Spring 2015

Western Farmers' Markets in Kathmandu: Vendor Perspectives

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SIT Study Abroad

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South Asia, Nepal, Kathmandu
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Nepal: Development and Social Change, SIT Study Abroad

Spring 2015

Abstract

This study seeks to understand Western farmers' markets (FMs) in Kathmandu by understanding vendors' motivations for attending FMs; and further, their perspectives on the purpose and potential for expansion of FMs in Kathmandu's food economy. In the US and Europe, FMs are often seen in the literature as a component of a social movement (SM) called the 'alternative food movement' (AFM) concerned with environmental sustainability and social justice within the processes of food production and consumption (Isenhour 2012). FMs, a type of direct market that offer face-to-face interaction between producers and consumers, are a site for the transmission of values related to the AFM, which grew out of a particular cultural context, having arisen in response to global-industrial agriculture. Nepal's vastly different culture and relatively localized food economy make the transposition of Western farmers' markets and their discourse of sustainability and social justice onto a Nepali context illogical; understanding vendors' motivations for attendance, values related to food production, and beliefs about FMs in general will give insight into the role of FMs in this different, distinctly Nepali context.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the Nepalis who lost their lives in the earthquake on April 25th, 2015, three weeks into our ISP period. Nothing can change the suffering this country has endured but, thanks to an outstanding, unbelievably immersive study abroad program, there are 17 American students sitting States-side, waiting on any signal to come back and begin rebuilding.

Acknowledgements

The completion of this research would not have been possible, first and foremost, without the cooperation, kindness, and generosity of all the busy producers with whom I interviewed. Many invited me into their homes or went out of their way to take me on 'field trips' to other markets or food-productions sites, with zero prompting or fishing on my end—the local food community in Kathmandu is *just that generous*. I must also thank my Academic Adviser, Daniel Putnam, for helping me shape my frenzied, eclectic musings into a cohesive set of research questions. I should also note that my fellow students in this Spring 2015 program provided an invaluable network of emotional support and the loudest of laughter, even on the most difficult days. Finally, thank you to Michael Pollan, whose books taught me to love and interrogate every forkful of food that comes my way.

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Introduction

This study seeks to understand Western farmers' markets (FMs) in Kathmandu by studying vendors' perspectives on the very FMs at which they sell their products. Two FMs were studied at two different host restaurants: the Saturday FM at 1905 Restaurant in Kantipath, Kathmandu, and the Sunday FM at Yellow House Restaurant in Sanepa, Lalitpur, Kathmandu. Because the Yellow House FM is essentially a branch-off of the 1905 FM – as explained further below – all vendors at the Yellow House FM also attend the larger 1905 FM. A total of eight interviews were conducted with six vendors, one FM supervisor/manager, and one vendor/FM supervisor. Interviews were conducted at various cafes across Kathmandu, at vendors' sites of production, and at vendors' homes.

Western FMs were created as part of an 'alternative food movement' which arose in response to global-industrial agricultural systems in the United States and Europe; and as a part of this social movement (SM) in the West, FMs are known as sites for transmitting particular values such as environmental sustainability, producer-consumer transparency, social justice, and even political activism (Isenhour 2012; Guthman 2004; Wright and Middendorf 2008; Goodman and DuPuis 2005). However, in such a culturally and economically different setting as Nepal, the reproduction of Western FMs may not mean the reproduction of a SM or the transmission of related values. Instead, their appearance in Kathmandu may indicate a reproduction of Western middle-class values and consumer preferences.

Western FMs in Kathmandu are seemingly elitist in both the high costs of their products and their unfamiliarity within Nepali food culture; upon first glance they also seem to be exclusive to an expatriate crowd. However, FMs may make increasing economic and cultural sense for a population whose interest in health consciousness and knowledge about their food's origins is skyrocketing (Lama, 2015; Rayamajhi, 2015).

Because of the difficulties of interviewing customers while they shop and the unnecessary invasiveness of interviewing those customers during the week, subjects were restricted to vendors and FM organizers.

The study revolved around the following core question: what motivates vendors to sell their products at the FM, rather than at other sites of exchange, such as supermarkets? And from there, how are vendors' motivations for FM attendance different from their general values related to food production– what does this difference say about the ideological values associated with FMs in Kathmandu, and their capacity to diffuse values to consumers? Are these FMs reproductions of a Western social movement (SM) of relocalizing food, or are they merely reproducing upper-middle class tastes? By the estimation of vendors and FM organizers, what are the FMs current consumer demographics; and further, is the future role of FMs in the Kathmandu food economy? My advisor for this study was Daniel Putnam.

Literature Review

To understand farmers' markets (FMs) as part of the 'alternative food movement' (AFM) and the degree to which vendors at Kathmandu FMs do or do not identify with the movement's goals, I turn first to the literature on alternative food movements in the United States and Europe and specifically 'direct markets,' of which FMs are an example. I then review the literature on FMs' ability to "re-embed" (Goodman and DuPuis 2005) values, plus consumers' and vendors siocultural and economic expectations of FMs and their motivations for attendance (Kirwan 2006; Griffin and Frongillo 2003; Brown 2002; Smithers 2008). However, it is vital to bear in mind that this (Western) SM and its related values discussed below – of which FMs in the US and Europe are a part – rose out of a specific cultural and economic context drastically different from that in Nepal. Thus it is unreasonable to assume that an identically structured and identically-appearing FM will have the same consumer demographics or values-diffusing effect in Kathmandu as in the West, nor that vendors necessarily enter FMs via the same set of motivations. Vendors may or may not be conscious of the discourse surrounding FMs in the West.

However, given the different context of food production in Nepal, and specifically the relative lack of dependency on a global-industrialized food market, it may be that if and when values related to this SM are professed by vendors, they are merely responding to perceived moral pressures to provide answers that make them appear altruistic; they may also be expressing certain values or motivations as a way of attracting a certain type of customer – that is, engaging in sustainable branding (Ottman 2011). This literature on Western FMs and values-diffusion, though potentially not descriptive of their values-diffusing potential in Nepal, will serve as a useful comparison against which Kathmandu farmers' market vendors' values and motivations can be measured.

Over the past decades a SM called the 'alternative food movement' has emerged in opposition to the global-industrial food system (Isenhour 2012;

Guthman 2004). The umbrella movement is largely ‘local,’ variously addressing production, distribution, and consumption through efforts such as urban gardens, CSA farm shares, farmers’ markets, coops, and various certification schemes including fair trade and organic (Isenhour 2012). By creating alternatives to the dominant food system, activists stand up for environmental concerns (Johnston 2008) like biodiversity loss (Isenhour 2012), greenhouse gas emissions (Heinberg and Bomford 2009), and sustainable urban development (Donald and Blay-Palmer 2006). Outside environmentalism, the movement’s discourse communicates a link between the localization of food systems and the championing of human rights, fairer trade relations, and social justice (Johnston 2008; Goodman and DuPuis 2005; Isenhour 2012).

