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The Public Market System of New Orleans: Food Deserts, Food Security, and Food Politics

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THE PUBLIC MARKET SYSTEM OF NEW ORLEANS:
FOOD DESERTS, FOOD SECURITY, AND FOOD POLITICS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Science
in
Urban Studies

by

Nicole E. Taylor
B.A. University of New Orleans, 2003

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the public market system in New Orleans, Louisiana by focusing on the history of New Orleans public markets, the privatization of food, and the “greening” of the city with the creation of the Crescent City Farmers Market and other grass roots food activist efforts. Using qualitative methods, ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation and interviewing, issues of food access, food security, food production, food locality, quality, and affordability in New Orleans are explored. The history of public markets in New Orleans and the patterns of market proliferation, regulation, and privatization are significant in the landscape of cultural self-identification, community cohesion, neighborhood networks and economic and ecological development and sustainability. The city’s various food shopping arenas and their locations become markers of history, status, rebellion, and of the “other,” and become centers for issues of health, economy, politics, and food.

INTRODUCTION

I have been going to the Crescent City Farmers Market since I first arrived in New Orleans in 1996. There was always a fascination about this gathering of weekly shoppers and vendors, and the festivity of the environment. There seemed to be something unique about the market that was indicative of the city as a whole, with an energy of excitement and a distinct flavor. New Orleans is a city that marks its yearly calendar with festivals. For example, Mardi Gras transforms the city into a festival playground in February or March, while April is the month of the Tennessee Williams Festival and the French Quarter Festival. April and May are the months of Jazz Fest in New Orleans, and in August the city hosts the Louis Armstrong Festival. At the Crescent City Farmers Market, the live tunes of a local jazz ensemble or the mouth-watering smells of a local chef's cooking demonstration create an event, similar to the city's other festivals; it is "a place to be," a weekly festival in a city of festivals. While I enjoyed the market on occasion, and while I found the most flavorful tomatoes I had ever tasted at the market, I never considered it as a place to purchase all of my produce or groceries because I thought the prices were too high. Also, I could not shop at the farmers'¹ market everyday. I had to get groceries more frequently, shopping somewhere closer to my apartment. My budget however, would not allow for an extravagant shopping trip to a nearby Whole Foods Market on Esplanade Avenue very often. Schwegmanns, now Robert's Market, at the corner of Elysian Fields and St. Claude, in the Seventh Ward, was the closest grocery store with affordable foods.

My sampling of different food supply venues showed me the limited availability of quality produce in the large chain grocery stores in downtown New Orleans. For example, one was greeted upon entry at Schwegmanns by the putrid smell of meat, which was only challenged by the smell of bleach emanating from some unknown location. As I searched the aisles of the store I found that not everything I had grown accustomed to eating in my hometown of Flagstaff, Arizona was available. The lack of variety in food selection startled me less, however, than the poor quality of “fresh” produce and the realization that the prices were not really affordable. After one bite into a red apple with a dried out brown center and one gulp of sour milk, I came to realize how risky it was to purchase food in New Orleans. Adding to my own shopping experience were the conversations I had with fellow shoppers waiting for the bus to carry their bags of groceries home with them to the Ninth Ward. I heard many women complain about the quality of produce and the inconvenience of traveling by bus or taxi just to “make groceries.” The irony of this struck me immediately, as New Orleans is touted for its culinary excellence and distinct food culture. The stark contrast between the festive Crescent City Farmers Market and the St. Claude Schwegmanns sparked my interest in investigating the contrasts of food availability in inner-city New Orleans.

Methodology

I began my study of the public market system in New Orleans in the summer of 2003 by volunteering at the Crescent City Farmers Market. As a volunteer I began my initial research of contemporary New Orleans farmers markets with participant observation and informal interviews. I spoke with vendors, shoppers and organizers of the Crescent City Farmers Market. By volunteering at the market, I gained access to

numerous farmers and urban gardeners who accommodated my requests for tours of their farmlands and gardens. I visited organic citrus farms in Violet, Louisiana, and urban gardens on the West Bank, in the Ninth Ward, and in Central City.

I expanded my research of New Orleans' contemporary farmers markets in the fall of 2003 to include an analysis of food access in New Orleans neighborhoods. My investigation of the changes in food access in New Orleans uncovered a unique part of the city's history, the public market system that began with the founding of the city in 1718. I researched the history of the public markets by searching through Commission Council records, which document official orders for construction, sale, and demolition of the public market buildings. By compiling the information on the public markets, I created a map demonstrating their proliferation throughout New Orleans, which included the growth of the markets numbering from one to thirty-four during the years 1831 to 1911. I began to search the city's neighborhoods for the remaining market buildings, and I took pictures of the fifteen market buildings I found still standing. Also, I searched the archives of the New Orleans Public Library and compiled a set of Works Progress Administration (WPA) photographs, which depict the WPA renovation of the public markets in the 1930s.

In 2004 and 2005 I continued my research by using qualitative methods, ethnographic fieldwork, ethnographic interviews, and participant observation. I conducted fourteen formal ethnographic interviews. Seven of these interviews were with New Orleanians who shared their memories of the public market system, five interviews were with fruit men or produce vendors, and two were with food activists in New Orleans. Putting my anthropology to work, I traversed City Hall to experience the permit

and licensing process for those contemporary produce vendors who locate on the public streets of New Orleans. I attended monthly meetings of the New Orleans Food and Farm Network, the New Orleans Food Co-op, the Slow Foods chapter in New Orleans, and I participated in preparing meals with the organizers of the New Orleans chapter of Food Not Bombs. Also, I continued to search for information in books, journals and public records concerning the history of the public market system in New Orleans.

In addition to my experiences as a volunteer at the Crescent City Farmers Market, and my ethnographic research, I worked with a Ninth Ward community group called the Community-Based Mitigation Committee (CBMC). From 2004 to 2005 I worked in an assistantship position with a private planning and consulting firm, GCR & Associates, Inc., to aid the CBMC in implementing projects in the Ninth Ward. In this job I focused on working with the CBMC to begin a farmers market in the Ninth Ward as a community cohesion project. It was one of the many goals of the CBMC to bring four neighborhoods—the Lower Ninth Ward, Holy Cross, St. Claude/Florida and Bywater—all located in the Ninth Ward but separated by the Industrial Canal, together by creating a central location, a public space to foster community awareness. The farmers market concept was suggested by the CBMC as a possible project to foster community.

While working with the CBMC I had the opportunity to tour three farmers markets in the region—the Crescent City Farmers Market, the Vietnamese Farmers Market, and the German Coast Farmers Market—to determine what kind of market the CBMC wanted to create for their community. I collected ethnographic data by interviewing Ninth Ward residents and I walked the streets of the Ninth Ward administering surveys to determine the interest and need for a Ninth Ward farmers

market. Finally, I organized a one-time farmers market event with the CBMC in the Lower Ninth Ward. This market event was a strategy, based on my research, to spark further interest and participation in the CBMC's efforts to create a farmers market.

In my investigation of the pattern of public market proliferation in New Orleans from 1718 to 2005, in my analysis of the abandonment of the public markets and the privatization of food beginning in 1946, and in considering the revolution of "green," with new forms of food activism entering the city in the 1990s, it has been important for me to consider the works of many theorists. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Tucker 1978) are foundational in considering issues of class, class struggle, and the continued ideals of a free market, perpetuated in the twenty-first century. These free market and class issues play an important role in perceptions of buying power and in the location of grocery stores in New Orleans. It has also been necessary to consider the cultural and class distinctions that are intricately tied to food as described by Pierre Bourdieu (1984,1998), distinctions that mark culture, place, and class. Access to food is only one very visible symbol of class distinction. Marketing techniques employed by the Crescent City Farmers Market, Whole Foods Market, and other large chain grocery stores, which emphasize organic, local or heirloom produce, and the "slow" or "traditional" and "authentic" production of culturally distinct foods, create new distinctions to be investigated. I have also relied on the work of Eric Wolf (1983) as a model for my research by emphasizing the history of a place, New Orleans, and how its history is tied to the larger history of colonialism, capitalism, and globalization. Following Wolf, I have looked for the interconnections in history, as well as the silences, and have attempted to highlight the unspoken in history and the patterns of colonialism by focusing

my attention on the marketplace as a literal and figurative example of the interconnections. Finally, the theoretical works of Michel Foucault (1965,1977) and Marvin Harris (1999) have guided my evaluation of power and of the politics of food in New Orleans. Specifically, I explored the role of “infrastructural causality” (c.f., Harris 1999) in food access and the creative mechanisms of the power structure to emphasize personal responsibility in matters of health and the body (c.f., Foucault 1965).

Three Patterns

Through my weekly observations at the Crescent City Farmers Market, my conversations with shoppers, vendors, and market organizers, and through my research, including ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, I have determined three patterns. These three patterns merge in the historical, cultural, theoretical, and political to create an overarching pattern that centers on food markets in New Orleans: the birth of New Orleans public market system, the destruction and privatization of the public market system, and the revitalization of the public market concept in the formation of the Crescent City Farmers Market and other food activist efforts. First, in chapter one, by looking to the history of town planning in the New World, and the history of public markets in New Orleans, it is possible to see a pattern of public market expansion and increased food access when there is public policy and regulation of the free market. For example, the public markets in New Orleans, which were owned and operated by the state beginning in 1779, were intended to provide food to an urban population that was of good quality and fair price. With the regulation of the public markets, and with the policy that it was the state’s responsibility to provision an urban population, the markets grew with the city, establishing a public market in each neighborhood.

