

In order to increase the quantity of successful farmers markets, organizers must be able to choose meaningful characteristics that will help them avoid the pitfalls of some of their market predecessors that included unstable vendor bases and overworked staff with too many projects on their plate. If support organizations and professional development consultants are to be successful in assisting markets in anchoring community food systems, they will need to know what works best for producers and for shoppers while always remembering that markets also need to exist within a larger system of municipal policies and retail trends.

And if it is true that markets need to be defined more closely in order to expand, then it is also true of other food system projects such as incubator farms, CSAs and other places that rely on local food producers finding economic sustainability.

In the beginning, the lack of clarity about markets' missions and structures may have worked in organizers' favor, allowing the first markets to move lightly between expanding goals while adding new members. However, with the number of markets that reportedly exist today (at last count, the USDA cites 7,864 markets operating in the U.S. as farmers markets (USDA 2013) that looseness would confuse anyone searching for what constitutes a farmers market.

The idea that markets structure and mission should be defined within a community's own context grew through the 1980s and 1990s with researchers and market practitioners alike searching for language that clarified what worked. Researchers Garry Stephenson and Larry Lev's work in the late 1990s resulted in reports such as "Analyzing three farmers markets in Albany and Corvallis Oregon"¹ that looked at shopper behavior and led to the first survey methodology designed for the open-air market community, the Rapid Market Assessment. Stephenson's further research clustered markets based on the size of their regular vendor base and then identified how "good" markets shared characteristics in the areas of "atmosphere, product and community" (or said as governance, product mix and partnerships in the language of this essay.)

At the same time that Stephenson was refining his theories of data collection and market management, J. Robin Moon, then a researcher for The Ford Foundation, authored a white paper in 2006 using the PPS' Diversifying Public Markets and Farmers' Markets Initiative as the basis of her research. This paper, called "Public Markets and Community Health: An Examination" (Projects for Public Spaces, 2006 p.35) explored public health community's nascent interest in using these "town squares" as possible intervention sites for significant, long-term behavior change for those Americans that are at risk for obesity related diseases, including diabetes and heart disease. The report offers this recommendation among others: "Strong evaluation that rigorously measures the impact of *different neighborhood strategies* (italics added) on the process needed to effectively implement the strategies that would be necessary in establishing a measure of the varying degrees of success across neighborhood interventions. It is acknowledged that it is difficult to *define "success" – whether quantitatively or qualitatively – due to the complex nature of the "causal web" of social determinants of health...When there is such a balance and nexus between individual asset building and the community asset building, the market can be effective in ensuring the well-being of both supply-side and demand-side*" (p. 35).

Moon's hypothesis was that markets were using different organizing strategies and therefore producing different outcomes in order to deliver the appropriate well being to their communities.

¹ <http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/sites/default/files/publications/techreports/TechReport2.pdf>

Partly based on PPS' Placemaking Strategy, this paper's approach considered the context of the location, the reason for the "intervention" and asked for comprehensive groups of local representatives (more than the farmers and organizers in other words) to be added as decision makers.

Based on that research, Moon was later invited to lead the Ford Foundation-funded 2008 Market Umbrella research conducted in Los Angeles, Mississippi and New Orleans, to create and pilot a research instrument called NEED (Neighborhood Exchange Evaluation Device) to measure the level of social engagement and trust-building happening at the marketplace. More details of the tool can be found at <http://transact.marketumbrella.org/>.

Moon and her research team discovered that the markets in Los Angeles and Mississippi had ventured into creating different market types through different product offerings, based on the contextual factors and need of the particular communities they served. This led the team to develop a more comprehensive market "typology", which attempted to summarize various types of markets seen across the country. By assessing each market and interviewing each market's staff, the team realized that unique characteristics around a particular market's location choice, its mission, governance structure, and project goals had to be examined for each market to be measured successfully.

This research led to the theory of what was informally called the "Moon typology" within Market Umbrella: that markets could be organized by selected groups of characteristics that identify the structure that each employed in order to have the hoped for impact on the market's vendors, shoppers and the larger community. These descriptions were not part of the main research for NEED and therefore were not published with the findings.