An important component of the SM is the “re-embedding” of social and cultural values in the economy by localizing the food system (Allen 2004; Raynolds 2000; Goodman and DuPuis 2005). In the literature of “re-embedding,” the ‘global’ becomes the site of “capitalist logic,” while the ‘local’ (farmers’ markets, CSAs) becomes the site of resistance to the capitalist machine, building trust between producer and consumer (Goodman and DuPuis 2005); values embedded in the act of consumption also include concern over corporate non-transparency, and strengthened feelings of responsibility to community and environment (Guthman 2004; Delind 2002; Wright and Middendorf 2008) – these are some of the values I will look for when interviewing producers at Kathmandu’s FMs. Studies by both Brown (2002) and Smithers, Lamarche, and Joseph (2008) posit that FM vendors are motivated by perceived economic advantages in their initial decision to sell at FMs, but over the course of their time at the FM they begin to value justice for employees, environmental sustainability, trust between producer and consumer, among other values. These are the values which keep them coming back, and which are 're-embedded' into producers' mentalities. However, the premise of re-embedding cannot be neatly transposed onto Nepal's food economy; the need to *re*-localize is relatively absent in Nepal, since many local farmers already engage in direct-marketing by selling their products in similar settings, but which are not "farmers' markets" in name (Pyakuryal and Suvedi, 2000). Thus the Western FM in Nepal may not be so much a space for re-embedding values as a space for capitalist reproduction.

FMs even in the West, however, sometimes fail to fulfill the abovementioned promises of social justice and community-building, and because of these shortcomings alone, may fail to transmit values related to the SM. FMs constituted mostly of "specialty products" – by nature of their high prices – favor a narrow demographic of urban consumer elites (Slocum 2007; Donald and Blay-Palmer 2006). Thus the potential for values-communication can be limited, and access to good, environmentally friendly food is not democratized. Second, on the consumer side, shopping for the sake of fulfilling certain values is often 'identity-construction' in disguise. What is labeled as 'political consumption' – the buying of certain goods to shift demand toward particular production practices—is often more about satisfying a personal interest like the "construction of an 'ethical' identity" (Macnaughten 2002), rather than an interest in restructuring the food system or forging stronger connection with community (Isenhour 2012); in that case, markets do little to spread values, and I expect this may be the case in Kathmandu since the FMs appear to serve primarily as a social gathering place.

Early conversations with two FM organizers indicated such elite-dominance (and bideshi ("foreigner")-dominance: approximately 90%) in FM consumer attendance. In fact, the dynamics around FMs in Nepal may be heavily related to elitism and the reproduction of middle-class consumer values; from initial observation, the markets seem to be more about getting access to specialty foods than the acting out of environmentalism or social justice. Thus their ability to diffuse values to the larger food economy and relation to their 'home' SM – the alternative food movement (AFM) – is likely low.

There is also the potential for vendors to be disingenuous about their values related to the AFM, both when asked by researchers – for fear of being morally judged – and by customers, in the hope of attracting a certain demographic of consumer. 'Sustainable branding' has emerged in the past decades as a marketing process starkly different from traditional marketing and branding strategies (Ottman 2011). To satisfy the relatively new generation(s) of eco-consumers, producers and vendors within the AFM have to present their products in a way that caters to a new set of consumer desires (Ottman 2011). Facing the challenges of today's level of green consumerism requires that producers shift their "branding practices, product quality, price and promotion" (Ottman 2011, 44); 'promotion' in particular requires that producers speak (literally or in writing) about their products, their views on environmentalism and food production, and their own goals related to production differently from mainstream values such as affordability (Ottman 2011) – whether or not these espoused values are true – in order to effectively sell their product. This may be the extent of the 'values' held by producers' at Kathmandu FMs; determining the genuineness of their motivation and values will require extensive conversation.

Generally, there is no literature to date on how Western-style specialty-producer FMs do or do not spread SM values to the rest of the food economy in non-Western nations, since the appearance of these FMs in non-Western nations is a new phenomenon. Similarly, without any studies of Western FMs in non-Western nations, it's impossible to predict their future in the Nepali food economy; interviews with vendors and FM organizers will provide the best insight possible.

Methodology

Farmers' Markets Studied

The empirical and qualitative data for this paper were drawn from two case studies: the Saturday farmers' market (FM) at 1905 Restaurant in Kantipath, Kathmandu; and the Sunday FM at Yellow House Market in Sanepa, Lalitpur, Kathmandu. These two FMs were the only two currently in existence in Kathmandu at the outset of this Independent Study Project. One FM opened in Bouddha the third weekend of the Independent Study period (April 25th). Approximately four other FMs had existed in Kathmandu previously (New Orleans Café in Jhamsakhel, The Summit Hotel Organic Farmers' Market, the Trisara Farmers' Market in Lazimpath, and a fourth in Patan), but all had closed by Fall 2014.

Though 'foundership' is contested at the 1905 Restaurant FM between (1) the 'supervisor/manager' and 1905 owner, Shoba Rayamajhi, and (2) Francois Driard, an self-termed "immigrant" of French background and producer of fine

French-style “Himalayan” cheeses, all three markets (including the brand new market in Bouddha) were – at least in part – founded by Driard.

At each FM, the ‘management’ is done by the host restaurant; however, the ‘management’ plays a significantly more active role at 1905, whereas at Yellow House Driard effectively manages the FM in place of the restaurant. The role of supervisor/manager includes such duties as monthly fee collection from vendors, admittance of new vendors, and supervision of vendor/consumer welfare (Driard, 2015).

Because the Yellow House FM was created well after the establishment of the 1905 FM (2010), and because of Driard’s role as organizer at both the 1905 and Yellow House FMs, all vendors at the much smaller Yellow House FM all also attend the 1905 FM. When Driard started the Yellow House FM, he simply recruited a few producers from the 1905 FM and brought them along; thus in that sense, the Yellow House FM is an extension – though smaller in scale – of the 1905 FM. The 1905 FM has about 30 vendors (17 food vendors, 10 handicraft vendors, and 3 NGOs) and occupies a large outdoor, multi-level patio space on the restaurant’s property (see appendices 1-2). The Yellow House FM, by contrast, hosts only about 10 producers and occupies a significantly smaller patio space below the restaurant’s outdoor seating area (see appendices 3-4).

It was decided that only food vendors (produce vendors – fruits, vegetables, etc., and specialty product vendors – jams, pestos, pastas, and other such value-added products) would be interviewed, even though there was a significant number of handicraft vendors and some NGOs with booths at the 1905 FM. Driard decided the Yellow House FM would be constituted only of food vendors, since he believed the spirit of a FM was food-only (Driard, 2015).

The reasoning behind the decision to interview only food vendors was two-fold: first, literature on FMs in the United States and Europe has only studied food vendors, since FMs in the United States and Europe are generally only open to food vendors. By restricting my subjects to food vendors, my research findings at Kathmandu FMs could be placed within an existing academic context, whereas locating such academic context for handicraft and NGO ‘vendors’ at the 1905 FM would be more difficult. Secondly, the owner of 1905 Restaurant and manager/supervisor of the 1905 FM, Shoba Rayamajhi, affirmed that the handicraft vendors and NGOs have an entirely different set of motivations for FM attendance than food vendors, based on her discussions with both groups, and thus comparisons between the groups would have added variables that would have been difficult to manage (Rayamajhi, 2015).