Second, in the post WWII era, and in the context of reform, New Orleans demonstrates a pattern where a large abandonment of city and state owned property took place. This abandonment included the public markets, which were sold into private hands beginning in 1946. Chapter two looks at this privatization of food supply venues and the transformation that occurred in access to food in New Orleans neighborhoods, leaving some neighborhoods without adequate access to food. In addition, the suburbanization of food stores added to the creation of “food deserts.” Community organizers and food activists describe “food deserts” as neighborhoods without a grocery store and/or adequate access to food. Chapter three expands the consideration of food access in New Orleans by looking to the effects of globalization on local economies of food supply.

Finally, chapter four documents the beginning of new forms of activism, which emerged in the 1990s in New Orleans, where food access and food security are the focus. “Food security,” is defined by those in the world of food activism as equal access to quality and culturally appropriate food for everyone. As food security is the goal of many food activists, this definition of food security implies that there is an uneven or unequal distribution of food in New Orleans neighborhoods, while highlighting the growing efforts to find solutions to a perceived problem. The emergence of the Crescent City Farmers Market in 1995 was the beginning of food activism in New Orleans. The farmers market became an alternative to large grocery stores in the city, and the Crescent City Farmers Market organization became an active player in a politically charged whirlwind of grass roots movements concerning food security and food culture.

Reading the Research

Tracing the evolution, destruction and revitalization of public markets in New Orleans, and placing the local patterns in a larger political and economic context, the Crescent City Farmers Market, along with New Orleans food deserts, and issues of food security, food politics, and food culture, can be better understood. Food availability in New Orleans, and in many urban centers in the United States has been a growing problem since the 1940s. In New Orleans, prior to 1946, food was readily available either at a public market or in the mobile produce carts that traveled through each neighborhood. Eventually, in the post WWII climate, the public markets were replaced by larger, privately owned grocery stores, some of which remain—Dorignac’s and Langenstein’s. Many of the grocery stores however, followed the flight from the urban center to the suburbs, leaving entire neighborhoods like the Ninth Ward, Holly Grove, and Central City without a grocery store. Publicly owned and operated food markets shifted into the hands of private ownership. Free market economics and competition within the capitalist system became the model. Grocery stores located near higher income households with greater buying power and transportation.

As a volunteer at the Crescent City Farmers Market in 2003, I found that the organizers of the market and many of the shoppers were aware of the poor quality of food available at chain grocery stores in downtown New Orleans. In fact, many of the shoppers expressed the view that they would not consider shopping anywhere but the farmers market or Whole Foods Market because a similar quality and atmosphere could not be found at other stores. In addition, the organizers of the Crescent City Farmers Market described their view of a long time disconnect between urban and rural, producer

and consumer, and farmer and shopper, which is a result of the shift from locally grown produce to the wholesale distribution that entered the city in the late 1940s as the public markets were abandoned. This movement from local to wholesale, and public to private markets, altered traditional networks between urban and rural in the region and affected entire neighborhoods, and the community life of the city. The transition to wholesale distribution is not unique to New Orleans food venues, as larger global economic and reform politics, which emphasize and idealize the free market, have played a role in altering traditional food distribution networks both nationally and internationally.

Vendors at the farmers market, including urban gardeners, regional farmers, local bakers, and food producers, and shoppers at the market, share concerns about the quality of food in New Orleans, the decay of urban and rural relationships, and the loss of community. The Crescent City Farmers Market is credited by vendors and shoppers with addressing their concerns by creating a community gathering place, which recreates the “magic” of the old walking city model and helps to preserve the history of New Orleans while enhancing ecological and economic sustainability. In addition, the Crescent City Farmers Market is viewed by vendors, shoppers and food activists, as a central point from which grass roots organizations like the New Orleans Food and Farm Network, the New Orleans Food Co-op, and the New Orleans chapter of the Slow Foods Movement, have spiraled out in a “greening” of the city.

In my work with the CBMC I became increasingly aware of the existence of “food deserts” in New Orleans, where some neighborhoods do not have access to food beyond the corner liquor/grocery stores and fast food restaurants. Many of these corner grocery stores in food deserts offer liquor, beer, and fast or snack foods like potato chips,

cookies, and soda, but no fresh produce. By working with the CBMC in the Ninth Ward, which is considered a food desert by community organizers and food activists in New Orleans, I was able to expand my understanding of the history and politics of food in New Orleans. As shoppers of the Crescent City Farmers Market expressed their faithfulness to the farmers market and its bounty of produce and its unique experience, people I spoke with in the Ninth Ward were unfamiliar with such bounty in today's twenty-first century food supply. Instead, many only had memories of a time when truck farmers and livestock were abundant in the area. Memories, however, are not edible.

The reality that some New Orleanians now live in food deserts, when once a public market existed in every neighborhood of the city, must be considered in the questions asked about policy, "political economy," and class. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "In creating 'the West,' the European Renaissance shaped a global geography of imagination. That geography required a 'Savage slot,' a space for the inherently Other" (2003:1). Is it possible that those who live in the food deserts and who are predominately low income African Americans are the "savage slot" of New Orleans (Trouillot 2003)? In the local "geography of imagination," it seems we have spatially isolated and categorized those in food deserts as the "other" (Trouillot 2003). Who benefits from the spatial distinction? How does free market idealism impact food distribution? How does class distinction matter in this distribution? These questions help guide an analysis of the differences between New Orleans past and New Orleans present, and the reality of food access in terms of socioeconomic distinctions and social patterning.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY OF PUBLIC MARKETS

Along the levee, as far as the eye could reach to the West and to the market house to the East were ranged two rows of market people, some having stalls or tables with a tilt or awning of canvass, or a parcel of Palmetto leaves. The articles to be sold were not more various than the sellers ... I cannot suppose that my eye took in less than 500 sellers and buyers, all of whom appeared to strain their voices, to exceed each other in loudness...

-Benjamin H. Latrobe's First
Impression of New Orleans, 1819

At the break of day the gathering commences—youth and age, beauty and the not-so-beautiful—all colors, nations and tongues are commingled in one heterogeneous mass of delightful confusion; and, he must be a stranger indeed, who elbows his way through the dense crowd, without hearing the welcome music of his own native tongue. The traveler, who leaves the city without visiting one of the popular markets on Sunday morning, has suffered a rare treat to escape him.

-Benjamin Moore Norman's
Tourist Guide to New Orleans and
Environs, 1845

Reading these early impressions of New Orleans public markets is like entering a revolving doorway into the past that eventually turns us back to the present, for the public markets are intimately tied to the history of New Orleans and to its future. The markets are an intricate part of New Orleans public culture. From as early as the founding of the city in 1718, New Orleans has had public markets where not only the exchange of produce and food items took place, but where people from different and faraway lands met and exchanged glances. It is where the paths of the French, the Spanish, the Africans, the Indians, the Creoles, the English, the Americans, and many others crossed. At the center of these crossing paths and crossing cultures was a market along the Mississippi River levee, which is now called the French market. This market was the meeting place of cultures and the commercial hub of the newly birthed city of New Orleans.

The marketplace, town center or commons was often the birthplace for cities in the New World. Those who dared or those who were forced to journey across the lands and oceans brought with them their ideas of place, their histories, their language, their cultures: in other words, their roots. With the passage of time and the entrance of each new arrival, each new culture, and each new government, the city changed and the markets were the stage upon which much of the change occurred.

In New Orleans, beginning in the eighteenth century, the markets changed as the city changed and the population changed. The markets transformed from informal gathering places to formal spaces governed by laws as early as 1779. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the market spaces changed from open air markets to walled buildings, from public to private; they grew to thirty four in number, one in each neighborhood and one along the levee right where it all began. By the early twenty-first century, we see the markets in transition, from global to local and public once again. Journeying through the history of the marketplace in the New World and in New Orleans, imagine the people who must have existed in these spaces, their hands toiling in the earth to bring tomatoes to market, their voices rising and singing a song to sell their fresh produce, their tasty pralines, their fresh seafood. While walking through time and through the changes that have transformed the public markets and the public culture of New Orleans, imagine the constant hum of many languages mingling in a marketplace and magnify it.

To help set the scene, the comments of Arthur William Tong, born in 1913 and interviewed in 2004 at the age of 91 right before he passed away, are helpful (Figure 1.1).

Tong was known as “The Phantom of Le Petit” and was a French Quarter fixture. He told me that he and his father would go to the French market almost every day. He said:

I’ve been coming to the French Market since I was about 5 years old with my father because my father ran a Chinese Laundry at Villere and Kelerec. The Market, it was huge, I mean the farmers market was one block long and the seafood part was one block long. But in those days the third district ferry was right here at the foot of Barracks street, and the Barracks street wharf was known as the oyster walk. Because the oyster people came down from the Bayou through the Harvey canal and down to here. I mean the whole seafood came down the river. But they did away with the ferry about 1929 I guess. I mean that was known as the third district ferry in Algiers, I remember all that. It was almost daily that we came down here.

We had also in our neighborhood the St. Bernard market, which was another public market, it’s now Circle Foods. You see back in those days the city government had public markets all over the city. Not too far from here they have the St. Roch market. Farther down they had the Lautenschlaeger market named after the Lautenschlaeger family.



Figure 1.1: Arthur Tong (1913-2004) at the grand opening of the Crescent City Farmers Market’s Wednesday French Market location.

