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Public Markets: An Ecological Perspective on Sustainability as a Megatrend

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| Abstract: | <p>Although today's public markets echo ancient market forms, they incorporate many original aspects which merit scrutiny because: 1) they are connected to a dominant neo-liberal market functioning and structures; and 2) they illuminate important tensions that question how sustainability is practicable at a macro level. Taking an ecological perspective, we show that public markets bring certain benefits in relation to sustainability. Significantly, however, we illustrate how these perceived benefits are underpinned by three compromises or "trade-offs" that public markets also invoke and that operate at inter-social, inter-nation, and inter-gender levels. We argue that what may look sustainable on a local level can raise challenges to macro sustainability more broadly conceived. Our contribution is twofold. First, we offer an updated, comprehensive definition of public markets and discuss to what extent they may represent a megatrend. Second, we contribute to the literature on sustainability by conceptualizing the notion of ecological sustainability, which suggests that an overarching analysis of sustainability reveals possible internal trade-offs between its economic, social, environmental, and ethical constituents, which the case of public markets helps highlight.</p> |
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4 Bdelycleon: "...If someone buys perch and doesn't want sprats, straight away the man
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6 selling sprats nearby says: 'This man seems to be buying his fish like a would-be dictator.'
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9 Or if he asks for a free onion to season his sardines a bit, the woman selling vegetables
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11 gives him a sidelong glance with one eye and says: 'Tell me, are you asking for an onion
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13 because you hope to be dictator? Or do you think Athens owes you a tribute of
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15 seasonings?'"

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19 - Aristophanes (422 BCE / 1983, p. 51)
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24 If our agent goes empty-handed, and takes with him nothing of which those from whom
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26 he is to get what we want are in need, he will return empty-handed... So we must produce
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28 at home not only enough for our own needs but also enough goods of the right kind for
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30 the foreigners who supply us ... which means an increase in the number of farmers and
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32 other workers in our state.
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36 - Plato (ca. 380 BCE / 2007, p. 57-58)
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40 In Aristophanes' *Wasps*, Bdelycleon uses the hazards of shopping for social and political
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42 accusations, creatively evoking the thrills and dramas involved during market exchanges in the
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44 agora, or public market, in Classical Athens (Davidson 1993; MacDowell 1995). In the *Knights*,
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46 the playwright condemns the vulgarity of the market by deeming the sausage-seller in the drama,
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48 "a cheeky rascal from the Agora" (Ehrenberg 1962). But, there was more than just the brisk and
49
50 noisy life of bazaars that took place in the Agora, and agorae. In ancient Greece the agora was in
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52 fact a marketplace in a town, where people gathered, and where social interactions and political
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54 discourses took place, even while it inspired politicians to strategize international trade and
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3 philosophers to ponder the meaning of justice (Santirocco 2008; Spitzer and Baum 1995;
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5 Thompson 1954; Thompson and Wycherley 1972).
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8 The above opening vignettes demonstrate that discussion of the local/global dimension of
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10 markets as well as philosophical interest in the impact of market exchange systems on societal
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12 wellbeing have ancient roots (Shaw 1995). Since then, two main transformations have fueled
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14 these debates further: 1) the unprecedented needs about the scale of food provision due to the
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16 booming of the world population; and 2) increased reflexivity about a new “natural resource
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18 economics” (Neher 1990) due to chronic exploitation of natural resources. As a result of these
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20 and many more transformations, attention on sustainability has increased and, as this special
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22 issue confirms, sustainability is now ready to be regarded as a potential megatrend.
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27 This paper focuses on a specific form of agora, that of public markets, read in the light of
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29 sustainability. Notably, we use the metaphor of the agora more restrictively than general
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31 macromarketing theory. From a macromarketing perspective the agora is used allegorically to
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33 encourage a focus that goes beyond the market *per se* to a market-society dyad (Hunt 1981).
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35 Mittelstaedt, Kilbourne, and Mittelstaedt (2006) suggest that macromarketing as a discipline is
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37 primarily a form of “agorology”, that is, the study of agorae as intertwined marketing and social
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39 systems. They also document three main characteristics of the agora: 1) complexity; 2)
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41 heterogeneity; and, 3) pervasiveness of economic behaviors on social well-being. As such,
42
43 macromarketing addresses the agora as *any* exchange and social system whereas we address it as
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45 a *specific* exchange and social system, that of contemporary public markets.
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50 Traditionally defined as “a municipally owned and operated building in which vendors
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52 sell fresh food from open stalls” (Spitzer and Baum 1995, p. 1), we contrast this with a more
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54 contemporary definition that reflects better how public markets are currently evolving. In line
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3 with Humphreys' (2010) conceptualization of "megamarketing" and the process of social
4 creation of markets, we show how today's public markets are moving from a countercultural
5 position (i.e., contesting the dominant exchange systems; Kilbourne and Carlson 2008) to a more
6 mainstream acceptance whereby capitalist critique and consumerism coexist As public markets
7 evolve from alternative to complementary market systems, they not only foreground different
8 ideologies and means for produce distribution, but also influence the way dominant market
9 systems operate. For example, an increasing number of restaurants, street merchants, and even
10 supermarket chains have taken inspiration from public markets, which therefore become a
11 reference point for economic agents that do not share public markets' very ideology.
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25 In doing so, contemporary public markets enter the lively discussion on sustainability as a
26 megatrend (Kilbourne, McDonagh and Prothero 1997). Too often addressed as a marginal,
27 neglected phenomenon in developed nations, we argue that today public markets constitute not
28 only a vital and fast increasing distribution system, but also an already relevant complement to
29 dominant distribution chains and e-commerce. Lack of systematic and comparable data on public
30 markets does not really allow us to accurately assess the overall scale of this phenomenon. Yet,
31 the USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service 2012) reported that
32 in 2012 7,864 farmers markets were already listed in USDA's National Farmers Market
33 Directory, which represents a 9.6% increase from 2011 and a 348% increase from 1994, the year
34 of the first census (Figure 1). In terms of economic relevance, within the precincts of the U.S.,
35 "more than 100,000 farms sell food directly to local consumers, according to an analysis by the
36 Cambridge, Mass.-based Union of Concerned Scientists, pumping \$1.2 billion into local
37 economies" and in the summer of 2010 "Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack asked Congress to
38 draft legislation that would help create at least 100,000 new farmers (Kayal 2011).
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[Insert Figure 1 about here]

In relation to Europe, the European Union (2004) confirms priority for rethinking critically the way food is produced, distributed, and eventually consumed. Despite not being focused on public markets alone, in 2004 the EU allocated a €685 million budget for the period 2002-2006 for exploring and proposing new “food and feed standards”, thus confirming interest for food production and provision also at an European level. In Italy, one of the European contexts we subsequently address, recent research shows that around 21 million Italians—that is, one third of the total population—shopped at public markets in 2012 (www.campagnamica.it). This datum has tripled in five years. Among these shoppers, 7 millions of them are regular clients of public markets and express preference for fresh produce, cured meats, wine, and baked products. Interestingly, the presence of public markets concerns the whole national territory, since 4,116 public markets (49.3%) are spread in the North of Italy—the richest area—and some more 4,224 markets are evenly scattered in the Center and the South. With reference to Spain, and Barcelona more specifically, estimates about the 2010 turnover of the public markets’ system (“Mercats Municipals”) range between €950 million and €1.100 million. Such a turnover represents a 30-35% market share of the fresh food market (Mercats de Barcelona 2009). In addition, 60% of consumers shopping at Barcelona public markets use modern distributions chains only to shop for what is not available at public markets, and thus show clear preference for this market system. In the UK many market towns have suffered declining fortunes in recent years and many have lost their markets altogether because of the competition from multinationals and the general centralization of services. Following their success in the U.S., farmers markets in the UK have also burgeoned over the last 15 years. It is estimated that there are now over 800 farmers markets with sales of £250 million (Farmers Guardian 2010). However,

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3 their increasing popularity is not only restricted to smaller towns; there has been a major growth
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5 of these markets in major cities as well.
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8 The contributions of our paper are twofold. First, with reference to the public markets
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10 literature, we investigate public markets *per se* and reveal internal tensions and contradictions.
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12 Then, we discuss the potential impact of public markets on sustainability. We adopt an
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14 ecological perspective, that is, a perspective assuming the interconnectedness and the equality
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16 between human beings and their environment (Germain and Gitterman 1995; Johnson and
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18 Rhodes 2005). The common definition of ecology as a branch of biology is the study of basic
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20 habitats—such as atmosphere and fresh water—that define the ecosystems in which our quest for
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22 happiness through consumption takes place (Fuller 1999). However, in the current study, we also
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24 use the word ecology as metaphorical term developed in social science (Germain and Gitterman
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26 1995) where the environment—not only natural but also social—is conceptualized as “more than
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28 a static setting” for people’s lives. The relationship of the two is considered a “unitary system
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30 within a particular cultural and historic context” that influences each other continuously
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32 (Germain and Gitterman 1995, p. 816). From this angle, we show that public markets’ positive
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34 micro effects may generate negative macro effects, thus making their overall contribution to
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36 sustainability less predictable. We identify three main trade-offs, namely inter-social, inter-
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38 nation, and inter-gender trade-offs. Second, with reference to the sustainability literature, we use
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40 the case of public markets to question to what extent sustainability might be sustainable and thus
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42 be a megatrend. By conceptualizing the notion of ecological sustainability, we show that
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44 sustainability itself encompasses possible internal trade-offs between its economic, social,
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46 environmental, and ethical constituents. Such evidence invites caution in presenting
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48 sustainability as an undisputable megatrend.
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In order to develop these issues the paper is divided into three main parts. First, we describe a brief history of public markets, present some ambivalent stories from five countries, and derive a broad characterization of contemporary public markets. Second, grounded on the public markets literature, as well as the empirical cases formerly presented, we explore the contributions that public markets make to a sustainable way of life (Ekins 2000), assessing sustainability across four key dimensions: economic, social, environmental and ethical. We complement this analysis with the identification of three main trade-offs reducing the positive impact of public markets on sustainability. Finally, we define ecological sustainability and discuss its implications from a megatrend perspective.