Data Collection Methodology

The data were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews with six vendors, one vendor/FM supervisor, and one FM supervisor, for a total of eight interviews. The general aim of the interviews was to hear vendor perspectives on these recently created, flourishing Western FMs in Kathmandu; specifically, ascertaining vendors’ motivations for FM attendance, their general values related to food production, and their perceptions of the FM’s place in Kathmandu’s broader food economy. The data collected are illustrative and the sample size is small; thus further study is needed before wider inferences can be drawn.

Interviews were variously conducted at vendors’ homes, sites of work, restaurants, and cafes across Kathmandu. It was impossible to conduct interviews onsite during the FM, because vendors were too busy serving customers.

However, it often was possible to speak for a few minutes with vendors during the FM, at which point initial contact and rapport were established, and interviews were set up for a later date or contact information was traded.

Each of the interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes (the variation attributable to the varying time constraints of the interviewees), and each interview was recorded with an iPhone for later verbatim transcription. Permission for such recording was requested of and granted by the interviewee prior to the beginning of the interview; at the same time the project was explained and the Participant Informed Consent Statement discussed and signed. The point that these findings would be archived online and the possibility that they could be read by consumers was particularly emphasized to interviewees before beginning the interview, though this was so unlikely as not to have been considered a ‘risk’ per se.

The topics discussed in the interviews included: summary of the vendor’s business and the history of their involvement with the FM in Kathmandu or FMs in other nations; motivations for attending the FM in Kathmandu; values related to food production, not limited to those expressed at FMs (e.g. environmental sustainability, direct contact between producer and consumer, social justice for workers); knowledge about ‘template’ or ‘average’ FMs in the US and Europe; their consumer demographics at FMs; and their perception of FMs’ present and future/potential role in Kathmandu’s broader food economy.

<u>Obstacles</u>

One obstacle that impeded data collection was the vendors’ general busyness and lack of availability. Eight interviews were conducted in total over the span of 18 days. However, an additional four interviews (with Simran

Silpakar, specialty producer (SP) of pasta; one with the owners of Everest Honey, SP; and two produce (P) vendors) were supposed to happen during the week after the earthquake on April 25th, and three interviews were cancelled by the vendor, or the vendor failed to show up at the time of the interview, and then later refused to or was unable to reschedule. The total number interviews arranged was 15, though only eight occurred. Thus the number of vendors interviewed was low relative to the total number of vendors at the FMs –17 at the 1905 FM, several of whom also attended and entirely constituted the Yellow House FM, which has 10 total vendors.

Resources

The vendors proved to be a helpful and close-knit network of colleagues; a few of my interviews, like the one with Shoba Rayamajhi, the owner of 1905 Restaurant, came about as a referral from another vendor. The literature used to create a framework for understanding the data were articles found online related to local food and FMs.

Research Findings

Vendors' Motivations for Attending FMs

As a way to understand the social, cultural, and economic role of FMs in Kathmandu, my primary objective was to talk with vendors about their motivations for selling their products at the FM in the first place; this question was accompanied by many supporting questions about their experiences as vendors, and their perspective on the future of FMs in Kathmandu.

While much of the (semi-structured) interview was spent discussing vendors' motivations for FM attendance, I supplemented that open-ended discussion by having each vendor fill out a survey pertaining to ‘motivations’ at the end of the interview.

A survey was deemed beneficial for several reasons. In the hope of generating clear, analyzable results, a Likert-scale survey provided raw numbers, rather than subjective expressions of importance or emphasis given to a certain motivation in the semi-structured portion of the interview.

Discussing the survey with the vendors was also an opportunity to communicate the important distinction between the vendor’s general values related to food production, and their motivations for attending the FM. The differences were often stark – for example, Janet Ashwell, the pioneer of Aquaponics in Nepal, expressed that she and her husband/business partner are motivated in their desire to be producers primarily by “concern for sustainability and for environmental health,” (Ashwell, 2015). However, she said their decision to begin selling their lettuce at the FM was not made out of a concern for sustainability, directly; rather, they were motivated to sell at the FM by the free marketing and brand awareness they knew came with attendance (Ashwell, 2015). For Ashwell, then, sustainability is a general value she holds related to food production, but it would not be considered a motivation for attending the FM. In that sense, the survey provided an opportunity to discuss the nuances in my questions, which were sometimes initially difficult for vendors to understand, particularly when the Nepali-English language barrier was an issue.

The survey asked the vendors to rank, on a scale of 1 to 5, the importance of nine specific motivations in their decision to attend and sell their products at the FM. A template survey is displayed on the next page.

Name: ______________________

Date: ______________________

This survey asks about the motivations you – as a farmers' market vendor – had in your decision to begin (and continue) selling your products at the 1905 or Yellow House farmers' market. What brought you to the farmers' market? These motivations may or may not differ your broader values about food production. You will be asked to rank the importance to you of each of the following listed motivations for attendance, on a scale from 1 to 5: '1' meaning *this value is not important or relevant to my farmers' market attendance,* and '5' meaning *this value is central to my decision to attend the farmers' market.*

Improved profitability from direct-marketing (by cutting out the middle-man, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5
Producer-consumer transparency via direct marketing	1 2 3 4 5
Protesting mass ('conventional') production in terms of its economic, political, sociocultural and ethical impacts	1 2 3 4 5
Improving food access for urban consumers	1 2 3 4 5
Equifying access to food among different socioeconomic classes and/or among castes	1 2 3 4 5
The social experience of the farmers' market	1 2 3 4 5
Environmental sustainability (generally defined as "meeting the resource and service needs of current and future generations without compromising the health of the ecosystems that provide them" (Morelli, 2011)	1 2 3 4 5
Reproducing another nation's cuisine and culture (perhaps the cuisine of your native country, if relevant)	1 2 3 4 5