Market Centers in the New World

According to historians (Tindall & Shi 1999; Bodnar 1985; Wolf 1981; Reps 1980), European settlements around the world, beginning in the 1400s (Wolf 1981:24-72) and in the New World of the Americas beginning in 1500 (Wolf 1981:129), were largely a process of transplanting town planning concepts and models into a new environment (Reps 1980). These settlements, under the direction of Old World empires and governments, established new colonies and expanded commerce. According to John Reps, many towns began as “market centers, bases for exploration and exploitation of natural resources, military camps for the subjugation of a region, ports for fishing and trade, or havens from the religious persecutions of Europe” (1980:1). These forces of settlement were accompanied by the cultural influences settlers brought with them from their native countries, along with the planning influences from military engineers, economic reformers, utopian philosophers, and the architectural works and writings by the influential Leon Batista Alberti and Andrea Palladio (Bodnar 1985; Reps 1980:2). Alberti and Palladio created town planning theoretical works during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Their writings not only influenced the early Renaissance designs for important buildings in Mantua, Rimini, Florence, and other Italian cities, but also influenced the shape of towns in the New World. Alberti advocated for the development of piazzas and recreational areas for each district of the city while Palladio emphasized the importance of the city as a visual experience. In addition, the influences of new town or bastide community plans like the one for Monpazier, France in 1284, and also the influences of Renaissance and Baroque architecture, can be seen in the development of town planning in the New World. King Philip II of Spain established a codified version

of these planning practices, which became standard, in his formation of the “Laws of the Indies” in 1573 (Reps 1980:27). These laws were intended “to establish uniform standards and procedures in town planning and their surrounding lands as well as to guide the development of other details in colonial settlement” (Reps 1980:27).

In the formation of towns based on these influences, a key element was a town center or town commons. These open spaces were organized in the organic structuring of towns as well as the formal grid pattern required in the Laws of the Indies. These centers served different functions in the beginning development of cities. John Reps explains that the clustering together in nucleated settlement patterns around a town commons “afforded the best protection against possible hostile attack and represented a continuation of a way of life with which many colonists were familiar” (1980:1). In addition, the centers such as Jackson Square in New Orleans, were developed to serve as piazzas and recreational areas, locales for festivals and spaces where community was emphasized (Reps 1980:3).

According to John Reps, for military engineers like Francesco Martini, the center of town held military significance (1980). For example, a gridiron street system was employed in the planning of Vitry-le-Francois in 1545 by Italian engineer Hieronimo Marino; “At the center of the town the designer placed an open space at the intersection of the four main streets which served as both market square and military mustering ground” (Reps 1980:4). Utopian philosopher Thomas More envisioned that “each city contained four neighborhoods grouped around market squares” (Reps 1980:7). Finally, in Laws of the Indies, established by King Philip II of Spain, the center of town was mandated in code number 112 which stated, “the main plaza is to be the starting point for

the town...inland [locations] should be at the center of town. The plaza should be square or rectangular, in which case it should have a least one and a half its width for length in as much as this shape is best for fiestas” (Reps 1980). The center of town became the focal point for town structuring and planning in the early settlements of America, used for community functions, military practice and safety, and as a marketplace.

While the military importance of these town centers holds great significance in the early planning of cities in the New World, their function as community gathering places and as market squares is important to our understanding of market history. The specific example of New Orleans and its market history serves to detail the use of a combination of planning influences. The “settlements of the French were not regulated by any ... equivalent to the Laws of the Indies,” (Reps 1980:47) however, their settlement plans reveal similar influences. The French were designing cities like Quebec, Canada in which the lower town was “a tiny, rectangular grid of streets with a single open square that served as a market place” (Reps 1980:50-51). This plan, like the plan for New Orleans, demonstrates the standard techniques that were in wide use at the time. New France, which consisted of the territories under French possession in North America starting in the seventeenth century, territories that extended from Hudson Bay to the mouth of the Mississippi and included Newfoundland and all of the land from Labrador to Maine, “depended heavily on water transportation and as the only reasonably speedy and effective means of communication and trade. The waterfront, or a military installation controlling water transportation was the important feature of most of these French colonial settlements” (Reps 1980:58). As early as 1718, Jean Baptiste, Sieur de Bienville began his planning, building and promotion of the city of New Orleans “laid

out by French engineers in a grid pattern—symmetrical, with a central square facing the river” (Lewis 2003:39).

The design for the city of New Orleans resembled the directions of the Laws of the Indies in the placement of a town center near the water with prominent buildings, like the church, facing the water. The town center, the focal point of the city of New Orleans, was the *Place d’armes*, the contemporary Jackson Square. The *Place d’armes* was laid out by the French in 1721 under Adrien de Pauger. It was to be the center of all activity: “After the Spaniards came, in 1769, it was named the *Plaza de Armes*; Creole citizens called it the Public Square” (Huber 1982:1). In 1851 it was given the name Jackson Square after Andrew Jackson, “in honor of the hero of the Battle Of New Orleans” (Huber 1982:1). The Square was initially intended for public use and eventually for the use of the residents in the Pontalba apartments that border it. Although there does not seem to be any official designation of the *Place d’armes* as a marketplace, it has experienced an evolution towards such a fate. As early as 1839 “some thirty-odd stall-keepers—fruit merchants ... had been given permission to do business” in the square (Huber 1982:53). In the twenty-first century, the square acts as a type of perpetual festival marketplace to placate tourist desires to see street performances of all kinds and to purchase the experience of New Orleans.

Town squares or market squares were often the locale for the exchange of goods and services in New World settlements. In New Orleans, however, although the city had established a town center in its initial development, the original produce and meat marketing occurred closer to its high traffic and commerce center, the port or the riverfront. In the mid-1700s along the riverbank near today’s Jackson Square, was “an

open-air exchange and commodities were sold either on the levee or in the streets by pushcart” (Sauder 1981:282). This informal market and the pushcart peddlers that expanded the market out into the streets of the original town borders and beyond would mark the beginning of a unique history of markets in New Orleans. Between 1730 and 1740, at the same time that the development of the informal levee market place was occurring, an informal African market located beyond the rampart in what is today called Congo Square also began (Gehman 1994:25). Many enslaved Africans and Free People of Color gathered at the market on Sundays “to socialize and sell various fruits, vegetables, meats and other wares. This market operated outside city regulations and was probably a major source of private income for slaves as well as some free blacks” (Gehman 1994:25). These two markets are important for they were the primary public meeting places in the newly forming New Orleans. They were spaces where different languages, foods, smells, tastes and people mingled. They were the stage on which so much of New Orleans culture was created, performed and transformed. Finally, these markets became markers of place, of neighborhood and community.

New Orleans’ Proliferation of Public Markets

It was not until the Spanish took control of the City of New Orleans that a permanent market structure was developed. In 1779 a government owned market was constructed for the sale of provisions. The reasons given for the shift to a state controlled marketplace involved issues of health and price; “By law, the sale of food in the city was centralized to protect the consumers from high prices and from food of poor quality” (Sauder 1981:283). The market classification “continued the Old World tradition of

markets established by political authority to provision an urban population” (Pyle 1971:172). This new market was erected in the location of today’s French Market in the Vieux Carre. The actual structure has endured many changes as it was burned in 1788, rebuilt, and then later destroyed by a hurricane in 1812. The French Market was rebuilt after the hurricane destruction, but the actual structure, which stands in 2005, was built in the 1930s as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) efforts (Sauder 1981:293).

According to historical geographer Robert A. Sauder, “in 1830 the French Market remained the only public market in the city, but rapid growth necessitated the construction of additional markets. St. Mary Market constructed in 1836, and Poydras Market, completed in 1837, were both located upriver from Canal Street ... Washington Market, built in 1838, was located down river from the original town limits in Faubourg Marigny” (1981:284). The continuation of the public market concept under American rule beginning in 1803 with the Louisiana Purchase is impressive. The markets expanded as the city grew beyond its original borders, under American control. At one point, the city of New Orleans controlled and operated 34 public markets, more than any other city in the country (Sauder 1981:82). Between 1841 and 1860 Carrollton, Ninth Street, Soraparu, Magazine, Dryades, Claiborne, Tremé, St. Bernard and Port markets were developed. From 1861 to 1880, Jefferson, Second Street, Keller, LeBreton, St. Roch, and St. John markets appeared. Between 1881 and 1911 the Ewing, Prytanía, Mehle, Memory, Suburban, Rocheblave, Maestri, Delamore, McCue, Lautenschlaeger, Zengel, Guillotte, Doulluth, Behrman and Foto markets took root (Figure 1.2).



Figure 1.2: Map of the growth and proliferation of New Orleans' Public Market system from before 1831 to 1911.

As Sauder points out, “most American towns of any importance had at least one marketplace where farmers sold their products to town residents. The French Market in New Orleans, Faneuil Hall-Quincy Market in Boston, Lexington Market in Baltimore, Pike Place Market in Seattle and others evoke images of lively interchange between rural and urban dwellers” (1981:82). It was the fact that New Orleans had so many public markets, at least one for each neighborhood, and held on to them for so long that makes its history unique.

In interviews I have conducted with an older generation of New Orleanians who remember the old public markets, I have discovered that the memories of these market spaces are rich with community. Emelda Skidmore was born in 1915 and is a life-long resident of the Holy Cross neighborhood in the Ninth Ward. She remembers the public market that was located in her neighborhood on Dauphine Street:

It was called the Doulluth Market. Each person had their own compartment, their own stall. They would pull into their spot and set up. And they would have vegetables in there and they would have meat hangin up on the rafters and we would have everything we needed.

