as health, food quality, animal rights, and environmental sustainability form broader political communities and are not bound to a particular locality (Dalby and MacKenzie 1997). Nevertheless, the local food movement is best conceptualized as a combination of the two views that community is locality bound and that community exists within regional and international networks. While the local food movement draws on global and regional connections among producers and LFS advocates, there is no true
“national” or “global” local food movement, but rather a collection of various movements rooted in particular localities (Nonini 2013). Recent attempts to organize funding for LFS on the national level in the United States (USDA 2014) may represent the first attempts to truly organize at the national scale, but for the most part, LFS communities remain rooted in particular places at the local or regional scale, and community arises at the localities where exchanges of products take place.

Ultimately, the placement of a farmers’ market within a landscape determines what kind of local community arises, who has access to this community, who makes decisions about the porosity of the boundary and the degree to which networks permeate the locality. Cresswell (1996) indicates that there are cultural expectations for how people use place, and that these expectations change from locality to locality. Thus a farmers’ market located near a mostly white, affluent neighborhood, would have different expectations for the use of place, and for who belongs at the farmers’ market, than a farmers’ market located in a largely minority, lower-income area. Slocum (2010) points out that ‘whiteness’ dominates the use of place in LFS. Barraclough (2009) goes further in accusing municipal zoning policies of favoring “white” LFS uses of land, such as hobby farms, over “minority” uses, such as urban gardens. Such expectations of land use lead to the primarily “white” construction of place that, while perhaps not explicitly intentional, serves to exclude those who fall outside of this construction (Creswell 1996).

Finally, different notions of place, even in physically similar localities, lead to different narratives surrounding community (Alkon and Traugot 2008). Farmers’ markets can provide an arena for the manifestation of diverse community narratives. For example, Alkon’s (2007) case study of a primarily black farmers’ market in Oakland, CA reveals highly heterogeneous constructions of community at different farmers’ markets within a small geographic region – communities that vary not only in demographic make-up, but that also have broader connections to other types of political movements, such as racial equality, environmental justice, and food quality movements. Because of their ability to generate thick attachments to place, to create vibrant communities within an urban environment, and to engage producers and consumers in political dialogue, farmers’ markets serve as key components of LFS.

METHODS

To examine the role of farmers’ markets in the LFS of DFW, we interviewed producers, consumers and market managers, mapped and recorded production activities, and created maps of foodsheds and marketsheds as visual representations of connections created by three different farmers’ markets. In order to understand how LFS actors conceive of place and community, we conducted nine interviews with local food producers and farmers’ market organizers between June and September 2013. Follow-up interviews were conducted over the phone with select producers and market organizers in December and January 2014. As well, an email survey was distributed to farmers’ market customers in August 2014.

We also collected information on type of produce, location of farms, size of operations, and markets and other methods of distribution from the websites of 30 producers in the DFW area. Producers were defined as permanent operations that produce fruit, vegetables, dairy products, eggs or pastured meat. Artisan bakers or craftsmen were not included. All of the active DFW farmers’ markets were identified as well. The criteria for an active farmers’ market was that it must be a public marketplace, not a private business, must have been established for at least one year, and must hold more than one market event per year. Farmers’ markets that are managed by a business but are still open to vendors and the public were included in the count.
We collected location data from the 39 producers and entered it into ArcMap to create displays of the distribution of three classes of producer in the DFW area: meat, dairy and produce. Although some farms produced more than one type of product, we classified farms based on their primary product. A foodshed was created for the three farmers’ markets based on the producers that sell at the particular market. Finally, we created a visual representation of the area of consumer draw around each market, or a “marketshed.” To do this, we asked market organizers at each market what distance consumers typically travel to reach the market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

DFW’s Local Food System

We identified 39 producers who serve the DFW area (Fig. 2). These producers operate farms, dairies, or ranches of different sizes. Some have little more than a backyard garden where they grow vegetables, while others have many acres of pasture. Most producers sell primarily at farmers’ markets, but nine supplement sales at a farm store or local grocery. Nine producers have weekly or bimonthly CSAs (Table 1). Only four producers do not sell at farmers’ markets and several producers sell at multiple markets. Two operations also