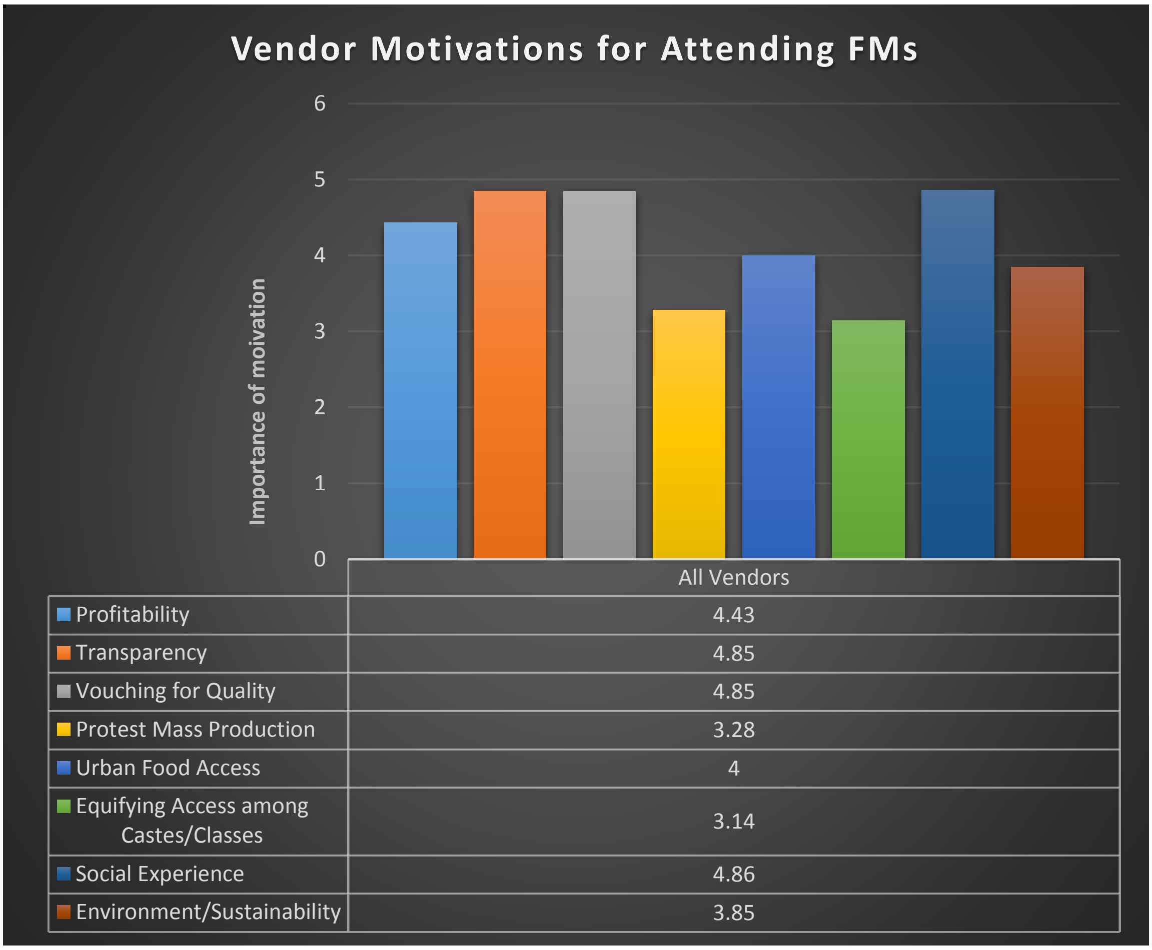
Survey Results

In total, seven producers were interviewed, five of whom self-identified as ‘expat,’ ‘immigrant,’ or ‘Westerner,’ and two of whom self-identified as ‘Nepali.’ Those in the first category differed widely in how long they’d lived in Nepal, ranging from one year to 20 years; there were also differences in the individuals’ understanding of Nepali culture and food economy, as apparent in the fact that only two of the five ‘Western’/’expat’/’immigrant’ vendors spoke more than a few words of Nepali. Because of the potential flimsiness of the Nepali/ non-Nepali category, I also made data comparisons between those vendors selling produce (P), and those vendors selling specialty products (SP), to see if their motivations different categorically.

The first chart shows simple averages of the scores all seven vendors’ gave to the listed motivations; the following two charts show comparisons between different categories of vendors. Before the charts, a table summarizing the producer demographics appears.

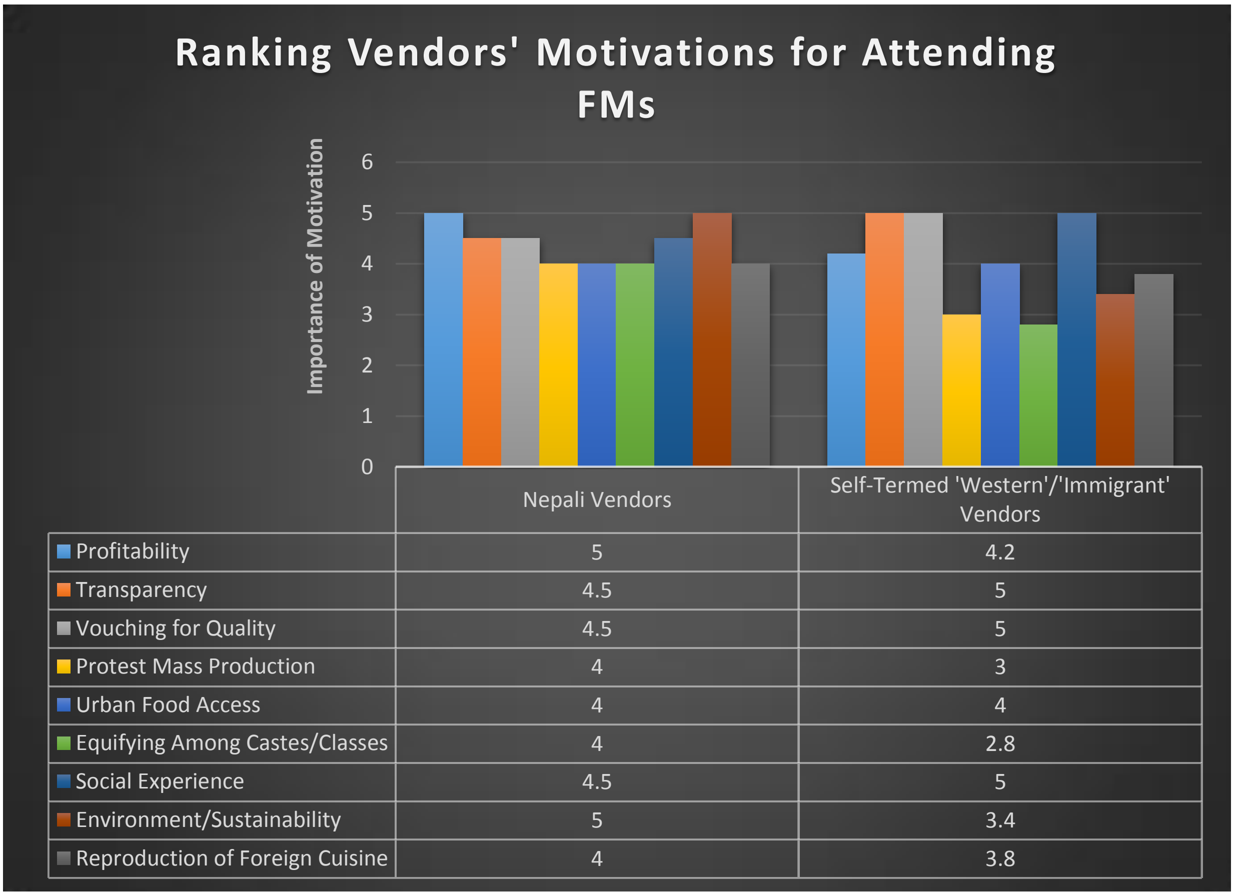
Vendor Demographics

Total number of vendors interviewed	**7**
Number of vendors identifying as ‘Westerner,’ ‘expat’ or ‘immigrant’	5
Number of vendors identifying as Nepali	2
Number of produce (P) vendors	2
Number of specialty-product (SP) vendors	5