In her memories of the old public market system in New Orleans, Ms. Skidmore emphasizes community when she says “We were just together people and we had everything we needed right there.”

According to Vincent F. Ferrara born in 1933 below Esplanade Avenue, the French Market and other public markets like St. Roch and St. Bernard, were neighborhood centers where everyone knew each other and where you could buy what you needed:

The French market was mostly Italians when I was growing up. They came down from Italy, they migrated here. You could walk and everyone would have produce along the market and fishmongers and meat supplies and you could buy your fresh produce everyday. That is the way people use to do it is they would buy everyday. They didn’t buy like they do today which is to buy for a week, they would buy everyday. I was a young kid and my mother and father would come.

I remember some of the other public markets, there was St. Roch and then they had the market on Claiborne and St. Bernard. You would go in there and they had a whole lot of butchers and you could get your meat. You could walk in the neighborhood at that time.

The old neighborhood that Mr. Ferrara remembers was dependent on the public markets for its community sustainability:

I think it would be good to have the neighborhood markets again. I prefer the old way. Whether the prices would be comparable to the supermarkets, that remains to be seen...It was a mixed neighborhood at that time. Businesses had their streets paved with black top. And you could walk the streets at night and sit on the steps and talk. Everybody knew everybody, it was closely knit. The market was a place to buy what they needed and to socialize.

Sister Joyce Hanks and her father J.B. (Philogene) Hanks remember the French Market and the community of the old neighborhood with fond memories. Sister Joyce was born in New Orleans on February 17, 1938 and J.B. was born in Sunset, Louisiana on February 18, 1909. Together they shared their memory of going to the French Market as a family tradition:

We would go to the fish market. First we would go fishing and if we didn't catch any fish then we would go to the fish market and daddy would say well we couldn't catch it with the regular hook so we are gonna catch it with the silver hook. And we paid for the fish. It was open you know, it wasn't closed. They had the pillars like you have now but with no walls, all open and they would have fish, every kind you could think of...

For Sister Hanks and J.B. Hanks, the French Market was an important part of living in New Orleans and the community of the neighborhood:

Everybody knew everybody. You knew everybody by their first name. It wasn't just grocery shopping you know. And the food was fresh.

New Orleans maintained its public markets as municipal markets, controlled by the city, until the 1940s when the pressures of wholesale markets and chain grocery stores finally displaced the neighborhood markets. One by one the public markets were sold at public auction until they were all in the hands of private owners, all except the French Market. By the 1970s, there were only eighteen remaining municipal market structures. In 2005, it seems only fifteen remain. Some of the market buildings are still being used as grocery stores like the old St. Bernard market being operated as Circle

Foods, (on Claiborne and St. Bernard Avenue), and the St. Roch Market (where St. Roch meets St. Claude), which still houses fresh seafood (Figures. 1.3, 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6). Keller market (located on Magnolia and Felicity) also maintains a small grocery store inside of its walls (Figure 1.7) and the French Market still offers fresh produce, pralines, seafood and spices (Figure 1.9). The markets that remain standing reflect the architectural renovation of the WPA era. Some of the buildings are still adorned with a plaque acknowledging the history of the building as a public market (Figure 1.8). Most of the public markets began as open-air markets with a shed-like covering. However, with renovation came the construction of walls and front door entrances. This shift in the physical structure of the markets along with the pressures of modernization would impact the spatial makeup of the New Orleans, its neighborhood centers, and its residents' access to food. In other words, the landscape of the city, as a city of neighborhoods, each with a central focus, its public market, would be altered in the name of “progress” as new models of urban planning and development entered the city.



Figures 1.3 and 1.4: St. Bernard Market at the corner of N. Claiborne and St. Bernard Avenue is now a small locally owned grocery store.



Figures 1.5 and 1.6: One can still find fresh seafood along with plate lunches at St. Roch Market on the corner of St. Claude and St. Roch Avenue.



Figures 1.7 and 1.8: Keller Market is now the home of several businesses including a small convenience store. Some of the old public market buildings, like Keller, adorn their WPA signs acknowledging the renovation to the structure by the Works Progress Administration.



Figure 1.9: The French Market still offers fresh produce, pralines, seafood and spices to local shoppers and tourists.

WPA Public Market Renovation (1937-1939)²

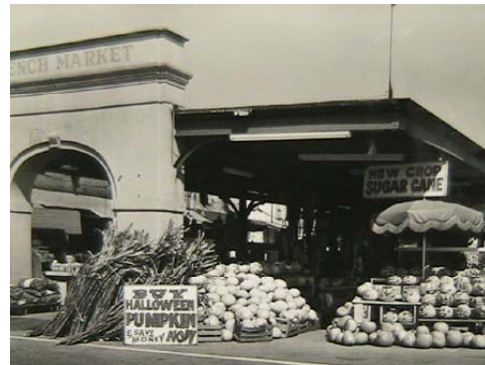
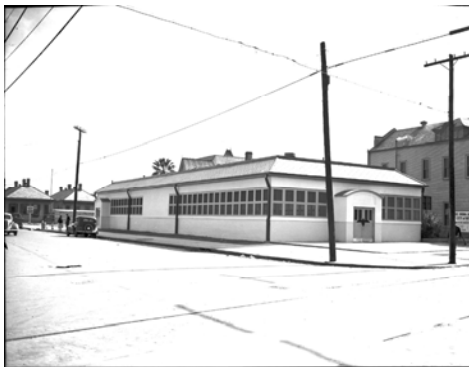


Figure 1.10 and 1.11: WPA renovation of the French Market in the late 1930s.



Figures 1.12 through 1.17: The progression of the WPA renovation of Keller Market at Magnolia and Felicity. The Keller Market building is still standing.



Figures 1.18 and 1.19: WPA renovation of LeBreton Market located in the neutral ground where Dorgenois meets Bayou Road. The LeBreton Market building is still standing.



Figures 1.20 and 1.21: The renovation of Maestri Market on the corner of Broad and Orleans. The Maestri Market building is no longer standing.



Figures 1.22 through 1.25: WPA renovation of Memory Market located at 3125 Tulane Avenue. The Memory Market building is no longer standing.



Figures 1.26 and 1.27: WPA renovation of Rocheblave Market on the corner of N. Rocheblave and Iberville. The Rocheblave Market building is still standing.



Figures 1.28 through 1.31: WPA renovation of St. Roch Market on the corner of St. Claude Ave. and St. Roch. The St. Roch Market building is still standing.



Figures 1.32 and 1.33: WPA renovation of the Lautenschlaeger Market in the Marigny at 1930 Burgundy Street. The Lautenschlaeger Market building is still standing.

CHAPTER TWO

THIS LITTLE PIGGY WENT TO THE MARKET... WHILE THIS LITTLE PIGGY HAD NONE

Makin' Groceries in New Orleans

In the destruction or abandonment of the public markets in New Orleans one can see the larger historical context of the Depression years and the later years of Urban Renewal at play. According to William G. Domhoff, "Urban Renewal was the most significant policy undertaken by a wide range of cities since World War II" (1983:173). Urban Renewal policy began to be discussed in the United States under President Herbert Hoover in 1931 when, according to Mel Scott, President Hoover called for a national "Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership" (1995:284). The general concern was about issues of housing including, "blighted areas and slums, low-cost dwellings for the poor, and the relation of housing to city planning" (Scott 1995:287). The conversation, concerning housing for the poor, continued under President Franklin D. Roosevelt (F.D.R), who replaced Hoover in 1932 (Scott 1995:300). According to Scott, F. D. R. "brought to the presidency a conviction of the need for planning" (1995:300). Under F. D. R, as Domhoff explains, "the first federal legislation related to this conflict, (of Urban Renewal) the Housing Act of 1937, was a redevelopment program for low-income housing that provided federal aid to municipal housing authorities" (1983:174). According to Scott, "Congress enacted the United States Housing Act of 1937, to provide financial assistance to the States and political subdivisions thereof ... for the provision of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for families of low income ... and to create a United States Housing Authority" (1995:329).

By the early 1940s there was a growing opposition to the 1937 Housing Act as Domhoff notes:

Business interests, particularly downtown property owners and realtors, wanted a clearance and rebuilding program that would be on a more "economic" basis—that would allow private entrepreneurs to participate as developers; permit reuses other than public housing, especially in centrally located slum areas; and let cities reap the higher tax returns which private developers promised (1983:175).

According to Domhoff, “the advent of the Eisenhower Administration in 1952 raised the possibility that the real estate interests could change the law to their liking, and their opposition to the program began to soften” (1983:178). The Housing Act of 1954 would solidify the Urban Renewal policy. According to Scott, “Urban Renewal areas ... could be slum areas requiring complete redevelopment, deteriorating areas to be restored by a program of voluntary repair and rehabilitation, or rundown areas in which a combination of demolition and rehabilitation would be appropriate” (1995:502). In city after city, Urban Renewal began to be implemented sparking conflict between residents of “slum areas” and planners and developers. Domhoff suggests that, “Since 1954 urban renewal programs have changed the face of many downtown areas and displaced millions of low-income citizens” (1983:173).