Table 1. Description of all producers serving DFW.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#Farms</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
<th>#Produce</th>
<th>#Meat</th>
<th>#Dairy</th>
<th>Avg. #Markets</th>
<th>#CSAs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>8 Years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Local food producers in DFW by type of food.
supplement their own harvest with produce purchased from larger farms near Austin, TX. These two operations both have large CSAs and sell at farmer’s markets. Most producers in the DFW area are younger operations established after 2005 (Fig. 3). The oldest operations tend to be pastured meat ranches. The youngest operations tend to be urban gardens, which require a much lower startup cost. Most of the current farms in DFW began operations after 2007. This is consistent with data that Texas and the South have lagged behind the rest of the US in terms of farmers’ market establishment (Fig. 1). The shift in production from pastured meats to vegetables seems to be indicative of new market demands, high prices for land, and the difficulty that ranchers face when they try to establish a meat processing facility on their ranch. RR mentioned that many new pastured meat operations come and go, failing within the first year of operation (Table 2; all interviewees will be referred to by the farmer codes in this table). In addition, most farmers are not career farmers; all but one of the farmers

![Figure 3. Year of establishment for producers in DFW.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmer Code</th>
<th>Primary Product</th>
<th>Secondary Products</th>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Farm Size (Acres)</th>
<th>Markets</th>
<th>Other Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EF</td>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>~10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>CSA, Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JF</td>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HF</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
<td>Eggs, Produce</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CSA, Store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF</td>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&gt;25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BF</td>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BR</td>
<td>Meat (Beef)</td>
<td>Pork, Lamb</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Store, Delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>Meat (Beef)</td>
<td>Chicken, Pork</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interviewed had a previous career before entering local food production.

There are 20 active farmers’ markets in the DFW area (Fig. 4). These markets are generally held on Saturday mornings throughout the growing season. Most markets close for the winter (November – April), but the well-established markets remain open year round. Municipal governments run most markets through a board of volunteers, but a few are run by private businesses or organizations. For example, a church runs the St. Michael’s Market of Dallas and the Lion’s Club runs the Frisco Market. A larger company that manages several farmers’ markets runs the Dallas Farmers’ Market and a local entrepreneur runs the Richardson Market. Most of the vendors at the various farmers’ markets are cottage industries/artisan food makers, and markets tend to have trouble finding enough produce and meat vendors to meet demand. For example, CM remarked that “we have a waiting list for food and craft vendors, but we can’t get enough vendors who are actually local farmers. The best markets have a good balance of both farmers and craftsmen”.

Only two farmers’ markets (Fig. 5) were established prior to 2002. The Dallas Farmers’ Market has been in operation since 1941 and the Fort Worth Cowtown Market since the early 1980s. Around 2002, several of the commuter cities in the outskirts of DFW began to develop their own markets. The Coppell Farmers’ Market (Fig. 4), considered by many to be the premiere market in DFW, opened in 2003. The organizers of the Coppell Market were key players in the pioneering of a number of municipal ordinances that allowed meat, eggs and other artisan goods to be sold out of tents and trucks. These ordinances established a precedent for other municipalities in DFW to open their own markets, leading to a large number of markets being established between

Figure 4. Locations of farmers’ markets in DFW by year established.
2009 and 2011. As CM also noted, “Once local food became more popular, every little town wanted a farmers’ market.”

The spatial distribution of local food in DFW seems to most closely follow Sinclair’s model of land use. Figure 2 shows that the majority of producers are located outside of the major population areas. Interview data confirms this distribution. For example, producer RR commented that: “with [a nearby city] expanding, we may have to move further out soon. Land costs are just getting too high.” Three producers, RR, SF and BF, mentioned that farm location is always a delicate balance between locating far enough away from population centers to have low land costs, but close enough to populated areas to ensure a customer base. Von Thünen’s transportation cost limitations seemed to apply conditionally to DFW local producers. As BF mentioned, some producers spend a great deal on gas money to travel to market. According to both DM and CM, producers will drive in from great distances to sell, and EF drives over 400 miles a week to bring produce to market. However, other producers indicated that transportation distance limited their operation. RR, in particular, mentioned that gasoline prices prevented his expansion into new farmers’ markets. Thus, distance from market may be a limiting factor. Access to consumers as quantified by distance from the city center (see e.g., Sella and Qazi 2005) may also play a role in determining where producers locate.