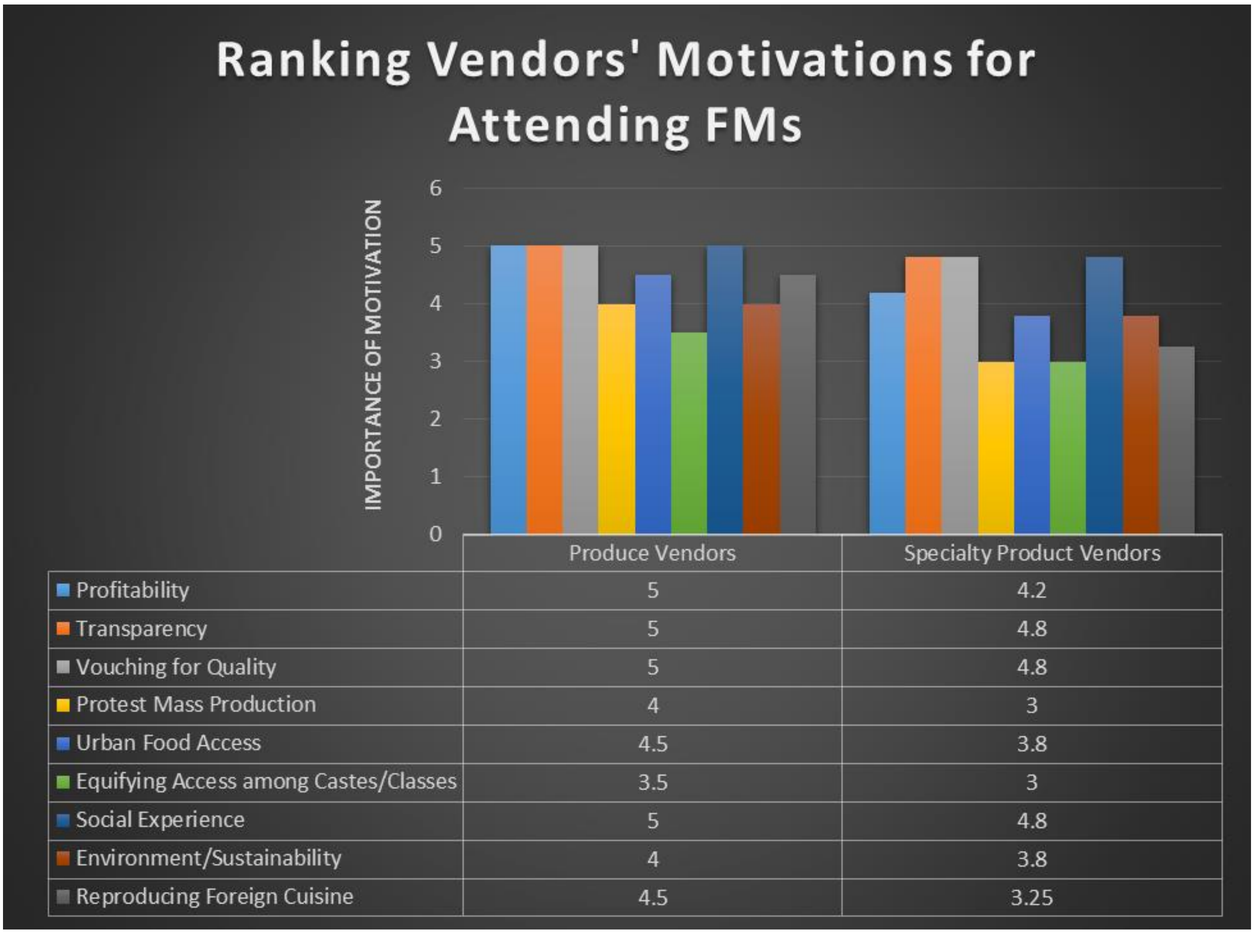
<u>All Vendors</u>

As you can see looking at the graph and the accompanying data table, the three highest-ranked motivations for FM attendance among all seven vendors are ‘Transparency between producer and consumer via direct marketing’ (4.85/5), ‘The opportunity to vouch for the quality of your product via face-to-face interaction’ (4.85/5), and ‘The social experience of the farmers’ market’ (4.86/5). The fourth highest is ‘Improved profitability by cutting out the middleman, etc.’ at 4.43/5, after which the rest of the values are ranked significantly lower.



<u>Nepali Vendors vs. Western-Immigrant-Expat (WIE) Vendors</u>

When comparing between the self-identifying ‘Nepali’ vendors and ‘Western-immigrant-expat’ vendors, a couple interesting differences in motivations emerge. First, the Nepali vendors ranked all the motivations higher, on average, than the WIE vendors. One vendor ranked each value at 5/5, explaining, as he did so, “These are all very important,” which pushed the data upward. In this case, a higher sample size would have helped clarify the motivations for the ‘average’ Nepali vendor, if such a thing exists. For WIE vendors, ‘Transparency,’ ‘Vouching for quality,’ and ‘Social experience’ were the most important motivations, with ‘Protest mass production’ and ‘Equifying access among castes/classes’ being relatively unimportant, on average.



<u>Produce (P) Vendors vs. Specialty Product (SP) Vendors</u>

When comparing produce (P) vendors to specialty-product (SP) vendors, the same four motivations ('profitability,' 'transparency,' 'vouching for quality,' and 'social experience' were ranked highest by both categories, though SP vendors ranked 'profitability' slightly lower. Ironically, the SP vendors ranked 'reproducing foreign cuisine' very low – lower in fact than the P vendors, who sell items that, because of their raw state, are fairly universal rather than specific to the cuisine of one nation – despite the fact that four SP of the five SP vendors were WIE vendors and sold products that are foreign to Nepali food culture (African donuts, Western-style sweet yogurt and milk, French cheese, and barbecue/smoked pork). Further interpretations of the data, and criticism of the survey as an accurate measuring tool for vendor motivations, can be found in the Discussion section below.

Vendors' Values Related to Food Production

During the semi-structured interview, vendors were asked to explain the general values they hold about food production. The qualitative data from this question revealed a wide range in values. The two produce (P) vendors – one, the leader of the organic produce industry in Nepal with significant international exports and international organic certifications; and the other, the pioneer of Aquaponic produce in Nepal, which by nature of its production process, meets or comes near to meeting USDA Organic standards by default – were both motivated to farm by concern for human health, food scarcity, and environmental sustainability. For them, profitability was important to the extent that they "have…famil[ies] to feed" (Lama, 2015). But one noted that "You can make more money doing other things. I am a farmer because many people in Nepal are sick, and I want to give them the organic produce they need" (Lama, 2015). Lama was also the only vendor to discuss job-creation for villagers, a value whose importance to him was apparent when he discussed the high wages he provides, the extensive vacation days he gives his workers, and the lack of need for fencing around his paradisiacal farm in Gavre, because of the strong relationship between himself and the many villagers he employs (Lama, 2015).

The P vendors, however, were the exception rather than the rule in the high value they placed on environment and health issues. Most vendors (i.e. all of the SP vendors) emphasized the production of delicious, high-quality food, and the face-to-face interaction between producer and consumer afforded by direct marketing – the latter both for the sake of re-embedding trust in the exchange of food, and for the friendships formed with consumers.