A Short History of Public Markets

In the Beginning

It is assumed that public markets were not Western in origin but were invented in the East (Redfield 1986). They existed in the Fertile Crescents of Mesopotamia, where agrarian communities discovered efficiency in market exchange, even before the invention of coinage. By the early part of the second millennium BCE, Assyrians migrated and built trading colonies in various parts of Anatolia, such as Kültepe, “the Ash Hill” in Turkish, in the ancient city of Kanesh. The excavations uncovered that part of the city called *karum* functioned as a kind of bazaar (Larsen 2008). In the aforementioned agora in ancient Greek world, as in today’s public markets (Spitzer and Baum 1995, p. 23), various forms of retail businesses existed, ranging from open-air booths (*skenai*), light wooden structures, and permanent shops or small factories (*ergasteria*) built of stone and brick (Thompson and Wycherley 1972). Imperial Romans located marketplaces around *fora* (Dixon 1995), the public spaces located at the center of Roman cities.

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3 Artworks and literature are additional sources of information. Fresco paintings from
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5 Pompeii show that venues of entertainments, such as amphitheaters and circus games, provided a
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7 marketplace for souvenir items (Jacobelli 2003). The marketplace was a meeting place for many
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9 during medieval times when the church often exercised its power to ensure the safety of visitors
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11 to the trading area (Hollander 2002). The romantic comedies of Shakespeare and Rabelais evoke
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13 the marketplace as *teatro del mondo*, “theater of the world,” where the cacophony of market
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15 exchanges contribute to a carnivalesque atmosphere; as well as the inversion of classes and roles
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17 that took place among and between sellers and buyers from divergent social strata. In Islamic
18
19 Persia, Shahs created bazaars around the *maidan*, the open space used for sports and other
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21 happenings. In addition, human dramas stemming from the market exchange in the souk were
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23 used as the leitmotif of parables in Baghdad and elsewhere. In the U.S., the first public market
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25 was founded in Boston in 1634, while the oldest surviving public market is that in the French
26
27 Quarter of New Orleans, which was founded in 1791 (Spitzer and Baum 1995) following the
28
29 1776 declaration of independence. By the beginning of the 19th century, ordinances were issued
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31 for protecting both vendors and consumers in public markets in New York (Tangires 2003). Thus
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33 the spatiotemporal ubiquity and the omnipresence of public markets in urban communities are
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35 evident.
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43 *Decline of Local Economies*

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45 Cities and rural areas were intrinsically linked: the urban food system was largely dependent on
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47 the production of farmers in the surrounding countryside. Every city had a “Market Street,”
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49 exemplified by the one in Philadelphia, where growers sold food out of wagons or trucks.
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52 Artworks and photos from the 19th century and first half of the 20th century depict massive
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54 public markets, street vendors, and entertainers teeming with customers and farmers (Tangires
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2003). Most cities also had a network of market gardens. Since World War II, a number of economic, social, and geographic forces have weakened the connection between cities and the countryside (Spitzer and Baum 1995). First, the emphasis on the supply chain, the rise of supermarkets, long-distance shipping, large-scale distribution systems, and big agribusiness corporations, all of which found opportunities in the expansion of market, fostered nationalization and internationalization of the food system (Lyson 2007). Changes in the marketing system driven by technological advancement shifted, or rather facilitated, the contemporary domination of modern distribution chains and e-commerce, which accompany and endorse a consumerist consumption ideology (Kilbourne, McDonagh, and Prothero 1997). Geographic expansions and effective marketing communication efforts further accelerated the quest for increased material well-being. Marketers' pursuit in the name of efficiency, together with consumers' desire for convenience, wider choices and lower prices, continued to diminish local economies until the rise of sustainability in public discourse. Second, the widespread suburbanization of cities and an increasing dependence on automobiles (Beltzer and Autler 2002) also affected the decline of local economies. Third, construction of a long-distance highway system has helped distribute food efficiently throughout the country as well as further promoted suburban sprawl. These trends resulted in the dismantling of linkages between cities and rural areas, transforming the nation's social geography and separating people by ethnicity and class (Szasz 2007).

Re-emergence of Public Markets: The Myth of Civic Agriculture and Just Sustainability

Despite the dominance of highly concentrated corporate interests (Alkon 2008; Hinrichs 2000), over the last three decades or so, the myth of civic agriculture and just sustainability has accompanied the re-emergence of public markets globally. Lyson (2007) contends that the