These descriptions (which exist only in draft form) at this point included **Flagship**, **Boutique**, **Staple**, among others. Later, **Food Security** was added as another type and **Campus** came next. It is also important to remember that these types exist on a spectrum and that changing from one to another is expected in a market's lifespan although to be clear, not necessarily in a progression.

Public Market Researcher and Trainer Darlene Wolnik uses these Market Umbrella descriptions in her work with markets. Here are her current descriptions, which continue to evolve and expand:

Flagship: Market is designed to assist the efforts of the larger food or civic community and therefore, its shopping base is not necessarily drawn from the area surrounding the market. The market is often located on the edge of 1-3 neighborhoods, rather than deep within one area. Events run a wide gamut of content, vendors are varied and the community that surrounds the market feels the impact of the market. Parking is often extensive (meaning a lot or defined parking is available) as the market is expecting to draw shoppers from outside the walking or biking sphere. This market type will often define or assist municipalities in setting policy or rules for vending for all markets in the area. Decision makers (stakeholders) include varied groups that are involved in aspects of the food community and possibly even the larger civic community. The market staff is often expected to have a wide range of skills from grant writing to project management to public speaking skills for many audiences.

Boutique (also called a Niche or Neighborhood): Designed to support surrounding neighborhoods, this type is often restricted to the type of local food producers that are not found in industrial food outlets such as supermarkets. Reviving culturally appropriate or heirloom varieties may also be a specialty of these markets. The goals of this market type relate to the goals of the local community, meaning, for example, whether the area wants to be seen as a business corridor or as a vibrant green space within the larger city. Often seen as "Main Street" markets.



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Events celebrate the success or support the business of the neighborhood. Logistically, the market may actually be situated in an area that has very limited parking, to encourage neighbors to walk, bike or take public transportation. The municipality may create rules including zoning perimeters to limit the size of these markets, ensuring that the needs of the neighborhoods are not forgotten in the growth. Decision makers or stakeholders are often drawn from or at least support the neighborhood that it serves. Market staff may operate mostly on market day, dealing with logistics and event management. Some outreach work will be done by market staff, but often in partnership with neighboring businesses.

Staple (also called Bazaar): This market type is seen more often in other countries and in some immigrant-friendly communities in the U.S. It is focused on offering a complete shopping experience with products and services beyond local food. A safe, business-friendly experience is the main goal. Resellers may be allowed even when they compete directly with local food producers. In the U.S., the shopping base may come from one ethnic group. Usually held in out of the way locations and often only loosely managed as a market. Decision makers may be drawn from a public health or social agencies working directly with the targeted shopping group. Market staff may work on other issues with the targeted community on non-market days. An emerging trend in this group is to use existing flea markets as a place to offer regional food.

Food Security: This type is embedded within a low-income community and designed to serve that community. Resellers may be allowed, but only when they do not compete with local food producers. Events are limited to encouraging sales of existing products by holding low-cost cooking demonstrations and giveaways. Often, both shopper and vendor participation is subsidized with incentives ranging from vouchers to free products. Decision makers are the partners that use the market as their project home. Market staff are expected to have the community organizing skills to work closely with other organizations within the market as well as to have grant-driven project management skills.

Campus: Closely related to a Food Security model, the Campus Market is designed to serve the community within an enclave. Examples may include a hospital, military installation or an academic institution. Often, vendor participation is subsidized, as the number of shoppers is limited to the total visitor number of the campus. Market parking or events are not usually offered as outside visitors are not encouraged. Decision makers usually are limited to the campus organizers or their direct partners. Market staff may be limited to logistical work on market day.

These descriptions are just the beginning; more market descriptions that illuminate who decides (governance), what can be brought to sell and by whom (product mix and rules), and how the market sets goals for their targeted audiences (through partnerships) should be added, with all needing further refinement.

Defining markets and other local food outlets is necessary to organizing one's community effectively with respect to its place and neighboring outlets. Respecting local traditions and skills and yet holding organizers to disciplined outcomes will become even more necessary as we expand the reach of community food systems to every place on our spinning globe.



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