The changing values in American planning and development did affect New Orleans, only more slowly. The Depression years brought change in New Orleans with some large projects conducted by the WPA, but the markets were not replaced, only renovated. While the rest of the country was beginning to demolish old neighborhoods and replace the old homes and storefront businesses with modern buildings, high rises and highway systems in the name of progress, New Orleans’ operation of municipal public markets continued. According to Pierce Lewis, it is this slow pace of

“modernization” in New Orleans that has worked to save some of its unique character, a character that includes architecture, street design, and, one could add, community and neighborhood networks (2003).

While New Orleans was slow to implement Urban Renewal projects, the city did experience the pressures of Urban Renewal and of business and real estate interests to change the urban landscape (1983). Also, the automobile culture and suburbanization which gripped the nation after WWII (Tindall & Shi 1999:1423-1458) affected New Orleans, engendering a desire for a different shopping experience and making it possible for people to shop and live in locations well beyond those provided in the traditional walking city.

The political structure of New Orleans during WWII also played a significant role in changing the urban landscape and in placing public markets in private hands. The old political machine—the Regular Democrats of New Orleans tied to the Choctaw Club of Louisiana—dominated Louisiana politics from the late nineteenth century until the advent of the Huey Long era in 1928. According to Edward Haas, the Regular Democrats “created a tightly knit system of patronage-fed ward and precinct organizations that effectively controlled the political behavior of the low-voting population of the city” (1974:8). In the early 1930s, Governor Huey Long and the Louisiana Democratic Association (LDA) forced out the Regular Democrats who refused to support him. Long and the LDA used the weakness of New Orleans economic system to change the power structure that would run the city (Haas 1974:10). By controlling the legal structure at the state level, Long and his legislative underlings punished New Orleans with a series of acts that stripped governmental powers from the commission

council, the ruling body of the city, and other municipal offices, and gave them to existing or newly created state agencies—all under Huey Long's control. According to Haas, “the city, for example, could no longer operate its own public markets, nor could it issue business licenses” (1974:11). New Orleans was forced to declare bankruptcy on January 15, 1935, as Long “prevented the city from borrowing on its projected tax revenues” (Haas 1974:12). Huey Long introduced a new machine political system to New Orleans governance when he handpicked Robert S. Maestri to be Mayor (Haas 1974:13).

The Maestri-Long machine functioned in New Orleans by providing repairs and improvements while maintaining Huey Long's infamous system of patronage. In the uptown or American sector however, a reform movement had begun. In the wake of WWII, with all the potential for business expansion, a new sense of “progress,” given the name of “reform,” gained momentum in New Orleans. According to Tindal and Shi, the national stage was also experiencing the aggressive voice of business leaders, real estate investors, and developers, expressing their interests to claim a greater stake in the post WWII economy (1999:1384). While the national debate concerned not only Urban Renewal policy but also the management and maintenance of price restraints on household goods by the Office of Price Administration (OPA), in New Orleans, the debate would center on greater efficiency of the city government (Tindal & Shi 1999:1384).

According to Haas, the reformers in New Orleans, elected Mayor DeLesseps Story Morrison in 1946, putting an end to the Huey Long era of control over New Orleans and introducing a new ideology of progress. Mayor Morrison’s “administration

stressed efficiency and economy in the city government. He began with an expansion of the city work week from thirty-five to forty hours” (1974:45). Morrison would be the leader in “new economy policies” including “slum clearance,” the transfer of the streetcar system to a bus system and the privatization of the public markets throughout the city (Haas 1974:47). According to Haas, “The Mayor and Director of Markets Theodore Grunewald launched a successful program to rid the city government of the public-owned markets,” pursuing the economic ideology of the time, that the private markets would “assure to the people of the neighborhood greater and better marketing facilities” (Haas 1974:47). Within the short time from June 21 to August 23, 1946, the city sold five of its public markets (Commission Council Series 1946).

The deregulation of the public markets was accompanied by greater restrictions for street vendors. Fruit men and produce stands, which were extensions of the public market system in New Orleans, felt the pressures of the newly privatized atmosphere of food distribution. They faced numerous regulations that forced them to become stationary. It had been that “citizens who could not get to the market were able to buy a wide variety of food from peddlers who set up temporary stalls or circulated through the streets, hawking their wares” (Cable 1984:34). These vendors would enter the neighborhoods and bring the produce to the doorsteps of their customers (Cable 1984:34–35). Often this produce was the discarded produce from the public markets. The produce that had gone beyond its prime or had fallen to the ground was given to these informal, mobile, fruit peddlers. Emelda Skidmore recalls the street vendors that would bring meat, produce and household necessities like wood, ice and coal door to door:

The drivers would come and pick up the meat. They would deliver it to you. My father Arthur, he worked at the slaughterhouse and he delivered

on his wagon and I use to ride with him early in the morning. You also had your wood that was delivered on a wagon. And then years ago, the iceman came around and in the wintertime the charcoal man came around singing: *Its gonna be cold in the morning ladies, stone cold. Does anybody want any coal this morning, ladies, stone cold.* And that's how he would come around you know.

Vincent Ferrara also remembers the old produce men:

The old produce men would come through the neighborhoods with a horse and wagon. I was not even in my teens yet. It was mostly black people selling their produce and they would come around every morning. And the iceman would come around to sell ice that would last you a day or a day and a half. At that time we had iceboxes, it wasn't refrigerators. In fact my uncle was an iceman below Esplanade. He had a regular route. He would get the ice at the icehouse and with an ice pick he would cut it to give to the people.

J.B. Hanks remembers the fruit men as they would sing songs while selling their produce.

They had one black guy who would sell out of his wagon and he would push the wagon singing: *Bananas, bananas, bananas, big yellow bananas.* They got their produce from the French Market.

J.B.'s daughter Sister Joyce Hanks recalls:

I remember we had an ice box that was built to hold a block of ice and the men would come down the street to sell the ice and you would get the piece of ice you wanted and stick it in the box and that would keep things cold and there was a special tray that would catch the water as the ice melted. The milk was delivered in bottles in a little six-pack and you would have the cream on top.

And the little guy that would sell, the truck farmers you know, they would come down the street and have a little sing song: *I got banana, watermelon, red to the rind.* One time there was a second guy following the first guy singing: *Me too, me too.*

By the 1970s, a new city ordinance restricted produce vendors selling in neighborhoods; the city now required fruit vendors to stay in one place. The city also required a zoning permit and signs indicating the legality of the business to operate along

the public streets. The residents had to sign a petition declaring that they were amenable to the business being located in their area. The city required that the vendors have business licenses and follow health codes. The “Rules and Regulations for Truck Vendors,” Section 46–4.2, actually states:

All sales of fresh fruit and vegetables from a fixed location on city sidewalks and streets shall be permitted only in accordance with all other provisions of law pertaining to the registration for necessary permits and license and only in accordance with the following provisions.

The provisions are a list of rules that stipulate the time of operation, the price of permits, the size of trucks, and a few limitations on where one can set up a stand and how many permits will be issued, limited to one hundred.

This shift to the regulation of small independent produce vendors and the deregulation of the larger markets had an adverse effect on the city. These regulatory changes in the context of Post WWII ideals of suburbanization and the newly invented supermarket would put an end to the public market system in New Orleans. In addition, the new regulations made it more difficult for produce vendors and local farmers to compete with the private markets. Produce that was once distributed to household doorsteps not only ceased, but now those produce vendors who were able to establish themselves in the new system, felt the pressures of competition with larger local and national chain grocery stores. The competitive pressure has resulted in a wholesale distribution of produce that mostly overlooks the local bounty of the region. This means that one can buy bananas, oranges, cantaloupe, apples, grapes and other food items sold at the large chain grocery stores, from the roadside vendors that still exist, but very little of this produce, if any, is locally grown.

Even in the face of the new restrictions, however, one can still hear the fruit man's song in some neighborhoods as a handful of vendors move through the streets, operating below the radar of regulations and permits. Arthur (Okry) "the fruit man" Robinson, carries on the tradition of selling fruit and vegetables from the back of his pickup truck. He inherited the business from his father and now sings his song as he moves through the downtown neighborhood streets in the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Wards (Figure 2.1):

I've got oranges and bananas, I have eaten pears and apples, I have grape- cantaloupe, I have plum – I have nectarine, I have okra's – I have cabbage, sweet potatoes, orange potatoes, I have onion, I have garlic.

The theme of community that runs through the public market memories are also heard when Okry describes his work,

You see there's a lot of old people who can't get to the grocery store and they appreciate you coming around. Some of them buy every day. They don't spend more than a dollar or two but they be waiting for me every day. The same people. I just have a lot of fun. I just be boo-koo in all day, that's all and I help the old people that can't get out to the grocery store.

Okry's continued work as a mobile fruit man speaks to a larger pattern in New Orleans concerning not only the distribution of food, but also the definition of community. His work demonstrates a struggle between ill-conceived regulatory policy and the effects of blind deregulation, where traditional community networks become illegal. It begs the question, "where do the local and neighborhood produce vendors and social networks fit into the planning models created by businesses and by the institutions of government?" His work reveals a pattern of informal modes of production occurring even in the face of increasing formalized, rule oriented and law riddled urban space. Okry defies the artificial boundaries created by government bureaucrats and continues to

circulate within a structure of community based on need, friendship, family ties, culture and history.



Figure 2.1: Arthur “Okry” (The Fruit Man) Robinson drives his produce truck through the Ninth Ward delivering fresh fruits and vegetables to elderly residents and to those who cannot get to the grocery store several miles away.