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2
3 paradigm of civic agriculture portends the possibility of using the agriculture and food system to
4 reconnect to local place and civic life, and to rebuild food systems locally. On a U.S. basis, Press
5 and Arnould (2011) address such a myth as the “American pastoralist ideology”. They
6
7 demonstrate that American pastoralism relies on five key consumer assumptions: 1) local food is
8 healthier; 2) systems of local food production and distribution help people feel part of a
9
10 community; 3) local systems combine natural enchantment with the benefits of a consumer
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12 society; 4) local food is safer since consumers can control local producers more directly; and, 5)
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14 local systems are associated with moral superiority.
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22 If the role played by the demand side in the recent spreading of public markets is thus
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24 unquestionable (Alkon 2008; Lyson 2007; Euromonitor International 2013; Prothero, McDonagh
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26 and Dobscha 2010; Hughner, et al. 2007; Szasz 2007), this phenomenon has been also (and,
27
28 indeed, earlier) supported at an institutional macro level. With reference to the U.S., the
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30 renaissance was due to the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976 (Gillespie et al.
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32 2007). Second, the USDA planned to develop farmers markets in order to contrast the prolonged
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34 crisis affecting the U.S. farm economy (Press and Arnould 2011; Winne 2008). Third, in light of
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36 the fact that less than three percent of farmers made direct sales to consumers, the U.S. Congress
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38 have supported a farmers market promotion program since 2002. Last, some multinationals are
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40 also mythologizing food and its production. On February 2, 2013, Dodge Ram Trucks, part of
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42 the Chrysler Group, ran a 2-minute advertisement at the U.S. Super Bowl entitled “God Made a
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44 Farmer”. This commercial, with a nostalgic Paul Harvey voiceover, is a patriotic glorification of
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46 foundational American values, such as rugged individualism, hard work, traditional family, and
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48 humility, symbolized by the farmer, a caretaker of God’s planned paradise America. On a more
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50 local scale, since 2011 the O’Hare International Airport in Chicago has opened its Urban
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3 Garden—a vegetable garden made of “aeroponic” towers located between the airport’s
4 terminals—that provides fresh food for airport restaurants and travelers. In relation to Europe,
5 we can see similar patterns occurring. Apart from legal measures and public bodies’ plans to
6 sustain the local farm economy, various cultural forces have brought about increased interest in
7 quality food. As Euromonitor International (2013) notes, the success of TV shows celebrating
8 food (e.g., “Masterchef” and its various adaptations) accounts for the widespread promotion of
9 food discourses today.
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20 Therefore, both consumers involved in the governance of the “agrifood system”
21 (Charlebois and Labrecque 2009) and authoritative institutions, such as super-national
22 organizations and national governmental agencies, have diffused a representation of public
23 markets as a juncture of ecological sustainability and social justice, or “just sustainability”
24 (Alkon 2008) where markets should foster values for common good (Agyeman 2005). This
25 translates into a mythicized “local love” (Euromonitor International 2013), a fast diffusing
26 sensitivity for what is produced locally, as well as an antidote against global consumer culture.
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37 Looking at public markets from a critical perspective, the scenario appears more
38 contradictory and nuanced than passionate consumers usually portray. Needless to say, public
39 markets can definitely engender positive effects. They offer a convenient form of retailing, in
40 particular when they help cope with cities’ “food deserts;” they are also associated with an
41 authenticity that conveys sincerity and emotion in food production, distribution, and preparation;
42 and, additionally, they boost local economy and stimulate placemaking (Young et al. 2012).
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51 Moreover, Kayal (2011) notes that thinking how food production is later distributed should not
52 be an *a posteriori* decision. Instead, considering ways to make food distribution systems
53 sustainable should be the first occupation of policy makers since such systems can stimulate the
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3 entry of new food producers, attracted by fairer remuneration for their work and investments. At
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5 the same time, public markets have also been unjustly accused of: targeting mostly upper classes;
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7 being a utopian market system because they cannot provide a general alternative to the dominant
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9 food production and provision system; and, being an expression of a left-wing part of the
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11 population (Johnston, Biro, and Mackendrick 2009; Press and Arnould 2011). Critics of public
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13 markets argue that, in the process of institutionalization, they have lost their original
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15 countercultural ethos without providing a sustainable alternative to the system they aimed at
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17 subverting. The second part of the paper discusses extensively the positive and negative effects
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19 of public markets on sustainability. Before that, we present empirical cases of public markets
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21 from five countries that help illustrate the recurrent traits of contemporary public markets and
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23 how public markets are defined.
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29 [Insert Table 1 about here]
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32 *Today's Public Markets Illustrated*
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34 Our discussion about public markets comes from multiple sources, including academic literature
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36 on sustainability, public reports, press articles, and actual examples. We use examples from
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38 Western industrial societies since they are the progenitors of dominant retailing systems
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40 (Kilbourne and Carlson 2008). These cases are selected in line with established sampling criteria
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42 for qualitative research, and reflect both opportunistic and theoretical sampling logics (Mayan
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44 2009; Miles and Huberman 1984). We include examples we could observe in person.
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46 Observation was documented by means of extensive photo-collection and field notes we shared
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48 within our research team, and complemented by informal conversations with stall owners and
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50 managers of these public markets. Table 1 offers an illustration of the variety and difference
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52 across the cases reported hereafter, cases that differ primarily in terms of historicity,
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3 geographical localization, size, nature of products, connected activities, and social
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5 inclusion/exclusion.
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8 Case 1: Union Square Greenmarket, New York, U.S. Moving from the simple assumption
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10 that without people urban areas become segregated, Union Square Greenmarket
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12 (www.grownyc.org/unionsquaregreenmarket) originates from the need to revitalize the
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14 neighborhood in which the market operates. Union Square Greenmarket exemplifies a public
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16 space that replaced a formerly unsafe place with the more positive engagements of the
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18 marketplace. By the middle of the 1970s, the Square was infested with drug dealing and
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20 prostitution (Spitzer and Baum 1995). In 1976, Union Square Greenmarket began with 12
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22 farmers (GrowNYC 2011a). The dubious activities disappeared as people started to congregate
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24 and the city renovated the park in the square. By 2011, the number of vendors has increased to
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26 about 140 in peak season, operating four days a week, attracting some 60,000 people who enjoy
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28 interacting with farmers, other shoppers, and chefs at cooking demonstrations. At the market,
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30 staff of the local ecology center picks up food scraps for composting and sells red worms,
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32 GrowNYC collects unwanted clothing and textiles as part of Textile Recycling Program, and
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34 Greenmarket Education Station hosts school tours, cooking demonstrations and tasting. As such,
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36 the Union Square Greenmarket also represents a space where non-commercial organizations can
37
38 connect. Administered by GrowNYC, formerly the Council on the Environment of NYC, the
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40 “Greenmarket program” is now the largest network of outdoor public markets in the U.S. with 53
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42 public markets and 235 participating family farmers. It helps preserve 30,000 acres of working
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44 farmland in the region and provides New Yorkers with food that is 100% farmer grown,
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46 produced, caught or foraged.
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3 Case 2: East New York Farmers Market, Brooklyn, New York, U.S. Initiated by the Pratt
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5 Center for Community Development in 1995, East New York Farmers (ENYF) Market began
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7 with the mission to organize a multigenerational and multicultural movement around sustainable
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9 local food systems and community economic development (East New York Farmers! 2013).
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11 Located in the eastern part of Brooklyn, East New York is an economically disadvantaged
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13 community that experienced decades of urban decline, unemployment, poverty, violent crime,
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15 and a large number of vacant lots left in the community. Over the years, the ENYF has evolved
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17 from two gardeners in the first season to more than dozens of gardeners, local entrepreneurs and
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19 upstate New York farmers, bringing fresh food to over 17,000 patrons per market season. They
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21 administer urban agriculture managing two farms that grow fresh food for the community; create
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23 buying relationships between customers and regional farmers through the Community Supported
24
25 Agriculture (CSA) Farm Share Program for discounted vegetables; and provide opportunities for
26
27 youth internships. A team of community educators provides presentations, cooking
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29 demonstrations, and compost and gardening workshops to enhance the wellbeing of the
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31 neighbors. Cultural diversity is celebrated by providing bilingual promotions in Spanish and
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33 hosting multicultural events for adults and children.
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41 The youth internship program is important since in this intensive 9-month program, over
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43 30 young people engage in hands-on learning. Aside from learning all aspects of running a 1/2
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45 acre organic farm, they learn about the environment, health and nutrition, entrepreneurship, and
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47 leadership. They also use food as lens to examine issues of social justice to create change in the
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49 community. ENYF and Greenmarkets encourage the patronage of residents receiving Electric
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51 Benefits Transfer (EBT), Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) coupons, Health Bucks,
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53 Senior FMNP, WIC Vegetable and Fruits Checks (Figure 2). FMNP is the Special Supplemental
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3 Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). In 2011 EBT sales of 43
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5 Greenmarkets surpassed \$638,000, experiencing an annual increase of 90 percent since 2008
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8 (GrowNYC 2011b). All New York City residents who receive Food Stamps have the opportunity
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10 to spend them at one of many neighborhood Greenmarkets. Partnerships with non-profits,
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12 foundations, and governmental agencies, such as Food Bank, the Department of Health and
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14 Mental Hygiene, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and Farmers Market Federation
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16 of New York, have helped to enhance the ways in which low-income consumers are served.
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20 [Insert Figure 2 about here]
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22 Case 3: The London Farmers' Market, London, UK. The London Farmers' Markets
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24 (LFM) (www.lfm.org.uk) is an organization that manages a network of farmers markets that take
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26 place in car parks, local squares and school playgrounds around London. Adopting a loose
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28 interpretation of local production, produce must be grown or made within a 100 mile radius and
29
30 comes from farmers, nursery growers, fishermen, bakers, preserve makers, beekeepers and cooks.
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32 No middlemen are permitted and produce must be seasonal and local. Standards are set by
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34 FARMA (National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association) who have a certification procedure
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36 to ensure all stallholders compile with these. Sometimes other services are offered at these
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38 markets, usually linked to environmental concerns, such as The Mobile Bike Workshop, a cycle
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40 repair business that tours around various LFM sites and reflects the recent growth of cycling in
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42 the city. At present the organization has 21 sites—although these are not the only farmers
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44 markets in London—where markets typically take place once per week with between 20-30 stalls,
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46 representing 30-50 producers (Figure 3a, 3b and 3c).
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52 [Insert Figure 3a about here]
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54 [Insert Figure 3b about here]
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[Insert Figure 3c about here]

Case 4: Le Marché des Enfants Rouges, Paris, France. The most ancient covered market in France, this public market was established during the reign of Louis XIII in 1615 to feed a new area of the French capital, “Le Marais”. Although the development project conceived by Henry IV was never fully completed, for centuries it represented the beating heart of the neighborhood, providing food, drinking water, services, and a place for conviviality. Its name is due to a nearby orphanage, after which the public market was also named. As such, its name, the “Marché des Enfants Rouge” evokes the historical memories of the whole area it serves. After centuries—and under the assumption that it represented an old-fashioned, inefficient retailing system—it was closed in 1996. Yet, dwellers’ harsh reactions, together with the support of the local municipality, permitted the market to re-open six years later. Today it operates six days a week, occupies a surface of around 2,000 square meters, and offers Paris a unique spot to shop, sit, and eat freshly cooked food from various food cultures. Notably, it includes both a farmers market, where local delicacies are offered to French customers and tourists, and other small kiosks that sell gourmand products from around France, as well as other countries. With a mixture of old and contemporary catering systems, it also hosts a fashionable restaurant.

Case 5: La Boqueria, Barcelona, Spain. Representing one of today’s most visited touristic spots in Barcelona, La Boqueria is a large public market located in the Ramblas. Its origin dates back to year 1217, when a preliminary, open-air butcher market was started. For centuries, and up to the 18th century, it was located just outside the city walls. Its primary designation changed several times, from butchers’ market to fruit and vegetable market, and from pig market to straw market. With its legal recognition in 1826, the market obtained a covered, official building. Even

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3 so, its structure kept on changing for decades, with new extensions and installations. The current
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5 metal roof was inaugurated in 1914 and coincided with the refurbishment program.
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8 Today, the “commercial supply is in abundance and varies greatly: fresh fish and sea
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10 food; salty fish; tinned food; butchery and offal; birds; game and eggs; fruits and vegetables;
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12 herbs; delicatessen; breads and pastries; restaurants; frozen items; artisan products; charcuterie;
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14 farmers' shops; wine; and even a Greek and an Italian handmade pasta stall have joined
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16 the consortium” (www.boqueria.info). This public market is somewhat hyperreal: on the one
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18 hand it gives the impression of being a traditional, old-fashioned market (e.g., the fresh, natural
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20 smoothies); on the other hand it operates via marketing logics and contemporary technologies
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22 (Figure 4). Notably, most sellers are from the third or fourth generation. From a legal perspective,
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24 La Bouqueria is an association in which all stallholders participate, and it is part of Emporion,
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26 the European association of markets offering excellence in food. In 2005, the World Markets
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28 Congress held in Washington acknowledged the outstanding service and assortment of this
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30 public market, and awarded it the prize for the best market in the world.
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36 [Insert Figure 4 about here]
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39 Case 6: Cascina della Cuccagna, Milan, Italy. Located in a semi-central area of Milan,
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41 Cascina della Cuccagna (literally, “the farmstead of Cockaigne;” www.cuccagna.org) is an
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43 ancient farmstead established in 1695. Originally positioned in an agricultural area, it has been
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45 annexed by the city as a consequence of urban development. A memory of a lost age and a
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47 different lifestyle, today it stands surrounded by modern buildings, big supermarket chains, and
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49 traffic (Figure 5). Long abandoned and in ruin, it was brought back to life in 2012 by a team of
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51 nine non-commercial associations with the shared objective of offering the neighborhood a poly-
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53 functional center. Covering a surface of 4,000 square meters, Cascina della Cuccagna is a highly
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3 complex market system. Despite its nostalgic appearance, it hosts a weekly farmers market, a
4 covered and permanent minimarket in which to buy high-quality and high-end organic food
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6 (Figure 6), a vegetable garden where children and other dwellers learn how to grow crops
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8 (Figure 5), several boutiques and areas for socialization, a bar, and even a “University of
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10 Sustainability.” The latter project offers 10 courses on the intersection between economic
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12 development and social, environmental and ethical sustainability. Classes involve qualified
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14 scientists and professionals, and thus support ideological activism with scientific rigor.
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20 [Insert Figure 5 about here]

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22 [Insert Figure 6 about here]