Vendors' Perceptions of Consumer Demographics

Six out of seven vendors interviewed estimated that over 95% of their consumers are "expat" – the umbrella term that, when pressed to clarify, they use to refer to: tourists, students living or studying abroad, volunteers from abroad, expatriates, traveling businesspeople, and the loose category of 'immigrants' – expats who've lived in Nepal for many years and who consider themselves immigrated Nepalis. One vendor, Matt Dawes of Milkmandu, had done his own data analysis on his FM consumers only three months prior to the date of the interview, and he reported that his consumers are 97% "non-Nepali," – a potentially problematic category which nonetheless corroborates the general impression that most FM consumers are not 'regular' Nepalis.

Prem Lama, the owner of the internationally successful Ashapuri Organic – was the exception to this rule. He estimated that while five years ago his consumers were primarily "expat," he had seen a significant change in his consumer demographic such that 50% of his customers are now Nepali, split between "upper-middle class and regular middle class" (Lama, 2015). His prices, by his own estimation, are nearly comparable to that of produce found at the public Kalamati Market – frequented by Nepali hotel owners, restaurant owners, and homeowners alike, and with concerning pesticide levels, according to recent government tests (Ministry of Agricultural Development, 2014). A head of lettuce at Lama's stand costs Rs. 75 – similar to prices at corner pasals – and thus his prices are more affordable for the average Nepali than most FM fare. Two other points of attraction to Lama's stand for Nepali consumers exist: produce draws more Nepali consumers than specialty products that are from other countries and thus unfamiliar to the world of Nepali cuisine. Secondly, the growing consciousness about food, chemicals, and health in Kathmandu – in particular the fear prompted by the government's test of produce chemical levels at the Kalamati Market – has urged a lot of Nepalis to seek out the few locations in the city where organic produce is sold (Rayamajhi, 2015; Lama, 2015), one of which is FMs.

FMs in Kathmandu's Food Economy, the Future of FMs

These statistics have important bearing on vendors' perspectives on the role of FMs in the Kathmandu food economy, and future of FMs in Kathmandu. Vendors – aside from Lama – expressed the general belief that FMs cater to expatriates, tourists, and immigrants, plus a few wealthy Nepalis who were educated abroad and have knowledge of local food dynamics in Western nations. Vendors also generally felt that FMs are at least as much about the social-gathering aspect for the expat community than for the exchange of food products. Four out of seven vendors believe FMs will stay in this exclusive niche, serving mostly expats and the highly educated Nepali elite. Three out of seven believe Nepalis will increasingly attend Western FMs because of a combination of the desire to emulate Western culture, and growing interest in knowing where food comes from, how it's produced, and who produces it. Two vendors and Shoba Rayamajhi – the owner of 1905 Restaurant and the supervisor/manager of the FM – expressed the conviction that such growth in food-health consciousness will be expressed in the growth of different venues, such as small organic corner shops, rather than FMs. Rayamajhi**,** however, believed FMs will continue and flourish – she has requests to aid in the construction of several new FMs across the city –

because of the important social role they play in the lives of expats (Rayamajhi, 2015).

Discussion/Analysis

Survey Results Analysis

The most important conclusion to draw is that among vendors motivations for attendance varied significantly, though all vendors were united in ranking three different motivations highly: ‘transparency between producer and consumer via direct marketing,’ ‘the opportunity to vouch for the quality of the product,’ and ‘the social experience of the farmers’ market’. Several vendors brought up, before I had mentioned it, the importance of ‘transparency between producer and consumer’ and ‘the opportunity to vouch for the quality of the product.’ Brian Swiger (2015), of Flat Iron Grill, encapsulated the importance, for many vendors, of these two related motivating factors:

> “Getting the feedback is almost more beneficial than the little bit of extra money I’d be able to make selling at a farmers’ market rather than retail. At the farmers’ market, [by] talking to customers, I get the chance to improve my product, which ultimately only generates more profit in the long run. It’s the customer feedback that ends up making me better off.”

Matt Dawes (2015) of Milkmandu also explained, somewhat similarly, during the semi-structured portion of the interview, his motivations for attending the FM:

> “It’s a sinister motivation, but it is money hands down. The farmers’ market is my slowest day. It’s the day I make the least amount, but there is added value to it, because I get to interact with my customers and tell them about my company. I am not just here to be a good person and give

> people milk and we're all singing kumbayah while we're all drinking it. No. there needs to be a reward. It's not upfront financially…But I get to talk to the customers, and… and they become long-term customers, and then they tell their friends."

From this discussion of 'customer feedback' mentioned independently by both Swiger and Dawes, it is reasonable to surmise that, when reading the survey questions, both interpreted "transparency between producer and consumer" and "opportunity to vouch for the quality of your product" as means toward the larger end of"increased profitability" (another listed motivation in the survey). However, neither ranked "increased profitability" as 5/5 in importance, while the other two values did get 5/5, perhaps because the individuals felt morally pressured into ranking "profitability" lower (since other, more altruistic motivations such as "environmental sustainability" appeared below), or because they interpreted the "transparency" and "vouching" – as the real motivating factors at work in the equation, because they are prerequisite occurrences before "increased profitability" can be achieved.

This discussion of the customer feedback-profitability link mentioned by two of the vendors highlights two important points which have bearing on the results of the other vendors' responses to the survey. First, the three motivations "profitability," "transparency," and "vouching for quality" were all ranked in the top four motivations for FM attendance for the all-vendors average and thus should be seen as primary motivating factors. When taking into consideration the discussions that accompanied the survey-taking, my impression was that, profitability aside, the FM appeals to vendors as a site for selling their products because the vendors value customer interaction, and the related opportunities to explain the worth of their product, make the consumer comfortable with and knowledgeable about their purchase, and enjoy the relationships built both among vendors and between vendor and consumer. It should also be noted, in relation to these three motivations ('profitability,' 'vouching,' and 'transparency') that the degree to which several vendors interpreted these three motivations as related and/or conceptually overlapping indicates a flaw in the way the survey was written, and a point upon which the data may be confused or confounded.

One other point of note is that while many vendors mentioned the FM as an opportunity for increasing brand awareness, none of the vendors seemed to be advertising their 'values' or 'motivations' for only the sake of sustainable branding, as I'd hypothesized some might. While a few vendors had significant branding – graphics, social media presence, a website, etc. – most had none at all, and all seemed content to present themselves to consumers at face-value. The two most profit-oriented vendors, for example – based on my own observations – talked up the quality of their product, but made no false claims about their commitment to the environment, social justice, or any other hot-topic issues that might catch the ear of a certain type of consumer.

<u>Values vs. Motivations</u>

Another important point to note when drawing conclusions from the survey is that values related to food production – as often were discussed simultaneously with the survey's questions about 'motivations for attendance,' varied widely among vendors; some were entirely focused on sustainability in their practices of production (and sometimes distribution), while others primarily focused on equifying access to food among socioeconomic classes and/or castes; others still were concerned only with profitability.

These values were often quite different than vendors' motivations for attending the FM. For example, Matt Dawes, the owner and founder of Milkmandu, expressed a deep interest in equifying access to his (fairly expensive) healthy, toxin-free milk among Nepalis and expatriates in Kathmandu; but his tactic for achieving this goal of equified access involves finding other venues at which to sell his milk that are more popular shopping destinations for Nepalis. The expression of that value was not possible at the 1905 FM because, according to his own data, 97% of his customers at the FM are expatriates, immigrants, or tourists (Dawes, 2015). Thus he ranked the importance that listed motivation as 1/5 in the survey. Because of that difference in consumer demographics at the different venues, his values related to food production did not align with his motivations for attending the FM. His motivations, instead, were primarily related to brand awareness, and long-term profitability visa vie that brand awareness (Dawes, 2015).