Farmers’ market locations in DFW also do not seem to follow Beauchesne and Bryant’s (1998) model of “innovation in the urban fringe.” While the majority of producers are located outside of DFW in the “urban fringe” area, a minority are located in more centralized urban areas (see Fig. 2). These producers were described by EF as the “backyard farmers” who take their backyards or other empty, vacant lots and transform them into prosperous businesses. Altieri et al. (1999) described the phenomenon of backyard farmers and urban gardens as crucial components of LFS and indicate that they provide important food security and community-building services. While much of DFW’s growth in local food production is occurring at the urban fringe, an equal if not more important component is occurring closer to city centers, suggesting an urban fringe model does not necessarily apply to DFW.

![Figure 5. Year of establishment for farmers’ markets in DFW.](image-url)
DFW’s Foodshed and Marketshed

Through integrating Nyusten’s (1963) idea of connectiveness and Ilbery and May’s (2005) notion that markets, greengrocers and CSAs form the nodes of LFS, we conceive of LFS as consisting of a network of actors and products who come to exchange at a node. Of the 39 producers identified in DFW, only four were not associated with a farmer’s market. Moreover, the majority of the CSAs supplement sales at a market. Thus, the farmers’ markets are the primary nodes of LFS in DFW. These nodes form Escobar’s (2001) localities within which the interactions and exchanges of local food take place. As these localities are firmly embedded in the local landscape, culture, and community, they begin to “gather ideas and memories” of places, as described by Basso (1998). When farmers’ market customers were asked why they enjoyed a certain market, or why it was special to them, many responded by relating memories. One customer recalled meeting her pet sitter at the market and how since then, the market has become associated with meeting new friends. Another customer shared that “a stranger gave me two tacos once because I was playing with her kid. I like that everyone gets much more trusting and open at farmer’s markets.”

The foodsheds created by the Denton Community Market, the Coppell Farmers’ Market and the White Rock Local Market display considerable variation in their size and location (Fig. 6). The Denton market has a 10-mile marketshed, White Rock’s marketshed is 20 miles, and Coppell’s is 30 miles. The Denton market has a noticeably smaller foodshed compared to the others, with its extent mostly confined to the northern part of Denton County. The White Rock market has a much larger foodshed, encompassing much of eastern DFW, and reaching down into the south. The Coppell market is the largest and displays considerable overlap with the White Rock foodshed. The Coppell foodshed also encompasses the eastern portion of DFW, but reaches further north, overlapping much of Denton’s area. Indeed, many producers sell at multiple markets. The Coppell Market and White Rock market include many of the same vendors, while Denton’s market consists mostly of producers who exclusively sell in Denton. Denton’s foodshed is likely smaller than the other two markets because there are no meat vendors. Meat producers tend to locate further from city centers, where land costs are lower. Therefore, the Coppell and White Rock foodsheds are expanded further away from the city centers by the inclusion of several meat producers/vendors in their vendor lineup.

Each farmers’ market marketshed (Fig. 7) seems to be closely related to the size of the foodshed. This is particularly noticeable for the Denton market, where its smaller foodshed is matched by a very localized (to the City of Denton) marketshed. The size of the marketsheds for the White Rock market and the Coppell market are similar to the sizes of their foodsheds, and encompass a much broader area, including multiple cities. These markets could be said to have commuting customers, whereas the Denton market has more localized customers.