23 24 *Defining Contemporary Public Markets*

25
26 The need for a definition of contemporary public markets emerges from both our literature
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28 review and the empirical cases that illustrate aspects of their variations. First, with reference to
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30 the theoretical side, literature on public markets addresses a plethora of related market forms. For
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32 example, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and farmers markets are both market
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34 systems in which consumers shop for fresh food grown locally and traded directly from the
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36 producer to the end-consumer. Yet, in the case of CSA, consumers also “prepay for a season of
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38 produce” (Press and Arnould 2011, p. 169) and thus participate in the producers’ risk, which is
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40 not true of farmers markets at large. Also, public markets extend to flea markets, which range
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42 from low-end second-hand markets, in which mainly private consumers re-sell used objects, to
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44 antique markets, where professional sellers offer selective, often high-priced objects. Finally,
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46 public markets may also be crafts-based, and differ from the former cases since: 1) unlike
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48 farmers markets and CSAs, they do not sell foodstuffs; and 2) unlike flea markets, they sell new
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Second, with reference to the empirical side, today public markets may originate from historical public markets—for example, le Marché des Enfants Rouges, La Bouqueria, and Cascina della Cuccagna—but look quite different from their predecessors. If we metaphorically address historical public markets in terms of agorae, contemporary public markets resemble ancient agorae in various ways. They represent a market system that is more than just a commercial center; they have immediate impact on society, and reflexively vice versa, often generating symbiotic interdependence among markets and marketing systems with other dimensions of civic life. Among social changes attributable to public markets, we identify: 1) the key learning that shoppers develop as an effect of information exchanged with producers but also, and more significantly, as a result of specific educational activities public markets offer (courses on composting and recycling, botanic and gardening activities, and more); 2) opportunities to socialize with others, and people from the same neighborhood more specifically, made possible by rest stops, in-site restaurants, and social activities such as special events; 3) the intermingling of people from different generations, nationalities, and social strata (Mercats de Barcelona 2009; www.campagnamica.it); 4) reduction of the distance between rural and urban inhabitants made possible through personal interactions between producers and urban shoppers; and 5) as in ancient agorae, the provision of places to discuss politics and ideologies. Research confirms that the average stay during a visit to public markets is long when compared to the limited dimensions and assortments of these markets (in Italy, the average visit is around 35 minutes long; www.campagnamica.it). This is due to the intensity of information exchanges and personal interactions at public markets.

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Despite analogies with ancient public markets—the agorae earlier mentioned—contemporary public markets are far from being the same. Differences are at least threefold: 1)

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3 they do not constitute the only way to distribute food and other consumer goods since they co-
4 exist with neighborhood stores, modern retailing chains, and e-commerce; 2) as such, they reflect,
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6 or at least convey, an original ideology of distributing and trading, built upon values of
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8 sustainability, reciprocity, fair-trade, transformation, authenticity, and local development
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10 (Farmers Market Coalition 2013); and 3) rather than being based on pre-modern market
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12 knowledge, they often incorporate highly sophisticated technological, marketing and managerial
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14 skills.
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20 Given the theoretical and empirical variety of public markets, our definition needs to be
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22 broad enough to avoid narrow representations of the phenomenon, but tight enough to mark a
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24 separation between public markets and other distribution systems. The definition we provide is
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26 phenomenological, that is, derived from the literature as well as from our field observation of
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28 successful public markets (to a greater or lesser extent) in five countries. Also, this definition
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30 does not aim at being absolute, but instead is offered as a preliminary conceptualization of this
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32 burgeoning field. For example, extension to non-Western countries may enrich the definition
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34 further. Our definition is the result of a two-stage process. First, we brought together what
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36 seemed to be the most recurrent traits that the various forms of public markets share. Second, we
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38 contrasted those traits to dominant distribution systems such as neighborhood stores, modern
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40 retailing chains, malls, and e-commerce in order to detect what is unique about public markets.
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46 These are the shared but distinctive traits emergent from our analysis. First, public
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48 markets are always located in-town, whereas modern distribution chains and malls can be, and
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50 often are, outside cities. We argue that this depends partially on the historical heritage of public
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52 markets being the agora of a city, partially on their promise of (re-)vitalizing a specific
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54 neighborhood. Also, they aim at shortening the distance between the countryside and the cities.
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Second, they are physical commercial spaces, and as such they cannot be run purely in an e-commerce format, albeit that the Internet helps raise their profile (Press and Arnould 2011). Their physical realization has important underpinning motivations: given the emphasis on local community, it encourages long-term relationships between buyers and sellers, as well as buyer to buyer and seller to seller relationships; it creates an ambience that stimulates the senses; and, it allows physical interaction with products, conveying a pastoral myth of natural production (Press and Arnould 2011).

Third, with reference to their governance structure, public markets seem to be mostly operated by either city and public bodies or stallholder associations. We assume the governance structure reflects the ideology of complementing profit and commercial logics with public aims and democratic participation (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007). As such, many consumers seem to acknowledge that the objectives of public markets go beyond commerce to include public goals such as social interchange, education on healthier food practices (Miller, Thompson, and Kalb 2012), and provision of business opportunities for local small companies. From a marketing angle, we conclude that while dominant distribution systems position themselves as economic actors and sometimes later integrate an ethical and a social ethos, public markets follow the opposite path, integrating commerce within a larger mythologized narrative. This seems to have a radically different impact on consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Thus, and differently from the past, the qualification of these markets as public is not meant restrictively to simply address municipally owned and operated buildings (Spitzer and Baum 1995, p. 1). Instead, we use the qualification to highlight the fact that these markets typically occupy public spaces, under public scrutiny and authorization, and with a claimed public interest.

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4 Fourth, public markets are comprised of locally owned and operated independent
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6 businesses that may sell locally produced products as well as imported goods (adapted from
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8 Spitzer and Baum 1995, p. 2). In contrast to established distribution systems dominated by
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10 multinationals, public markets deliberately seek out local entrepreneurs, thereby functioning as a
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12 complement to dominant retailing practices. At public markets, farmers, crafts people, fresh- and
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14 prepared-food merchants, and flea vendors constitute a complex market system, interacting with
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16 the local government and the community. Here two clarifications on what “local” means are
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18 required. As the London Farmers’ Market shows, local products can actually come from regions
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20 relatively far away but typically within national boundaries. As a general rule, public markets
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22 however do not sell—at least not massively—products coming from opposite parts of the globe
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24 since they advocate preference for seasonal produce and containment of the carbon footprint
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26 (Farmers Market Coalition 2013). Also, local does not generally exclude offerings of different
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28 ethnic origins. Although public markets usually prohibit import of products from distant
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30 countries, they do not extend their prohibition to local sellers of different ethnic origin. As such,
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32 some of these markets, while remaining “local”, can actually look like a microcosm.
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39 Fifth and last, public markets’ assortment is different since: 1) each stall offers an
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41 assortment limited in width; 2) yet, due to hyper-specialization on one or a few products (e.g.,
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43 eggs, chili peppers, fruit salads and smoothies) stalls show a higher depth of assortment than
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45 most dominant retailers; 3) public markets privilege hand-made (crafts markets and flea
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47 markets) and fresh produce (farmers markets) over mass-produced products; and 4) in line with
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49 their ethics, they also offer seasonal and local produce, which translate into greater heterogeneity
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51 and discontinuity of the assortment over time.
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In sum, owned and operated by city governments or private organizations that are different from corporations, we define public markets as stabilized commercial spaces located in town that sell a potentially varied and hyper-specialized selection of fresh and hand-made products (fruits and vegetables, food, crafts, and second-hand objects) primarily from local producers/retailers, and that accompany their offering with an overarching myth of resistance to, or distancing from, the dominant distribution systems. Notably, the mythological content that different public markets convey can also differ and may cover: voluntary simplicity, under-consumption, green-consumerism, and recycling ideals (e.g., flea markets); local authenticity as opposed to globalized offering (e.g., CSAs and farmers markets); sustainability of the local economy and local fair trade (almost all of them); revitalization of the neighborhood (e.g., Union Square Greenmarket in New York); or protection of a threatened craft (e.g., crafts markets). In the sections that follow, we look at the so-framed phenomenon of contemporary public markets (from now on, public markets *tout court*) to inspect their positive as well as negative effects on sustainability.

Public Markets and Their Impact on Sustainability

The current levels of production, consumption, and resource uses are simply not sustainable (Neher 1990). The emphasis on increasing material living standards is making our planet, in ecological terms, more cataclysmic than any time in the past (Trainer 1997). As such, research on sustainability is more necessary than ever. Sustainability may be broadly defined as the capacity for continuance into the future indefinitely (Ekins 2000), that is, the capacity of meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Kilbourne 2008a). As such, the definition of sustainability poses an inter-generational interrogative about what we may address as the heritage of one generation to the

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3 next. Ekins (2000) identifies four indicators of this heritage: economic, social, environmental,
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5 and ethical sustainability.
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8 As discussed, public markets are built on and circulate the myth of civic agriculture and
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10 just sustainability. They illustrate the need for a radical reconsideration of production,
11
12 distribution, and purchase processes in order to grant local development, fair remuneration of
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14 producers' work and investments, and limited environmental impact. They also take into account
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16 consumers' role in sustainability beyond that of producers and retailers. For example, they invest
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18 in food demonstrations, feeding education, gardening courses, and/or formal teaching on
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20 sustainability in order to make a lasting impact on consumers' understanding of the marketplace
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22 and practices. Yet, beyond this ideological positioning of public markets, what is their real
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24 impact on sustainability? Although a single study cannot provide an exhaustive answer, in the
25
26 following paragraphs we nonetheless show that public markets do affect sustainable market
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28 systems in very practical terms. More specifically, we identify four key positive effects, as well
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30 as three key negative effects, that make the overall impact of public markets on sustainability
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32 less predictable.
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38 *Public Markets and Their Positive Impact on Market Sustainability*