In the post WWII climate, with a new economic liberalism on the rise, the concept of public markets owned and operated by the government must have come under attack. This public structure may have become one of the many symbols of all that was wrong with government-run or socialized institutions. Economists at the time, like F. A. Hayek, preached the doctrine of *laissez faire* in which social policy should not interfere with the larger capitalist market system. Hayek warned against socialism’s primary methods of “collectivism” and “planning” (1944:37-40). According to Hayek, these methods and their brand of organization led to the limitation of individual freedom. Standing firm in the ideology of nineteenth-century economic liberalism, and the free market of Adam

Smith, Hayek focused his critique on the contemporary world where National Socialism was sweeping Europe (1944). In New Orleans, this ideology of free market economics swept into the city on the coattails of machine politics and government corruption. Reform rang in a new day in New Orleans.

For those who enjoyed the public markets and used their spaces as community gathering places, the markets are remembered as a vital link to the workings of a neighborhood. The shift from public to private markets was intended to bring a better quality of food and a better price of food to the neighborhoods and residents of New Orleans. However, with the move from public to private, and in the context of change that gripped the city in the post WWII era, including reform politics, Urban Renewal, desegregation and white flight, the markets began a flight of their own. The neighborhood markets were probably under pressures as well from the changing methods of food distribution. Wholesale products became the standard. Now markets felt the pressures to buy produce grown all around the country and the world, replacing the local varieties grown by regional farmers. It is as though the walls constructed in the 1930s by the WPA, which enclosed the open-air spaces into closed buildings, transformed the space in the city—*in and out, public and private, us and them*.

Of the thirty-four public markets that once provided quality produce, meat and fish to neighborhood residents, only fifteen of the buildings, renovated by the WPA, remain standing. Keller, St. Bernard, St. Roch and the French Market, still offer some produce, seafood and other food items within their walls (Figures 1.3 through 1.9). As for the remaining market buildings, current uses are varied, however none are being used

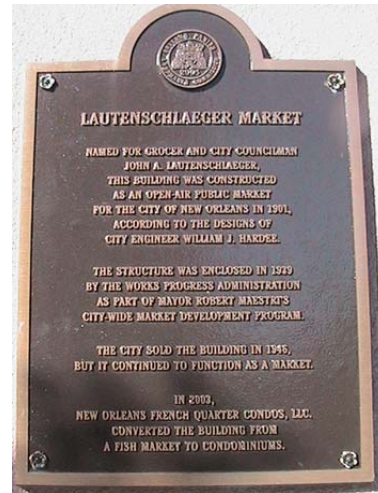
for their initial purpose, to provision an urban population with food that is reasonably priced and of good quality (Figures 2.2 through 2.17).



Figures 2.2 and 2.3: The Ewing Market building in 2005 is being used for an upscale clothing store on the corner of Magazine and



Figures 2.4 and 2.5: Jefferson Market at Magazine General Pershing, has been transformed into a school gymnasium.



Figures 2.6 and 2.7: Lautenschlaeger Market located at 1930 Burgundy Street was renovated into condos in 2004.



Figures 2.8 and 2.9: On the left, in 2005, LeBreton Market, located in the neutral ground where Dorgenois meets Bayou Road, is used as a church. On the Right the Ninth Street Market located on the corner of Magazine and Ninth Street houses a flower shop in 2004.



Figures 2.10 and 2.11: On the left, the Rocheblave Market, located on the corner of N. Rocheblave and Iberville in 2005 is being used for a car insurance shop. On the right, Suburban Market, on the corner of Carrollton and Iberville, sits empty and is for sale in 2005.



Figures 2.12-2.15: In 2005, St. Mary Market at the corner of Magazine and St. Mary is being used as a print shop. The building is still marked with signs of its time as a market.



Figures 2.16 and 2.17: The Zengel Market building on Dauphine and Piety is being used as artist space in 2005. Zengel is the only remaining market structure in the Ninth Ward.

Neighborhood “Food Deserts” in New Orleans

The Doulluth Market, remembered by Emelda Skidmore, no longer exists in the Holy Cross neighborhood of the Ninth Ward. In fact, the Ninth Ward area, east and west of the Industrial Canal, provides a stark example of the unequal access to food in New Orleans since the public markets were privatized. Once the home to at least five public markets (Doullouth, Behman, Washington, Guillotte and Zengel), there are currently no large grocery stores—not Winn Dixie, Robert’s, Albertsons, Sav-A-Center, nor Whole Foods in the Ninth Ward. There are no community gathering places beyond the street corners, the corner bars or liquor stores, or the front porches.

Corner grocery stores exist in this predominately African American neighborhood, but they provide a limited and expensive alternative for those in search of food items and produce. For example, a survey of twenty corner stores in the Lower Ninth Ward (an area of the Ninth Ward bordered by St. Claude Avenue, Florida Avenue, the Industrial Canal and the Jackson Barracks) conducted by the Crescent City Peace

Alliance and the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (GNOCDC) determined that only two stores carried fresh produce while five had a limited amount of fresh produce and the remaining thirteen stores did not have any produce for customers to purchase. In addition, the GNOCDC found a correlation between supermarket locations and low-income, predominately African American neighborhoods, determining that fewer stores carry produce in poor, and Black neighborhoods (Table 2.1).

<u>Racial & Ethnic diversity (2000)</u>	<u>Marigny</u>	<u>Bywater</u>	<u>Holy Cross</u>	<u>St. Roch</u>	<u>St. Claude</u>	<u>Lower 9</u>
Black or African American	17.7%	61.0%	87.5%	91.5%	90.5%	98.3%
White	72.7%	32.4%	9.4%	3.9%	6.9%	0.5%
Hispanic (any race)	6.0%	4.8%	1.4%	3.2%	1.7%	0.5%
Other	3.6%	1.6%	1.7%	1.4%	0.8%	0.6%

<u>Population in Poverty (2000)</u>	<u>Marigny</u>	<u>Bywater</u>	<u>Holy Cross</u>	<u>St. Roch</u>	<u>St. Claude</u>	<u>Lower 9</u>
% of people living in poverty	24.1%	38.6%	29.4%	37.1%	39.0%	36.4%
% of people living at or above poverty	75.9%	61.4%	70.6%	62.9%	61.0%	63.6%

Table 2.1: U.S. Census Bureau – Census 2000. Compilation by Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (GNOCDC). The Marigny neighborhood has one grocery store while Bywater, Holy Cross, St. Roch, St. Claude and the Lower 9 have none.

The growing difficulty faced by people trying to buy food in the Ninth Ward neighborhood and in other “food deserts” in New Orleans, including Central City, Holly Grove, and the Desire and Florida Public Housing Projects (Figure 2.18) exemplifies a sociospatial phenomenon occurring in many inner cities. Social scientists began documenting the inequality in food distribution within inner cities in the twentieth-

century. Donald Sexton for example, presented a 1970s analysis, in which he looked at food access in low-income neighborhoods. He determined that food prices were higher in the inner city, and chain grocery stores were relatively less dense (1973:97). Sexton expanded this analysis emphasizing that inner city shoppers are less mobile and less likely to be able to shop around for the best price. Sexton concluded that the poor pay more for their food (1973:97).

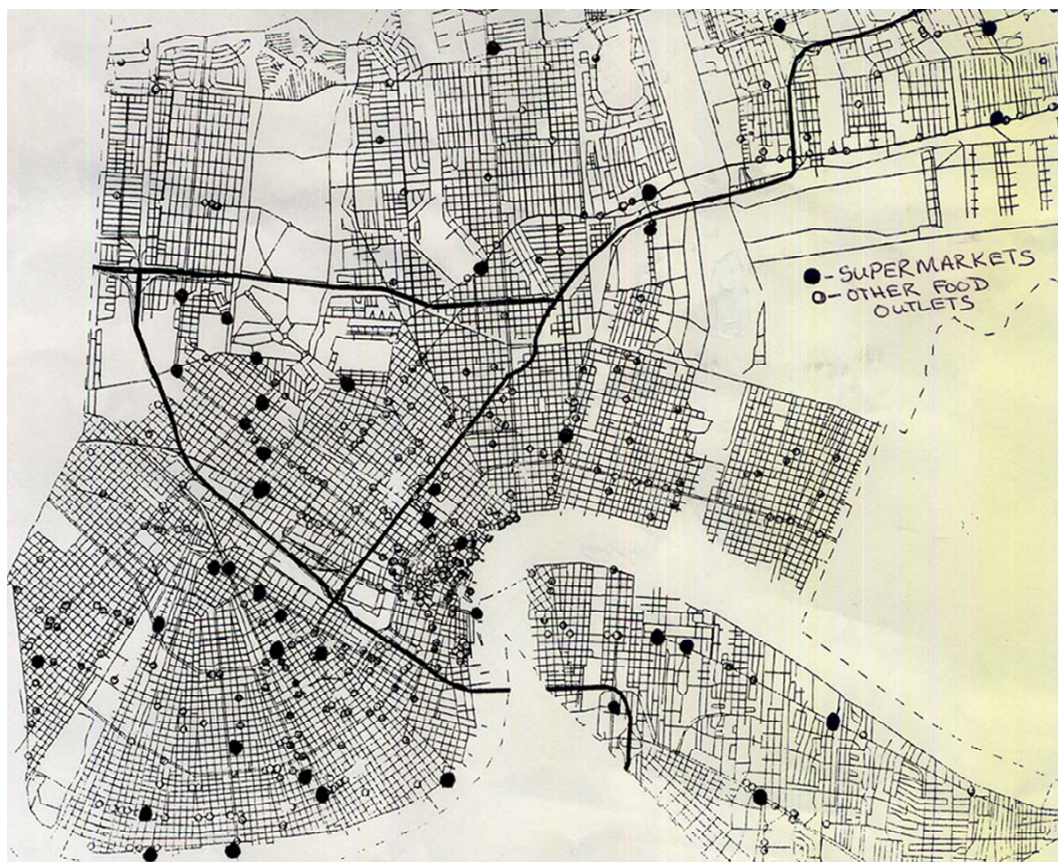


Figure 2.18: A map created by the LSU School of Public Health in 2005 using data from OPH Permits. This map depicts the locations of supermarkets in New Orleans. Some neighborhoods, such as the Ninth Ward, Holly Grove and the Desire/Florida Housing Projects have no grocery stores within a two-mile radius.