The size and shape of each market’s respective foodshed and marketshed may be representative of heterogeneous ideas of place and community at each market. For instance, the small size and relative isolation of Denton’s foodshed and marketshed may indicate a tighter sense of community at the Denton market, or a tighter network of producers that frequent the market. This corresponds with DM’s remark that the Denton Market is “more of a community gathering than a place of business”. Three customers at the Denton market also indicated that the market is more a community gathering place than a place exclusive to business activities.

The Coppell market’s large foodshed and marketshed, combined with interview evidence, may indicate a looser sense of community: one Coppell vendor noted that there is not a lot of networking between producers at the market. The Coppell market also did not include the food trucks and musicians characteristic of Denton and White Rock.
Figure 6. Foodsheds for select DFW farmers’ markets.
However, the size of Coppell’s foodshed and marketshed does indicate large producer and consumer draw. Also, CM indicated that the Coppell Market is a place where people “come to buy, not to look around,” and that the market has a waiting list for vendors. EF mentioned that a lot of producers “really want to get in on the Coppell Market”, and RR indicated that the customers at the Coppell Market buy a lot more food than people at other markets. Because of the larger volume of vendors and customers, the Coppell market may not represent as “thick” a place as smaller markets – since people and goods are coming from further away and a larger number of places are being represented in one locality. However, the higher flow of people and goods makes the Coppell Market a very desirable location for both producers and consumers to do business.

The White Rock Market seems to sit somewhere between Denton and Coppell in terms of network size. The vendor make-up and characteristics of the market are similar to Denton’s (food trucks, live music, interconnected producers). But its central location in the metroplex may naturally give it greater consumer and producer draw than a locality such as Denton. Although two customers felt that the White Rock Market is a location for people to sample new types of cuisine and enjoy a unique lunch experience, the market’s larger foodshed and marketshed, and higher vendor turnover (the vendors rotate every two weeks), also suggest a looser sense of community at the White Rock market.

In sum, the foodsheds and marketsheds are visual representations of the networks of DFW’s LFS, and represent the flow of people and products into the nodes – the farmers’ markets. The characteristics of these networks help to define the kind of place and community that exists at the nodes – the farmers’ markets.
Community and Place at the Nodal Farmers’ Markets

“The only way to know what you’re eating is to know where it comes from, who produced it, and how it was produced”
— RR, producer

“People have a total lack of confidence in where their food comes from”
— BR, producer

No obvious trends can be discerned from producers’ discussions of place. No producer specifically mentioned “sense of place,” for example. Producers did, however, note that a connection with the landscape and seasons is important. Two producers said they have a personal connection with the landscape, which is an important part of their work. For example, BR said that “the most rewarding part is being out in my field, tending the grass.” JF expressed similar sentiments, saying that “my plot of land is my heritage, I want to have the healthiest soil in [the county] and be able to give that land to someone when I’m done.” Another producer, HF, also mentioned that seasonality is important: “My favorite thing is waiting for that first peach right off the tree in spring. That’s how we’re meant to be, how God intended us to be.”

However, sense of place seems to be more important at the farmers’ markets. Both market organizers indicated that the markets provide a unique and warm atmosphere for consumers and producers. Aside from other aspects of LFS, they felt that these characteristics of the market provided an important reason for consumers to come back. CM said, “I just love the smell of fresh bread every time the baker’s truck rolls up.” To DM, “it’s not just the farmers, we have musicians out here and all the craft vendors and food trucks. It’s a really unique place.” The surveys conducted with customers largely echoed these sentiments. Four of the nine customers surveyed specifically mentioned the “atmosphere” as a key reason for attending the market. Seven of the nine customers indicated that they either have fond memories of the market itself, or that the market reminds them of good experiences. CM also remarked that the market is embedded in the surrounding city/town and is reflective of those surroundings. Customers confirmed this observation. A Denton customer referred to the market as a “Saturday ritual... people here like those [types of] events and they like that constancy, it’s what makes a small town a small town,” indicating that the way in which business is conducted at the Denton market reflects Denton’s small town way of life. This embeddedness rings of Casey’s (2001) notions of thickly- and thinly-lived places, where thickly-lived places arise from their surrounding environment. Several producers seconded this notion with the sentiment that the markets have positive impacts on the surrounding community.