39
40 Elaborating upon Ekins' (2000) four dimensions of sustainability, we discuss how benefits of
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42 public markets interact with each dimension and contribute to the making of a more sustainable
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44 marketplace.
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48 Economic Sustainability: How Public Markets Restructure Local Economies. Economic
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50 sustainability is "a condition of non-declining economic welfare projected indefinitely into the
51
52 future" (Ekins 2000, p. 75). Marketers and consumers, however, usually aim at maximizing the
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54 utility of current consumption. As such, the static optimization of the interested parties is not
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3 compatible with sustainability. Reviving local food traditions and economies does not mean
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5 abandoning the existing food system, but rather embracing new goals that do not solely focus on
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7 cheap prices and a steady supply. This is plain common sense at a time when economic
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9 uncertainty and fluctuating energy costs could mean a sudden drop in food shipped from afar or a
10
11 drastic increase in prices. Also, consumers increasingly want to know where their food comes
12
13 from for reasons of nutrition and taste (Coldiretti and SWG 2012); after all, the food should be
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15 the ultimate nutrient, as invoked by Hippocrates' famous injunction, "let food be thy medicine"
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17 (Pollan 2008, p. 29). They see the benefits of investing in the local economy, rather than distant
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19 suppliers.
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25 So how do public markets restructure local economies in practice? First, they can
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27 influence local producers' and retailers' profitability. While labor costs for selling activities and
28
29 other marketing expenses can be higher than using wholesale channels, premium pricing and
30
31 negligible packing costs can contribute to higher profit margins. Although higher pricing does
32
33 not guarantee profitability, direct marketing channels such as public markets provide smaller
34
35 farmers and artisans with entrepreneurial opportunity to develop financially viable businesses
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37 with access to markets (Hardesty and Leff 2009). Second, public markets not only preserve
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39 existing farming and craft organizations, but also stimulate the development of new ones. Miller,
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41 Thompson, and Kalb (2012) comment on the importance of public markets as incubators for
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43 SMEs and enablers of new alliances among public agencies, associations of producers, and
44
45 consumers. In Italy, by redirecting interest for more traditional exchange systems, the booming
46
47 of public markets has also supported the revamping of street merchants, with a 10% increase in
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49 number during the period 2009-2012 (www.campagnamica.it). Finally, with specific reference to
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51 farmers markets, the public markets' system can modify food procurement logistics, assortment
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3 decisions (i.e., seasonal, local, sometimes organic), and even affect the competitiveness of local
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5 restaurants. Increasingly, restaurants buy local fresh ingredients and advertise their choice in
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7 their menus. Also, modern distribution chains are progressively modifying their assortment
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9 strategies by placing emphasis on the quality/price ratio rather than on pure convenience, and by
10
11 including larger amounts of local, seasonal, and fresh products (www.coldiretti.it). This
12
13 trajectory reflects the increasing appeal that public markets, and farmers markets more notably,
14
15 exert on larger consumer groups. As stated above, around 12% of the total Italian population is
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17 already loyal to public markets and spends one third of its weekly shopping budget there. On a
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19 national level, and with reference to all forms of distribution chains, in 2012 Italians showed
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21 preference for local products in 44% of cases (this percentage was 34% only two years earlier;
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23 Coldiretti and SWG 2012) and confirmed they shop at public markets regularly or recurrently in
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25 62% of the cases. Such evidence provides grounds for a change in the way modern distribution
26
27 chains create their assortments. Fabio Bonaccorso, Director of External Relations at Coldiretti
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29 Lombardy (the organization bringing together the largest number of Italian agricultural
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31 companies), comments further: “Farmers markets have become a kind of goal for large
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33 supermarket chains, which are now turning their attention to local and “Made in Italy” products.
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35 (...). For example, Auchan or Esselunga, the main Italian label in modern distribution, are now
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37 developing corners dedicated to local products and communicating them through stories about
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39 their territories of origins.”
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48 Social Sustainability: A Community Building Ethos. Social sustainability is defined as “a
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50 society’s ability to maintain the necessary means of wealth-creation to reproduce itself, and ... a
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52 shared sense of social purpose to foster social integration and cohesion” (Ekins 2000, p. 73). In
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54 the age of globalization, the concept of a local economy that contributes to local livelihoods and
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3 responds to local priorities is increasingly unrealistic (Bauman 2005). In advanced “consumer
4 societies”, the value system is such that people attach most importance to consumption *per se*
5 rather than for its utilitarian ends (Rifkin 1995). As a result, economic deprivation is today
6 particularly relevant as regards the rise of social isolation (Hill 2001), whereas access to
7 economic wealth has the reverse effect.
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15 Public markets promote an ideology of closeness to local community and use the market
16 to materialize and fulfill this objective. By buying at public markets, consumers often feel
17 committed to traditional values such as spirituality, frugality, generosity, altruism, and sense of
18 community. If social inclusiveness stands at the very heart of public markets’ ideology, actual
19 access to public markets for consumers with limited purchasing power is then of critical
20 importance. Our field observations and the discussions we had with managers in charge of some
21 of these markets partially confirm this concern. Public markets often pursue an income-based
22 market segmentation strategy, which consists in offering different types of goods and fresh
23 produce to consumers having different purchasing power as well as different willingness to pay.
24
25 As Òscar Ubide, General Manager at La Boqueria, observed “We have 250 stalls, so the offering
26 for customers ranges from the lowest to the highest prices (...). La Boqueria is the cheapest place
27 in town, but also the most expensive, depending on what you are looking for.” Market research
28 confirms that people shopping at “Mercats de Barcelona”, the whole system of Barcelona’s
29 public markets, are mostly from the lower and middle classes: 35.5% from the lowest classes;
30 50.5% from the middle classes; and only 13.9% from the upper classes (Mercats de Barcelona
31 2009). Similar considerations hold for other public markets, where basic fresh produce or
32 standard goods are sold at entry prices (e.g., fruits, vegetables, milk, bread, etc.), while special
33 and rare goods are premium priced (e.g., ostrich-eggs, French pralines, etc.). In the same vein,
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3 Cascina della Cuccagna runs a weekly farmers market for all types of consumers but has a
4 permanent mini-market (Figure 6) where specialties and more upscale products are sold.
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8 In the U.S., policy makers in federal, state and local governments, and community
9 advocates interested in urban food access have made extensive effort to reach diverse groups
10 through farmers markets. Around 8,000 in 2012, public markets have become a critical strategic
11 site to distribute affordable fresh produce to low-income communities (Project for Public Spaces
12 2013). As mentioned above, in New York City the project to expand local consumers' access to
13 fresh food in public markets, aiming to positively impact community wellness, has been
14 implemented through Greenmarkets (GrowNYC 2012). Participants of Food Stamp Program
15 receive a state-issued Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) debit card that enables them to purchase
16 produce at open-air farmers markets with wireless EBT terminal. Rather than price, the
17 knowledge about the markets and the acceptance of benefits has been identified as one critical
18 factor to increase the patronage of markets in low-income communities (Project for Public
19 Spaces 2013). In this regard, managed by the full-time EBT project staff, GrowNYC has
20 implemented a multi-language outreach campaign to disseminate information and stimulated
21 EBT purchase by offering incentives. The efforts have resulted in a drastic increase in EBT sales
22 in Greenmarkets, from \$952 in 2005 to \$831,601 in 2012, although it is hard to change the
23 consumer's grocery shopping habits. Other food assistance programs, such as the Special
24 Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Farmers Market
25 Nutrition Program (FMNP), have used incentives to attract low-income customers. In addition,
26 GrowNYC offers educational programs targeted to children and seniors to increase their
27 understanding of local agriculture and importance of fresh produce.
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4 Environmental Sustainability: Caring for the Environment. The environment contributes
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6 to human economy and life through a wide range of “environmental functions” defined as “the
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8 capacity of natural processes and components to provide goods and services that satisfy human
9
10 needs” (De Groot 1992 quoted in Eakins 2000, p. 79). Such functions fall into three categories:
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12 1) provision of resources for human activity; 2) absorption of waste from human activity; and 3)
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14 provision of environmental services independently of, or interdependently with, human activity.
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16 Then, environmental sustainability is defined as the maintenance of these important
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18 environmental functions. Some of the areas public markets contribute to environmental
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20 sustainability include their direct influence on sustainable agriculture, bioregionalism,
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22 sustainable transportation of goods and value chains, and consumer quality of life.
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27 In particular, public markets contribute to environmental sustainability in the following
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29 ways. First, farmers markets—where vegetables, meat, fish or flowers are supplied by producers
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31 coming from the same or nearby district and regions—shorten food miles, with positive returns
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33 in terms of reduced energy for transportations, less pollution and greenhouse gases (Norberg-
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35 Hodge 2002). On the contrary, food available at regular markets travels approximately between
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37 1,500 and 3,000 miles before reaching consumers (Ton, Ren and Mack 2012). Being typically
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39 located in town, public markets also reduce pollution related to shoppers’ circulation. All the
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41 cases we listed are within walking distance for local dwellers and easily connected via public
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43 transport for shoppers coming from areas further afar. Second, public markets reduce the need
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45 for packaging, not simply in relation to fresh food, but importantly in relation to certain
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47 traditional packaging functions such as information and aesthetics. Information about food
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49 origins or preparation suggestions can be given directly by the seller or found online. On its web
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51 site, London Farmers’ Market offers recipes for food preparation and indications about seasonal
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3 fruits and vegetables that should be preferred. Aesthetic display of the products is achieved
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5 through space management, either in terms of how stalls present the food or via the design of
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7 covered commercial spaces. For example, La Boqueria or the Marché des Enfants Rouges
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9 emphasize the aesthetics of food with dramatic food staging and visual display. Third, by
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11 pumping economic life into the local economy and redirecting attention to local farms, public
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13 markets help preserve open spaces and give the local community a rustic image that may even
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15 attract tourists (Lyson 2007). Last, public markets frequently foster recycling practices both in
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17 the cases of flea and crafts markets. In London and in Milan, these markets facilitate movement
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19 of second-hand products through selling back (flea markets) or creative transformation into new
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21 objects (crafts markets).
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27 Ethical Sustainability: Public Markets as Actionable Utopia. Sustainability implies that
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29 the economic and social equity for future generations is a society's moral imperative. The way a
30
31 society uses its environment depends on its cultural system and the ideology embedded therein,
32
33 namely, how that society regards nature, the status of human beings and other life forms. An
34
35 anthropocentric world view hence justifies the aggressive uses of the environment and condones
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37 its destruction by humans who are seen as superior to nature, whereas an ecological perspective
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39 (Johnson and Rhodes 2005) regards humans and the environment as equally sacred.
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44 Utopian thinking has long sought to reconcile society's needs with those of the natural
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46 environment (particularly feminist utopias; Sargisson 1996) and to conceive of alternative ways
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48 to live with nature that challenge anthropocentric worldviews and the dominant economic
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50 imperatives of markets (i.e., ecofeminism). Utopia's real significance is as a process that
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52 critiques the status quo and opens up new ways of thinking. There is, therefore, a strong utopian
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54 impulse embedded in the concept of public markets where both producers and consumers
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3 challenge current ways of doing business and raise many moral and ethical debates about how
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5 we want to live as a society now and in the future.
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8 As previous discussion documents, public markets' undeniable utopian ethos is not only
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10 preached but acted upon. In other words, public markets represent a form of utopian praxis. First,
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12 they present a real complement to dominant forms of retailing. Thus, they are not just a dream
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14 but also a well-functioning system of produce supply. Additionally, they mobilize people and
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16 educate them in order to make a long-lasting transformation of thoughts and practices. Initiatives
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18 like the University of Sustainability, food demonstrations, composting, and gardening courses
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20 are all contributing to the diffusion of a shared understanding of the ideology of sustainability
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22 and to the translation of values and norms into actionable behaviors.
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27 *The Contested Impact of Public Markets on Market Sustainability: Micro versus Macro*