The existence of “food deserts” in New Orleans and around the country has sparked a new examination by those who live in areas without adequate food access and from community organizers and activists (Brannon 2005; Norberg-Hodge, McGranahan & Satterthwaite 2003; Merrifield & Gorelick 2003; Lewis 2000, 2001; Gorelick 1998; Gratz & Mintz 1998; Meier 1987; Lerza & Jacobson 1975; Sexton 1973; Padberg 1971). The interest is in demonstrating the reality of “food deserts” to those in power and to organize communities to create change (Norberg-Hodge, McGranahan & Satterwaite 2003). In New Orleans, large chain grocery stores are prevalent in the suburbs and in areas of the city that are thought to have greater wealth and spending power, for example, Metairie, Uptown, and Carrolton have numerous supermarkets. At the same time, residents of “food deserts” are finding it very difficult to do something as simple as go to the grocery. The grocery store locations in the city exacerbate the distinctions between wealth and poverty, and White and Black. Grocery store locations mark the spatial geography of the city, and place certain neighborhoods in the category of “other.”

Community activists like Greta Gladney, who is active in the many issues that face the Ninth Ward area, including food security, has worked with other activists to create the Downtown Neighborhood Market Consortium (DNMC). The DNMC has a mission to improve the quality of life in the Ninth Ward and to work toward food security, community cohesion and economic development. For Gladney, who was born in the Lower Ninth Ward and has lived there for all but three years of her life, it is her ties to her community and her experiences that have brought her to her current efforts.

Gladney explains the situation of food access in the Ninth Ward:

When I was growing up my grandmother and I would do the grocery shopping on Sundays at Puglias which was located at St. Claude and

Caffin. That store has been closed for years now. Puglias is now Advanced Auto and the Lower Ninth Ward has no supermarkets. The closest supermarkets are Robert's at Elysian Fields and St. Claude and at Almanaster in Arabi, is Winn Dixie.

We have corner stores but the corner stores are not grocery stores because they do not sell produce. They may sell cheaper cuts of meat, and some bananas but they are overpriced. In a comparison of prices for staples like milk, eggs, rice etc. of the corner stores that carry these items, most of them are higher priced and the quality is not great. Also, there is no variety.

At the larger stores, like Robert's at Elysian Fields, well, it is not comparable to the Robert's in Lakeview. The location of the grocery store matters for what kind of produce and quality you get. This Robert's at Elysian Fields with the gentrification of the area is influencing what they sell. But if you look at the demographics it changes, it matters who your shoppers are. Once neighborhoods get beyond 37% Black there is less access to food.

Growing up, there were a number of family owned corner grocery stores but many of them are closed now, which is unfortunate.

Gladney is concerned about the health of her community because of the lack of food access:

African Americans are at a higher risk of obesity, diabetes, hyper-tension. One part is to address health disparity and the other is a problem with food access among African Americans, especially when the corner stores don't sell fruit and vegetables.

Greta Gladney's assessment of her neighborhood's limitation of food access places the history of New Orleans public markets into a context of difference and distinction. Quality and affordable food in this context again carries the notion of class, as only certain residents of the city have access in location, mobility and economy to the ideals of food. The issues of food access faced by individuals and communities in "food deserts" lead directly to issues of health. The very reason for creating the public markets under Spanish rule in 1779 was to ensure the health of an urban population, to ensure

food access that was affordable and of good quality. With the vanishing of the public market system and the Post WWII creation of the supermarkets, which fit so nicely into a suburban setting, inner cities and urban populations have been left with hunger pains (Padberg 1971:382).

Fat City

The negative health effects, described by Gladney, and which plague the residents of the Ninth Ward who are mostly low-income African Americans, also plague other inner city residents in “food deserts,” including the elderly. In addition, some residents in isolated rural communities, like those in the inner city, suffer from diabetes, high blood pressure, hypertension, obesity, and heart disease, related to inadequate access to healthy foods. In many cities and countrysides around the United States “low-income people often pay more for food than their wealthier neighbors,” and the food many low-income people have access to is not healthy (Sustainable Food Center 2004). According to the Sustainable Food Center in Austin, Texas:

Low-income residents pay 10 to 40 percent more for food than higher income residents of the same cities. Low-income residents pay more because large, efficient, well-stocked supermarkets rarely locate in their neighborhoods. The very people who need to make every dollar count do not have an essential piece of the neighborhood infrastructure to do so (2004).

In New Orleans, which has been labeled the “fat city,” and is said to have one of the largest per capita obesity problems in the country, the role of food access in the health of some New Orleanians is of great concern. The issues of health that are related to obesity and diet are often framed in terms of personal choice, while issues of food access are often overlooked. In the new “war on fat” that began sweeping the country in the late

twentieth century, much of the hype is directed at changing individual behavior, placing the emphasis on personal responsibility over one's body.] In contrast, Michel Foucault, who structures his analysis of the body in relation to power structures of the larger society, not only concludes a direct connection between the mind and body, he also interprets the body as a tool, a machine, an instrument that has been manipulated for the benefit of the existing power structures (1977). In the world market economy of the twenty-first century, the power structures are ever persistent in their manipulation of mind/body. This manipulation comes from numerous directions all advertising the ideal life-style, the ideal body, and the product of achievement. Often the products that are promoted to achieve this ideal life-style are food items like a McDonalds hamburger or a Rally's sandwich. The body, using Foucault's analysis (1977), can be seen as the tool through which large food companies and fast food corporations have come to their wealth. The individual who consumes the products of these companies becomes the mechanism of wealth production for the power structure (Foucault 1977).

According to Pierre Bourdieu, what is at stake in the process of consumption, including food consumption "is indeed personality, i.e., the quality of the person...is affirmed in the capacity to appropriate an object of quality" (1984:281). Food is just one of the tools used in our society to elevate and define distinctions of class; "It can be seen intuitively that these indicators of different life-styles fall into a pattern which corresponds to the structure of the space of life-styles" (Bourdieu 1984:263). The qualities that are associated with food in its distinctive use are complicated through the use of advertising and the mixed messages that one will increase their life-style status and

their enjoyment by purchasing fast food while simultaneously being told to eat healthier and to be thin.

In addition, class distinctions are directly tied to food and its quality, its production and its accessibility. Other messages of food consumption focus on health, locality, and slow production. Food in the context of “art” has elevated the distinctive function of food consumption. According to Bourdieu:

The appropriation of symbolic objects with a material existence (such as food), raises the distinctive force of ownership to the second power and reduces purely symbolic appropriation to the inferior status of a symbolic substitute. To appropriate (food as art) is to assert oneself as the exclusive possessor of the object and of the authentic taste for that object which is thereby converted into the reified negation of all those who are unworthy of possessing it, for lack of material or symbolic means of doing so (1984:280).

As Bourdieu indicates in his analysis of food as art (1984) distinct meanings are embedded in the purchasing of food. New Orleans is no exception. The purchasing of food in New Orleans is also an act filled with symbolic meaning. The material and symbolic purchases of food items may be viewed differently by different factions of the city, however the mark of distinction, and of class, is tied to those who buy food exclusively from Whole Foods Market or those who eat regularly at fast food chains.

According to Marion Nestle:

We may believe that we make informed decisions about food choice, but we cannot do so if we are oblivious of the way food companies influence our choices. Most of us, if we choose to do so, can recognize how food companies spend money on advertising, but it is far more difficult to know about the industry’s behind-the-scenes efforts in Congress, federal agencies, courts, universities, and professional organizations to make diets seem a matter of personal choice rather than of deliberate manipulations (2002:360).

Add to this dilemma of choice manipulation the fact that many do not actually have a choice in where and how to shop. Nestle suggests that we can “vote with our forks” (2002:372). However, for many this vote is difficult to make without the mobility and economy to support such “choice voting.” Those who promote personal choice as “the” mechanism to improve those health issues that plague many low-income residents disregard the realities of environment, the function of class distinction and the manipulation of advertising.