Shortcomings of the Survey

The most obvious issue with the survey data is the small sample size. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen obstacles near the end of the research period, four scheduled interviews were cancelled. Three more interviews had been cancelled by vendors during the first two weeks, and they were unable to reschedule. Of the 17 food vendors at the 1905 FM (bearing in mind that all Yellow House vendors also attend the 1905 FM), 15 interviews with vendors were scheduled, but only seven completed. Because of the low sample size, particularly in the categories of 'produce vendors' (2) and 'Nepali vendors' (2), care should be taken when drawing inferences from this data; further study is needed in which vendor participation is higher to produce more representative results.

One significant problem with the survey was that some vendors, when filling out the survey, often circled a number that seemed to be contradictory to the answers they'd given in the preceding semi-structured discussion. It appeared that the written survey made the vendors feel 'moralized,' and perhaps pressured to answer in a certain way (e.g. ranking environmental sustainability highly on the survey even though they'd expressed disinterest when I'd asked about it previously in the interview). The most common 'mis-answer' was related to profitability. Every single consumer mentioned, at some point during the course of the semi-structured interview, that profitability was their primary motivation for attending the FM; but profitability was, on average, ranked only fourth-highest in the survey results. This discrepancy made it seem that the vendors wanted to be perceived as less individualistic and/or capitalistic than they were, and more altruistic. That incongruity between the importance of certain motivations as *discussed* and as *given a numerical rank in the survey* may have skewed the data for several motivations. However, since (beside the responses for 'increased profitability') it was a minority of vendors who answered in this seemingly contradictory way, the data should still fairly accurately reflect their motivations for FM attendance.

On the whole, vendors expressed less interest in issues of environmental sustainability, relocalizing, and other such traditional FM values/motivations than was expected. While there were certainly exceptions – particularly both P vendors: Janet Ashwell (Aquaponics) and Prem Lama (Ashapuri Organic) – most vendors had not entered the FM with a vested interest in the traditional suite of values, outside of some substantial interest in transparency between producer and consumer, nor had they developed those values by attending the FM for a period of time. Literature on FMs in the US and Europe suggests that initially, vendors enter FMs because of "perceived economic benefits," but eventually recognize the value of "collaboration and healthy competition with fellow vendors" (Smithers, 2008) plus values like producer-consumer trust, environmental conservation, the creation of jobs, and "the development of entrepreneurial skills" for youth (Brown 2002). This did not prove to be the case with the vendors I interviewed, who entered motivated by "perceived economic benefits" but did not cultivate appreciate for other values. This suggests a fundamental difference in the ideological fabric of Western FMs *in situ* – in the United States and Europe – and those in Kathmandu. While the two P vendors interviewed and the FM organizer at 1905 were primarily motivated by a desire to make food production more sustainable and to diffuse that value among producers and consumers, all other vendors were interested primarily in profitability and the social landscape of the FM. Thus, for now, Kathmandu FMs are – at best – sites at which environmental and other such values can sometimes be distributed, based on which stalls the consumer attends and what company each vendor keeps. Primarily, FMs in Kathmandu should be seen as sites of social gathering, and capitalist and cultural reproduction.

Conclusion

More study is needed to verify the conclusions drawn above, but from this initial study it seems clear that while there is evident potential for FMs in

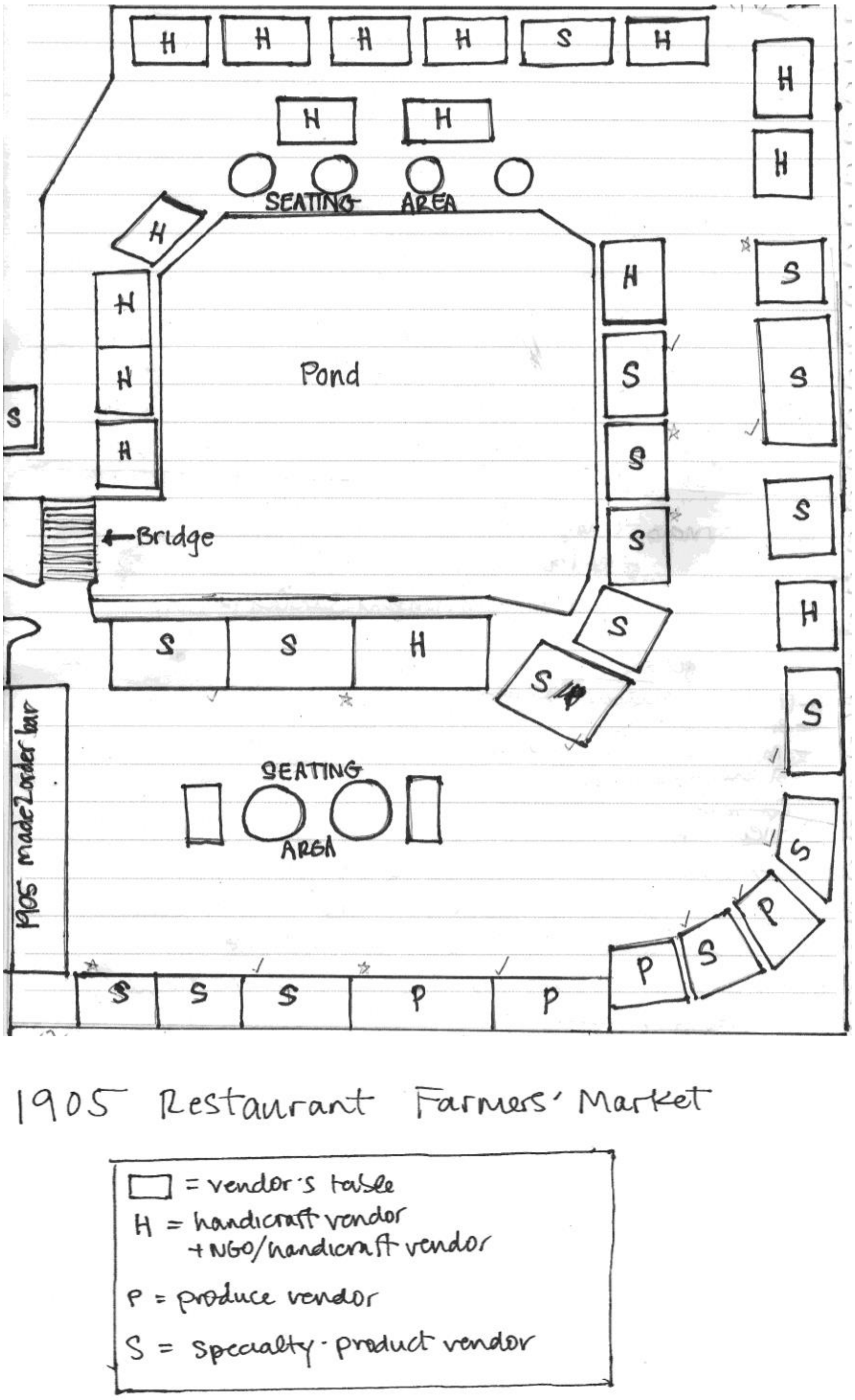
Kathmandu to become sites of values-diffusion and beacons of sustainability and relocalization, as of now they are more social watering holes than anything else. The vendors interviewed displayed a wide range of motivations for FM attendance, which sometimes did and sometimes did not overlap with their values related to food production. Some vendors expressed the belief that FMs will become more accessible to average Nepalis in the future, and will thus become better vehicles for the promotion of food and health consciousness; other vendors suggested FMs will stay somewhat exclusive hang-out sites for expats. In terms of engaging with the alternative food movement (AFM) of which FMs are a part in the US and Europe, it may be that – as Shoba Rayamajhi**,** the owner of 1905 Restaurant and FM supervisor suggested – corner organic stores will be a more effective means of 'spreading' good food and local values to the Nepali population. Regardless, FMs have a bright future in Kathmandu: perhaps as sites of true value-diffusion, but certainly, at least, as playgrounds for the expats and the social elite.