28
29 *Sustainability*

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31 So far, we have mostly presented the impact public markets have on local sustainability. What do
32
33 we see, however, whenever the scope of analysis is broadened? And how broad should the scope
34
35 of analysis be? To some extent, our questions mirror the question grounding the macromarketing
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37 discipline *per se*: "How macro should macromarketing be?" (Kilbourne 2008b, p. 189) As
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39 Kilbourne notes, no complete answer has yet been provided, and certainly this would be beyond
40
41 the scope of this present paper. However, by widening our frame of reference we can more
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43 clearly identify three important trade-offs in terms of public markets and sustainability, trade-
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45 offs that stimulate concerns about their macro impact.
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51 Public Markets and the Inter-Social Trade-Off. Elaborating upon Marx's (1976) critique,
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53 we have already underlined that what matters is not only the amount of wealth a system
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55 generates but also to what extent this wealth is distributed across the social strata. Among others,
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3 Johnston et al. (2009) have reservations about public markets' inclusiveness of different social
4 classes, and suggest that they might leave lower-income shoppers at the margins. We commented
5 before on public markets' ability to manage social inclusion. Now, we turn attention to two main
6 reasons of substantive concern: 1) provided that public markets are located in town, they often
7 operate in richer neighborhoods, which makes access by people from lower social strata more
8 difficult; and 2) prices at public markets can be higher given, among other reasons, limits to
9 economies of scale at the various stages of production and distribution stages. Also, prices may
10 increase as soon as public markets become fashionable venues in which to shop and as they
11 attract a broader public, including tourists.
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25 Looking at these two aspects separately, the first concern is in relation to the so-called
26 "food deserts". The USDA defines food deserts as "low-income tracts in which a substantial
27 number or proportion of the population has low access to supermarkets or large grocery stores"
28 (Dutko, Ver Ploeg, and Farrigan 2012, p. 5) where low access means more than one mile from a
29 supermarket in urban areas and 10 miles in rural areas. More pertinently, 23.5 million Americans
30 live in low-income areas that are further than one mile from a large grocery store or supermarket
31 (Dutko, Ver Ploeg, and Farrigan 2012). If public markets are located within such food deserts,
32 they may help overcome economic and social isolation for those consumers by reinvigorating
33 local life, as well as the economy of the area. If not, they may exacerbate the social isolation felt
34 by those in areas of deprivation. Indeed, positive examples are in evidence, such as some of the
35 farmers markets in the UK, the flea markets at Porte de Clignancourt—a complete neighborhood
36 with permanent, covered stalls operated twice per week in a deprived and peripheral area in
37 Paris—and the ENYF market in Brooklyn. Yet, many other public markets actually operate in
38 more central and/or richer areas (e.g., La Boqueria, Le Marché des Enfants Rouges, etc.),
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3 especially those with historical roots that account for their central location. Thus, we agree that
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5 geo-localization of public markets can sometimes heighten isolation for the lower income groups.
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8 This can be even more serious for countries whose geographical dispersion amplifies risks of
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10 isolation for people not living in major urban areas and with limited mobility options, such as the
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12 U.S.
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15 The second aspect relates to price levels. There is growing awareness that the lack of
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17 fresh, healthy food in low-income communities that also suffer from environmental inequality
18
19 may lead to various health problems associated with poverty and lower levels of “collective
20
21 efficacy”, that is, social cohesion and informal social control in a given neighborhood (Silver and
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23 Messeri 2006). This has led to an obesity epidemic in poor communities and suburbs and
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25 troubling overall health disparities (Halweil 2004). Thus the issues of obesity and imbalance in
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27 the human energy equation discussed by Witkowski (2008) seem not only applicable to
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29 developing countries but also to U.S. society. As we have illustrated, food sold at public markets
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31 is perceived as healthier and safer, and even more authentic (Press and Arnould 2011). Former
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33 research proves that some consumers value authenticity for elitist motives (Visconti 2010), that
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35 is, to signal social difference and higher status (Bourdieu 1984). Those consumers are therefore
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37 more price-insensitive and may facilitate an increase in price, with negative effects on lower-
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39 income shoppers’ opportunity to access the same market. This proves true also when public
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41 markets are located in more marginal areas or cater to tourists. For example, with their highly
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43 priced goods, the abovementioned flea markets at Porte de Clignancourt attract mainly tourists
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45 and antiques-lovers, thus almost excluding the residents in the area. This effect can be described
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47 as a form of “gentrification” at a market level. At other times, public markets can segment their
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49 market and also target lower-income shoppers through basic, but fresh, produce.
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3 In conclusion, while our investigation documents several examples and means to avoid
4 social exclusion for lower income consumers within public markets, it also confirms a serious
5 risk of increasing social inequality whenever key decisions, such as public markets geo-
6 localization and pricing strategy, do not reflect such a concern. These aspects are therefore
7 indicated as crucial points for policy makers and private planners.
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15 Public Markets and the Inter-Nation Trade-Off. Further concerns emerge when we
16 consider the privileging of local development over international trade. Indeed, public markets are
17 often represented as a form of local fair trade system: by emphasizing produce from local
18 suppliers and by shortening the distribution channel, consumers support the economic
19 development of local producers, who receive better price for their work and investments. What
20 about the impact of local development on the development of other countries? More particularly,
21 what about the impact of public markets, and farmers markets specifically, on the developing
22 nations that provide developed markets with certain fresh fruits and vegetables, some of them
23 within a system of traditional “fair trade”?
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36 We look more closely at these concerns from two specific theoretical angles, (neo-)
37 liberalism and comparative advantage theory. In sum, liberalism relies upon 18th century
38 economic principle of *laissez-faire* (i.e., “allow to do”) and Adam Smith’s paired metaphor of
39 the “invisible hand” (1776/1991). Both principles argue that economic systems are self-regulated,
40 and that individual opportunistic and optimal behavior automatically leads to the maximization
41 of collective wellbeing. From this angle, optimal exploitation of the public markets system
42 should not undermine the economic development of other nations. However, both economic
43 theory (Keynes 1926) and history proved the shortcomings of this credo. In reality, rich
44 developed nations, under the auspices of *laissez-faire*, have practiced a form of protectionism
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3 while hypocritically preaching free trade for their own exports (Witkowski 2005). This may
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5 benefit those nations at a similar level of economic development (Chang 2002), but eliminate
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7 opportunities for poorer nations. This position is especially encouraged by the neoliberalist
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9 policies of Western governments since the time of Reagan and Thatcher. Neoliberalism is
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11 generally associated with the extreme outcomes of free market capitalism and the breakdown of
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13 more collective systems of government. Based on an ideology of the liberated entrepreneurial
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15 individual exercising his or her right to free choice in the marketplace (Fitchett 2014),
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17 neoliberalism has created a new global super-rich caste, whilst at the same time increasing
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19 inequality between countries because its ideology supports individualism and financial
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21 opportunism (Harvey 2005) that stresses the central role of consumers and markets for social
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23 wellbeing. Thus farmers markets—which have flourished under neoliberalist policies—may be
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25 less a sign of resistance to global capitalism and more a sign of entrepreneurial opportunism that
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27 ignores the financial impact on other less developed economies.
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34 With reference to comparative advantage theory, the key assumption is that each nation
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36 should be able to develop a number of productive domains in which to achieve a relative
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38 efficiency, that is, lower marginal opportunity cost (Baumol and Blinder 2012). On that basis,
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40 nations will maintain an advantage in trading since each of them will sell what it grants at lower
41
42 costs and buy other products and services from leading nations in those productions. In this light,
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44 we should consider what developing economies can produce and sell at best conditions, and
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46 avoid producing them locally. As such, public markets may need to be circumspect in trading
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48 local products whenever local producers cannot claim to have a comparative advantage on them.
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50 Again, comparative advantage theory has also been criticized. Among others, economist Chang
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52 (2002) has argued that in doing so developing countries will keep on being specialized on
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3 agricultural production and maintain a technological dependence from developed nations,
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5 ultimately making wealth differentials even more marked. He also argues for country-specific
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7 institutional and policy improvement that are beneficial for each country at a particular level of
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9 development. From this perspective, the diffusion of public markets in developed countries
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11 might positively affect developing and lesser developed nations in the long run. In fact, they: 1)
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13 would contrast and elucidate developing countries' specialization in agriculture; and 2) therefore
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15 stimulate their locally-contextualized development and innovation that would improve their food
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17 marketing in more technological industries that would also contribute to reducing poverty
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22 (Tollens 2010; Van Trijp and Ingenbleek 2010).
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25 The picture is complex. On the one hand, neoliberalism threatens macro sustainability
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27 across nations with its emphasis on global capitalism. On the other hand, comparative advantage
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29 theory gives competing motivations to (not) invest in market systems supporting local agriculture
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31 in developed nations. In reality, we note that the trade-off could actually be more limited than it
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33 appears on a theoretical level. Buying regionally grown produce in season does not hinder the
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35 trade of coffee beans from Guatemala, bananas from Ecuador, or tea from China as these
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37 products cannot be grown regionally and still have to be imported from overseas. In this regard,
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39 the agribusiness and local market systems have evolved to coexist, reflecting negotiations
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41 between neoliberals, their supporters, and their detractors. The magnitude of sales volume at
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43 public markets in developed nations does not rival that of the corporate agribusiness. In the least
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45 developed, as well as some developing countries, they are still struggling with insufficient food
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47 supplies to meet their own domestic demand and do not have residual supply for international
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49 trade. Even if the nation is involved in international trade, because of the neoliberal market-led
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51 agrarian reform, profit tends to fall into the hands of a financial elite while income inequality
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3 increases amongst the general population (Chang 2002; Poole 2010; Van Trijp and Ingenbleek
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6 2010). Thus the localism discussed in the current study seems to have only faint practical
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8 possibilities in relation to the comparative advantage of global trade in the macro system.
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10 Public Markets and the Inter-Gender Trade-Off. A final aspect that we look at is
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12 regarding the role of public markets in relation to gender equality. As already mentioned, public
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14 markets convey a nostalgic myth built on the superiority of a certain past, that of civic
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16 agriculture, pastoralism, and local communities (Johnston et al. 2009; Press and Arnould 2011).
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18 The structures of these societies, however, were based on strongly prescribed gender roles, roles
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20 that the ethos of public markets may also reinforce. For example, food shopping has traditionally
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22 been seen as a feminine role, associated with women, “feeding the family” (De Vault 1994) and
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24 themes of love and sacrifice (Miller 1998). However, in the last 20 years this position had been
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26 changing significantly as more women enter paid employment and more men take responsibility
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28 for food shopping, reflecting the emergence of new forms of masculinities (Kimmel, Hearn and
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30 Connell 2005). A recent Nielsen Research survey in the U.S. (Forbes 2011) estimated that 39%
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32 of males were the primary shoppers in their household. Another survey, which focused solely on
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34 male grocery shoppers (Mortimer 2012), identified the biggest group of males in the sample
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36 (41%) as busy professionals who shop quickly and prize convenience over making extensive
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38 evaluations on product quality or price. Convenience is not something that farmers markets
39
40 easily facilitate. Bearing such factors in mind, then, the question arises as to whether public
41
42 markets may encourage a return to more gendered shopping roles, at a time when traditional
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44 roles are beginning to break down. There is some evidence for our fears, given that a UK study
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46 revealed almost three quarters of shoppers sampled across three farmers markets to be female
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48 (72.7%)(Bentley, Hallsworth, and Bryan 2003). Further support for the potentially gendering
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3 effects of farmers markets can be found in Coldwell's (2007) assertion that farming is still
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5 dominated by rural masculinities that are constructed around hard work, ruggedness and the
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7 control of nature, values that reflect a hegemonic masculinity that maintains traditional divisions
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9 of labor. Other market research confirms that women still constitute the largest part of shoppers
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11 at public markets (e.g., 66% in Italy and 76% in Barcelona; Coldiretti and SWG 2013; Mercats
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13 de Barcelona 2009). Yet, these studies also show that the percentage of men shopping at public
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15 markets is higher than that of men shopping at modern distribution chains. This suggests that
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17 consideration of public markets' impact on gendered shopping roles would be better compared
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19 across different retailing systems.
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25 From an ecofeminist perspective, the gendering effect of public markets may also be
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27 exacerbated by the fact that it is most often women and femininity that are associated with caring
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29 for the environment (Dobscha 1993) and there is often the assumption that women are nature's
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31 vanguards (and victims). This type of dualistic thinking aligns men with culture and women with
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33 nature and also privileges the former over the latter. Indeed, Dobscha (1993, p. 37) highlights
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35 how women are frequently depicted in marketing discourse as "wood nymphs" and "earth
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37 mothers", appellations that devolve responsibility for saving the planet to women and bring
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39 about a type of "romanticized servitude." In sum, by circulating the naturalistic myth, public
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41 markets may contribute to maintaining, and even reinforcing, the separation men/women as a
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43 reflection of the separation culture/nature.
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48 **Discussion and Conclusion**