The dialogue surrounding community provided more noticeable trends among producers. Five indicated that the personal relationships within an LFS contribute to community. For example, CM said that “you buy from someone because they’re your neighbor”; and BF declared that “we have a direct relationship with all of our customers. We’ve known people since their kids were babies.” Five participants also noted that networks of producers arise around farmers’ markets. To DM “There’s a lot of cooperation among farmers and sharing of resources. There’s really a community of farmers.” Likewise, BR said, “local food is a very tight-knit network,” while CM noted that “the vendors will become friends and always try to get their booths set up with the same groups of people.”

Other producers mentioned topics including feelings of trust between consumer and producer. Some producers felt that the wider impacts of the farmers’ market really created the sense of community, with two producers indicating that the markets created broader community cohesion (based on the surrounding city), and another two indicating that the markets wide-reaching beneficial impacts on other parts of the community.
All participants but one expressed the feeling that the markets create some sort of community among producers and consumers. The one participant who disagreed that producers experience community at the market felt that the markets were good places for consumers to create community, but that producers were there mostly to sell their goods.

Different markets produce different kinds of community. As indicated by the network sizes (Figs. 6 and 7), each market brings together a different set of people from varying geographies. In the case of Denton, a localized network is present at the market—people who live in the same area and experience more frequent interactions with one another. The Coppell Market brings together a more regional network of producers and consumers who come from different cities and do not have the opportunity to network as closely as the smaller markets. This produces varying senses of community and interconnectedness at the markets. High turnover rates of market vendors may change the sense of community. For example, the White Rock Lake Market has two sets of vendors that rotate each week, and two other DFW markets have monthly rotations of vendors. Although this might allow the market to serve more farmers and craftsmen and expose consumers to a wider range of products, it offers less of an opportunity to create a community compared to markets with fewer vendor turnovers. The different network sizes and local characteristics create heterogeneous market communities across DFW.

Nevertheless, producers agreed overall that community is an important aspect of LFS, and that community forms in and around the farmers’ markets. This supports Duncan’s (1994) and Pratt’s (1991) findings that communities are inherently embedded in a locality, and Nonini’s (2013) finding that local food communities form a sort of quasi-global movement, where there are connections at the regional and global scales, but because local food is such a locality-based movement, communities form most intensively at the local scale.

Finally, an interesting trend among producers is the shared sentiment that LFS create community and connect people with the environment while conventional food systems do not. RR stated that “people have a total lack of confidence in where their food comes from [in the industrial system]” and that “the only way to know what you’re eating is to know where it comes from, who produced it, and how it was produced.” These findings correspond with literature linking community to perceived threats (e.g., Herbert 2005; Morgan et al. 2006). However, the fact that producers see community being created in farmers’ markets and not in conventional food systems indicates that farmers’ markets are perceived as an improvement over the kind of landscape and social arrangement that arises from industrial food.

CONCLUSION

The local food movement is growing throughout the United States. Although DFW is a relative newcomer to the movement, it is growing rapidly in terms of new producers and new farmers’ markets. These markets, which form important nodes of the networks that create local food systems, continue to provide both producers and consumers with a unique locality where place and community are conceived and created. The importance of place at the farmers’ market suggests that place is an integral component of the local food movement as a whole. However, further investigation into customer perceptions and notions of place surrounding CSAs and greengrocers also is needed to determine if other components of local food movements can be linked to sense of place. Community, based on producer perceptions, can be linked to the local food movement, and should be considered central to the function of farmers’ markets. Farmers’ markets form heterogeneously across the LFS landscape, with each market representing a unique geography of people, products, and place. An interesting follow-up study would be to conduct a socio-demographic analysis.
of the market communities in DFW and examine how these differences create different kinds of community. Finally, suburbanizing municipalities in DFW begin to create community when they establish their own farmers’ market. These communities are created because farmers’ markets are places where producers, consumers, and neighbors come together to talk about food, connect with each other over products grown from the surrounding landscape, and delight in the experience of the market.

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