Glossary of Terms

Farmers' market – A Western site of food exchange in local (parameters vary) farmers gather in a single space to provide a market-style shopping experience for consumers.
Direct market/direct marketing – Type of exchange in which the producer or vendor interacts directly with the consumer, rather than the consumer receiving products from one or more middlemen.
Producer – Person who grows food. If this person sells that food, she is both a producer and a vendor.
Vendor – Person selling products at a farmers' market. Can be a producer – who actually grew the products being sold – or someone who contributed to a value-added process, such as selling jams he or she made from fruit purchased from another individual.
Pasal – (A Nepali word for a small store/stall, often wedged between other similar stores on a roadside, usually with a garage door that comes down to protect the store at night)
Alternative food movement – social movement started in the United States with a central focus on relocalizing food economies through such mediums as CSAs, farmers' markets, coops, and other direct markets.
Aquaponics – A sustainable, chemical-free method of growing food that employs fish, fish feces, water, and the plants being grown, in a closed-circuit. Takes place indoors, usually in a greenhouse.
Specialty product – value added item that tends to be of high quality and thus somewhat expensive. Examples include jams, pestos, sauces, fine cheeses, etc.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Map of 1905 FM (Saturday)



Appendix 2: Photos of 1905 FM (Saturday)

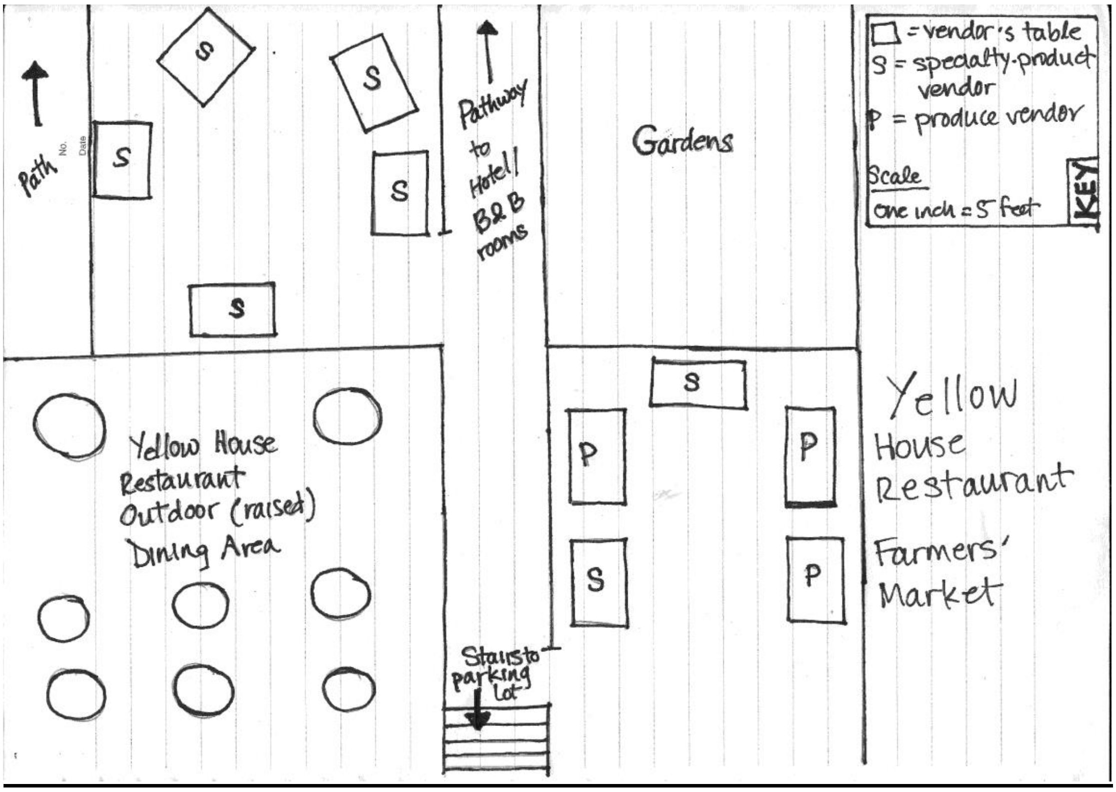
An aerial view of the 1905 FM on a busy Saturday morning.

A specialty producer arranges his cheese into a careful presentation.

From left to right: Honey producers, Salsa producers. (Both considered ‘specialty producers,’ or SPs.)

The view when crossing the entry boardwalk into the 1905 FM. A staircase ahead leads down to the right, where one enters the market area.

Appendix 3: Map of Yellow House FM (Sunday)



Appendix 4: Photos of Yellow House FM (Sunday)

A view of the grassy area below the outdoor dining room, where on Sundays, a dozen vendors set up their stalls.

Himalayan French Cheese producer Francois Driard pores over charcuterie and cheese with a consumer.

Vienna Bakery’s stall at the Yellow House FM on an early Sunday morning.

Appendix 5: Table of Vendor Survey Data

Importance of each motivation was ranked on a 1-5 scale; 1 being not important, 5 being extremely important in motivating the vendor to attend the farmers' market.

	Huguette Npudi	Francois Driard	Matt Dawes	Brian Swiger	Das Dharma	Janet Ashwell	Prem Lama
Improved profitability from direct-marketing (by cutting out the middle-man, etc.)	4	5	4	3	5	5	5
Producer-consumer transparency via direct marketing	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
Opportunity to 'vouch' for the quality of your product via face-to-face interaction	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
Protesting mass ('conventional') production in terms of its economic, political, social, cultural and ethical impacts	4	3	3	2	3	3	5
Improving food access for urban consumers	5	5	2	4	3	4	5
Equifying access to food among different socioeconomic classes, and/or among castes	5	2	1	4	3	2	5
The social experience of the farmers' market	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
Environmental sustainability (generally defined as "meeting the resource and service needs of current and future generations without compromising the health of the ecosystems that provide them" (Morelli, 2011)	4	3	4	3	5	3	5
Reproducing another nation's cuisine and culture (perhaps the cuisine of your native country, if relevant)	5	5	1	4	3	4	5

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