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50 This paper analyses the booming phenomenon of public markets from two main angles. First, it
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52 interrogates to what extent public markets' recent and global development can be considered as a
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54 megatrend. Second, it questions to what extent the overall impact of public markets on the social,
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3 market, and economic system is positive. This second aspect highlights the trade-offs of public
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5 markets specifically and—we believe—of sustainability at large. We comment on these two
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7 angles separately in the concluding paragraphs.
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11 Drawing conclusions on public markets as a megatrend is not straightforward. First, to
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13 the best of our knowledge—and as far as our key informants know—to date no systematic
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15 research has been conducted at a supranational level. Such an empirical gap impedes any final
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17 conclusions on the overall scale of public markets. Second, as our definition reflects, public
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19 markets include a plurality of market systems, which share similar ideological underpinnings and
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21 distribution logics, but which differ, sometimes substantially, in terms of products sold, thus
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23 expanding informational needs. Third, the notion of megatrend *per se* is quite paradoxical. The
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25 term megatrend is defined as a “large social, economic, political, and technological change [that]
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27 is slow to form, and once in place, influences us for some time – between seven and ten years, or
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29 longer” (Naisbitt and Aburdene 1990 quoted in Kotler and Kelly 2012, p. 74). On the other hand,
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31 the Merriam Webster online dictionary (www.merriam-webster.com) defines a trend as:
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33 something that points or veers the establish path in a new direction; something that shows a
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35 tendency; or something deflecting the current path. In all these cases, a *trend* is the *beginning* of
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37 a new trajectory that interrogates the *established* direction a system has followed before. Then, a
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39 *megatrend* would be such an affirmed, widespread trend to become the new established path, that
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41 is, a “non-trend.”
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49 To sum up, if we have to interpret megatrends as rival alternatives to formerly
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51 dominating systems, then we have to conclude that public markets do not yet constitute a
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53 megatrend. Today, neighborhood stores, modern retailing chains, and e-commerce still dominate
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55 the market, and they are likely to dominate it for the upcoming years. They have some basic but
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3 essential advantages such as extended opening hours, proximity, and depth and width of their
4 assortments that public markets are not likely to grant. Nonetheless, much research we reviewed
5 (e.g., Brown and Miller 2008; Coldiretti and SWG 2012; 2013; Euromonitor International 2013;
6 GrowNYC 2011a; 2011b; 2012; Mercats de Barcelona 2009; www.campagnamica.it; etc.)
7 confirms that public markets are already a relevant and fast-developing provision system in
8 various developed market economies. As data show, public markets cut across different
9 generations, sexes, social strata, and ethnicities. Also, their transformative power stems from the
10 volume of products supplied by these markets (i.e., direct impact) as well as from their influence
11 on dominant market systems, which incorporate ideas from public markets and adapt them to
12 their business logics (i.e., indirect impact). Hence, if by megatrend we mean public markets'
13 ability to become a complementary part of today's and future market systems, and be an
14 inspirational source for the market, then we can answer our questions more positively. We note
15 that initially public markets were more likely to position themselves as being in overt opposition
16 to dominant exchange systems (Kilbourne and Carlson 2008). Conversely, since public markets
17 started to diffuse on a larger scale, they have maintained their specific ideological values but re-
18 positioned themselves as an inspirational complement to other distribution systems.

19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 *Public Markets and Ecological Sustainability*

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43 Taking into account the combined positive and negative effects of public markets on
44 sustainability represents the second main area of our interest. The more we narrow the scope of
45 analysis, the more public markets appear to be a means of supporting *local* development from a
46 number of angles: social, economic, environmental, aesthetical, and generational. Yet, the more
47 we consider public markets from a *macro* perspective, the more clearly we see the emergence of
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3 inter-social, inter-nation, and inter-gender trade-offs, which invite caution in assessing their
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5 overall impact.
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8 We suspect that such combined effects are not exclusive to public markets. Rather, our
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10 investigation suggests that the multi-dimensional nature of sustainability (Ekins 2000) raises
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12 challenges to its own sustainability. In developing this point, we take an ecological perspective
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14 (Johnson and Rhodes 2005), and use illustrations from public markets to elaborate our points. As
15
16 already briefly discussed in relation to ecofeminism, ecological theory deals with issues of
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18 prioritization among the various components of a whole, these components being men/women,
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20 culture/nature, or humankind/nature.
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24 There are several ecological perspectives—for example, Deep Ecology, Environmental
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26 Holism, as well as , Ecofeminism—that believe in the fundamental interconnectedness of all
27
28 things on earth, both human and non-human. These perspectives share several fundamental
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30 insights that we draw on for our analysis. First, they prompt ecological interconnectedness,
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32 which counters anthropocentric worldviews embedded in the Dominant Social Paradigm
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34 (Kilbourne, McDonagh, and Prothero 1997) of industrialized societies, worldviews that
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36 conceptualize nature as instrumental to humans and thus justify the use (and, indeed, destruction)
37
38 of nature to satisfy human needs and wants (Kilbourne 2004). Second, because their parts are
39
40 interconnected, ecological theories also postulate the idea of rivalry between them. Dominant
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42 positions imply that economic growth has to be supported to the detriment of the environment
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44 and its future sustainability. In contrast, the core philosophy that underpins theories of
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46 interconnectedness is about how to live a more balanced life on earth, and thus limit rivalry to a
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48 minimum. Third, in relation to rivalry, ecological theories also put forward the notion of
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50 prioritization. Ecocentric views challenge anthropocentrism by denoting a system of values that
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3 is nature-centered rather than human-centered, seeing people as inseparable from the
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5 inorganic/organic world in which they dwell. This natural world is comprised of many different
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7 ecosystems that have evolved complex inter and intra relationships which humans can easily
8
9 destroy through their actions. Therefore a guiding tenet is that the environment is a living whole
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11 which should be respected and accorded the same rights as humans to grow and flourish. In this
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13 way human beings status in the natural order is re-evaluated and nature is no longer viewed as a
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15 commodity to be used at will for human use maximization and profit. Overall, an ecologically
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17 holistic perspective demands that we rethink many of our core values as a society. This also
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19 implicates the structure of markets that are such an essential part of contemporary society.
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24 Sustainability comprises an economic, a social, an environmental, and an ethical
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26 component (Ekins 2000). An ecological analysis of sustainability thus implies to: 1)
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28 acknowledge that these components are interconnected, and therefore that by acting on one of
29
30 them we have to expect effects at one or more of the remaining dimensions; 2) evaluate the
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32 trade-offs among these four dimensions; and 3) face the challenges raised by prioritization. As
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34 such, ecological sustainability does not represent a contestation of established sustainability
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36 notion. Instead, it complements extant definition by suggesting that sustainability components
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38 are tied, potentially competing, and thus often envisioned within a hierarchical frame.
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43 The case of public markets can be used to illustrate the notion of ecological sustainability.
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45 By taking into account both environmental and the economic dimensions, public markets reveal
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47 the tension between environmental improvements, resulting from a reduction in the carbon
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49 footprint due to localized production and retail, and economic improvements for developing
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51 nations, which, conversely, need their products to be imported. This scenario illustrates the
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53 foundational principles of ecological sustainability in play. Both dimensions are relevant, though
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3 for different reasons and for different people. Yet, they are interdependent and not necessarily
4 about a win-win logic. By adding a third dimension, that of ethics, in relation to values espoused
5 by policy makers, marketers, and consumers, the conflict between environmental and economic
6 sustainability can be solved in a different way (in favor of one of the two parties or in search of a
7 possible balance). In conclusion, ecological sustainability not only highlights the complexities
8 inherent in sustainability, but also stimulates reflexivity about the sustainability of sustainability,
9 that is, the possibility of stabilizing sustainability as a megatrend.
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Pauline Maclaran is Professor of Marketing & Consumer Research at Royal Holloway, University of London, UK. Pauline's research interests focus on cultural aspects of contemporary consumption, and she adopts a critical perspective to analyze the ideological assumptions that underpin many marketing activities, particularly in relation to gender issues

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For Peer Review

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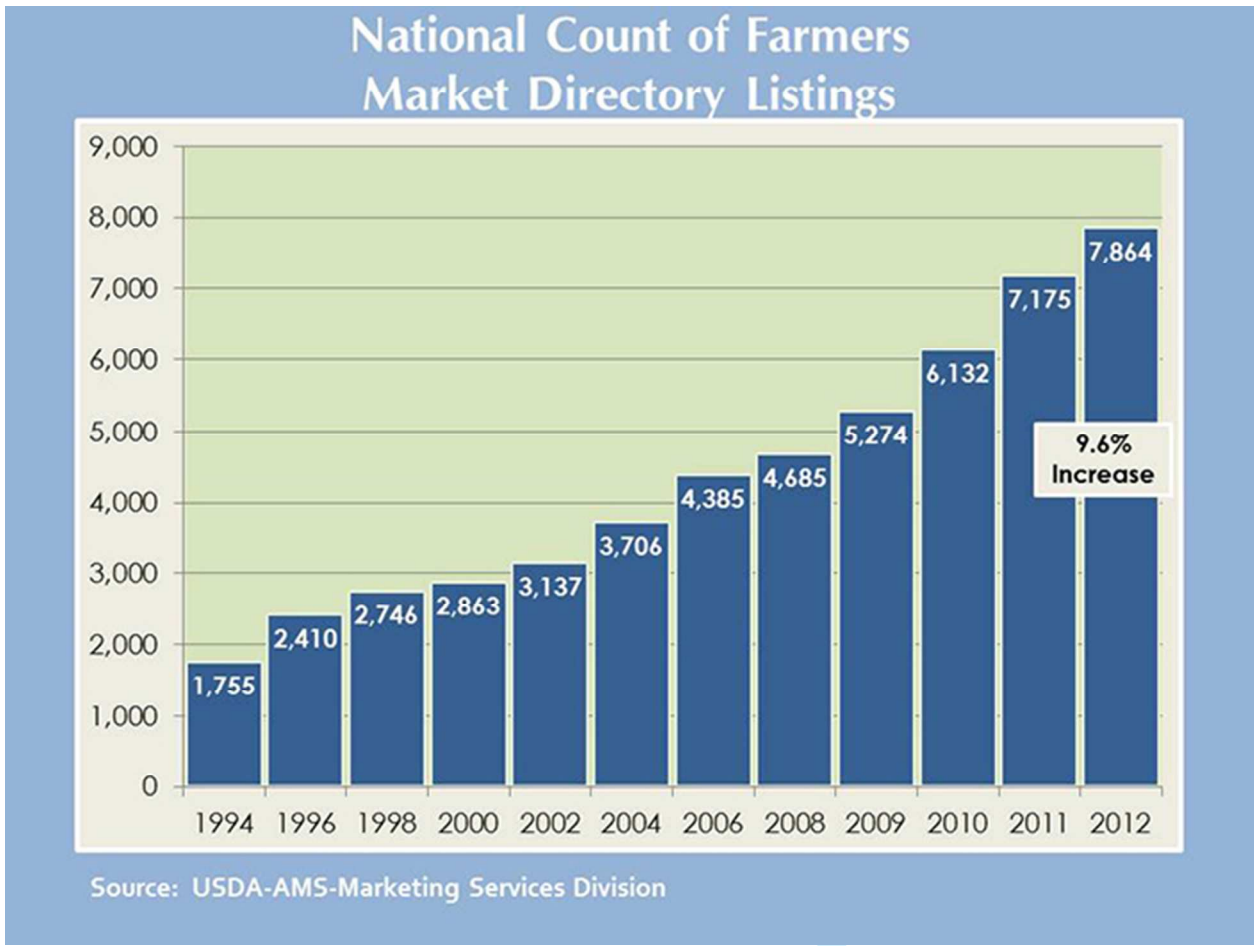


Figure 1. Farmers markets Growth: 1994 - 2012

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service. 2012.



Figure 2a. Encouraging Patronage at ENYF Market in New York City

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Figure 2b. Encourage Patronage at Greenmarkets in New York City

Photo by Samuel-Cristophe Tedjasukmana, Courtesy of GrowNYC

Peer Review



Figure 3a. Baked Products at Parson's Green Farmers' Market

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Figure 3b. Fresh Fish at Parson's Green Farmers' Market

Peer Review



Figure 3c. The Mobile Bike Workshop at Parson's Green Farmers' Market

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Figure 4. Hyper Realism of Public Market at La Boqueria

Peer Review



Figure 5. Cascina della Cuccagna's Botanic and Vegetable Garden

Peer Review

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Figure 6. Cascina della Cuccagna's Permanent Mini-Market

Table 1: Comparison across cases of public markets

| | Union Square Greenmarket | East New York Farmers Market | The London Farmers' Market | Le Marché des Enfants Rouges | La Boqueria | Cascina della Cuccagna |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Location</i> | New York City (U.S.) | Brooklyn (U.S.) | London (UK) | Paris (France) | Barcelona (Spain) | Milan (Italy) |
| <i>Established in</i> | 1976 | 1995 | 1999 | 1615-2002 | 1217-1914 | 1695-2012 |
| <i>Dimension</i> | 140 vendors 60,000 visitors per week | 10-20 stalls 17,000 patrons per market season | 20-30 stalls Part of a net of 21 farmers markets in London | 2,000 square meters | 250 vendors 6,089 square meters; 2,583 sales square meters | 4,000 square meters |
| <i>Types of markets</i> | Farmers market Crafts market | Farmers market Crafts market | Farmers market | Farmers market | Farmers market | Farmers market Crafts market |
| <i>Offer</i> | Food; flowers; clothes; food demonstrations; educational activities; EBT station; sustainability center | Food; children's play area; cooking demonstrations; art events; EBT | Food; flowers and garden plants | Food; flowers and garden plants; restaurants | Food; restaurants; frozen items; artisan products; gastronomic events; Culinary Classroom | Food; mini-market; educational activities; gardening; clothes; handicraft |
| <i>Relation with modern retailing</i> | Not marked | Not marked | Not marked | Co-existence Mutual benefit | Not marked | Co-existence Revision of modern retail systems |
| <i>Foundational aim</i> | Make the neighborhood safer; educate people | Organize a movement around sustainable local food systems and community economic development | Feed the neighborhood | Feed the neighborhood and space for social life | Started as travelling vendors' and peasants' market in the 13th c.; the official site of the December pig fair in the 15th c. | Feed the neighborhood; space for social life; educate people |