CHAPTER THREE

JACK AND THE GIANT

Global Polarization

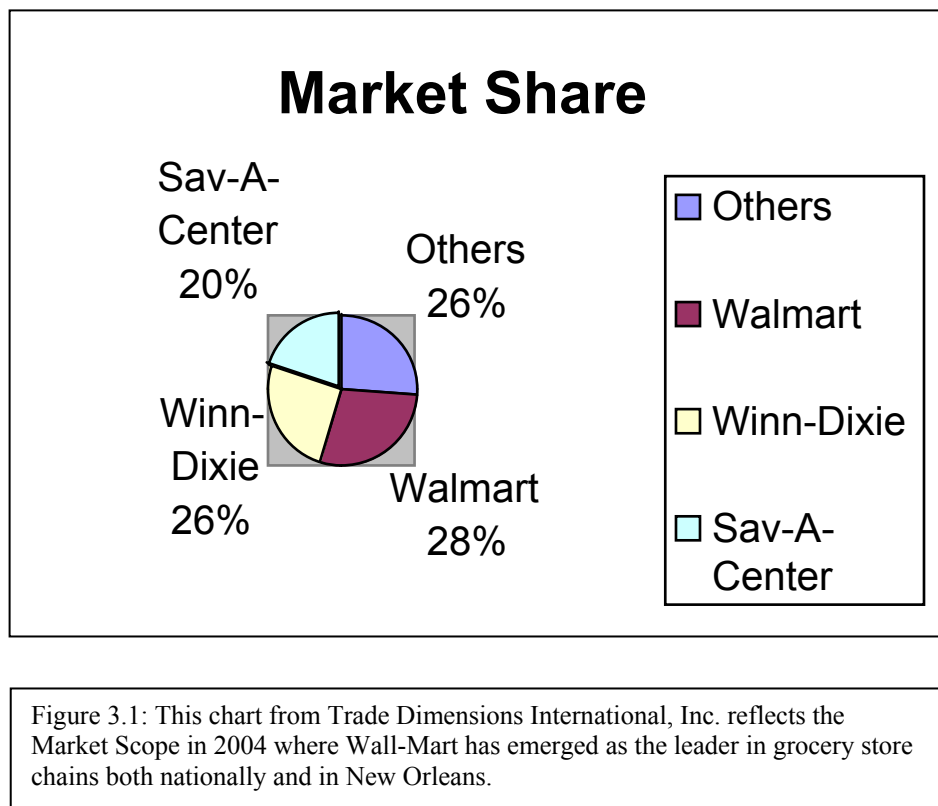
Food production and access to food has always had a political element in America from Jeffersonian ideals of agricultural superiority to the bread riots at the turn of the twentieth century in the Jewish ghettos of New York City (Tindal & Shi 1999). In the twenty-first century, food and its abundance, its quality, its locality, its diversity, and its access continues to hold associations of privilege that politicize the atmosphere surrounding food. In addition, the growing disparity between rich and poor in America is reminiscent of the disparity seen during the industrial revolution that transformed America in the nineteenth century (Tindal and Shi 1999; Chomsky 1993). Concepts of the free market became the vanguard for the industrial revolution, which began in Western Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Tindal and Shi 1999). Those free market ideals are again the trumpeted call of America's future and have been tied to concepts of freedom and democracy. This "free market fundamentalism" as labeled by Cornel West, in a lecture he gave at the University of New Orleans in 2005, is critical to the examination of the politics of food.

According to Andrei Shleifer, the current realization that "private ownership is the crucial source of incentives to innovate and become efficient" has moved "reform governments throughout the formerly socialist world" to implement massive privatization programs (1998:135–36). The argument is that private ownership strengthens the owner's incentives to make investments that lower costs for consumers, thus improving

services (Shleifer 1998:137). Around the globe, the effects of the open door global market with limited regulations is having an impact on local economies including the production and consumption of food. In New Orleans, the concerns over a global supply of food are raised by sugar producers, oysterman and fisherman, and by regional strawberry and dairy farmers. In other countries, there is a concern about the “Americanization” of the food system where McDonald’s replaces the local restaurant or where market demands to grow certain items like one variety of corn, as in Mexico, or sugar as in Brazil (c.f., Scheper-Hughes 1992) will displace the traditional and sustainable farming practices.

In the United States we have seen the global market impact not only our food production practices, as we have turned to corporate and industrialized production of food and have virtually abandoned the family farm, but also impact how food is distributed and by whom. The “grocery store wars” for example, are bringing to light the troubles with the “ideal” free market as promoted by F.A. Hayek (1944). According to Hayek, it is only in the free market that freedom can be achieved (1944). This freedom comes theoretically in our choices. However, as the economic structure becomes more and more competitive, there has been a narrowing of choice. Corporations are merging, grocery stores are closing and food production is becoming uniform (Brannon 2005; Carr 2005; Bolner 2003; Schneider 2003; Norberg-Hodge, Merrifield & Gorelick 2003; Lee 2003; D’Innocenzio 2003; Gorelick 1998). In New Orleans, local supermarkets like Dorignac’s, which has provided food to New Orleanians for 57 years, are feeling the heat of competition from Wal-Mart and Whole Foods Market (Brannon 2005). Others, like Schwegmanns, closed under the pressure after filing for bankruptcy in 1999 (Brannon

2005). In 2005, a southern regional chain, Winn Dixie, filed for bankruptcy. It seems the giants of the supermarket world are winning the battle of “consumer choice” (Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1).



<u>Stakeholders</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Time Frame/ Approach</u>	<u>Scale/ Unit of Analysis</u>	<u>Sources of Power</u>	<u>Interests/ Focus</u>	<u>Positions/ Goals</u>
<i>Global/ Industrial Food System</i>						
<u>Conventional Food System</u> 1. Fast Food restaurants 2. Convenience Stores 3. Corner Stores 4. Corporate Supermarkets 5. Local Supermarkets 6. Wholesalers 7. Distribution Centers 8. Processors	1. Food as commodity 2. Profit 3. Efficiency 4. Scientific (biotech)	1. Short-term profits 2. Long-term market dominance 3. Reactive	1. Global/ transnational corporate scale 2. Market economy model 3. Economic analysis	1. Top-down production 2. Concentration of market players 3. Control of resources	1. Large-scale production 2. Vertical integration 3. Control of production, distribution and marketing 4. Homogenization of food and palates	1. Reduction of economic risk – vertical and horizontal integration 2. Product specialization 3. Control of market share 4. Influence consumer shopping and eating habits

Table 3.1: This table provided by STEPS for a Healthier New Orleans, demonstrates the conventional food system both globally and locally in 2004.

When considering the spatial access to food via large grocery stores in New Orleans, the idea that privatization increases access to quality services comes into question. Just who does the private marketplace serve? The implications of class, race, gender, and the history of discrimination that are embedded in the American and capitalist economic system must be considered in the investigation of food access and the sociospatial reality of grocery store locations. The competition that is supposed to exist in the free market to drive prices down for the benefit of the consumer cannot operate when there is not even a market in existence, as in the Ninth Ward. In fact, it could be argued that in this free market economy, where private enterprise follows the money, we find the causality of unequal food distribution and unequal food prices in places like the

urban landscape of New Orleans (King 2004:1). According to anthropologist Eric Wolf, a Marxist perspective on the capitalist mode of production demonstrates that:

The capitalist mode of production determines distribution. Those who detain the means of production can also detain the commodities produced. Those who produce the commodities must buy them back from the owners of the means of production. Means of production, in turn circulate only among those with capital to acquire them (1982:77).

The inequality in the system of food distribution must be placed in the larger context of infrastructure, where the distribution of resources is intricately tied to the capitalist mode of production. Examining the structure of food distribution in New Orleans in particular, and around the country and the world more generally, invites a look at the causality of unequal food access. Unequal food distribution opens the door for a critique of the dominant mode of production, capitalism (c.f., Harris 1999).

Two examples, one in Bom Jesus, Brazil and the second in Harlem, New York, demonstrate the impact of globalization and neoliberal economics on local economies in the twenty-first century. Beginning in Brazil, Nancy Scheper-Hughes describes the impact of colonialism upon the local market of Bom Jesus (1992). According to Scheper-Hughes, Bom Jesus was “originally part of a large land grant awarded by the Portuguese crown to a sixteenth-century colonist” (1992:73). By the nineteenth-century, Bom Jesus was controlled by Antônio José Guimarães, “a cotton and a sugar planter, slaveowner, and (later) textile merchant” (Scheper-Hughes 1992:74). Bom Jesus experienced the impact of “modernization” and industrialization with the advent of shoe factories in the 1960s however, “by 1989 the shoe industry in Bom Jesus was practically moribund,” while sugar production remained strong (Scheper-Hughes 1992:75).

Scheper-Hughes explains the effects of mono-crop production on the local food supply in Bom Jesus:

Over the decades the dominance of the sugar monoculture has caused distortions in the production and marketing of foodstuffs. As a result of the destruction of a peasant-producer base ... the quantity, variety, and quality of vegetables and fruits sold in the weekly (open-air marketplace) have declined precipitously. Moreover, the majority of vegetable and fruit vendors today are not small producers themselves but rather middlemen selling produce grown in other regions of the Northeast and even in other states of Brazil (1992:75).

The realities of food access and production in Bom Jesus as described by Scheper-Hughes can be contextualized as some of the effects of global production pressures on a local economy in the Third World (1992). In addition, her description of the production and marketing of foodstuffs in Bom Jesus is strikingly similar to New Orleans.

If the Third World is experiencing negative effects in food supply and production as a result of globalization, and if as Noam Chomsky has suggested, inner cities in the United States resemble Third World countries (1993), then it begs the question, are the global effects on food supply and production similar in the inner cities of the United States to that of Third World towns, such as Bom Jesus? The answer to this question is not an easy one. According to Mamadou Chinyelu, inner cities in the United States, such as Harlem, with its predominately African American population, are often a similar target for capitalist interests as countries and towns in the Third World (1999). Chinyelu points to the recent interests of large, corporate businesses to locate in inner city Harlem, as the suburbs have become oversaturated, and with the understanding that expansion is necessary for success in the capitalist system (1999:63). According to Chinyelu:

The masters of capitalism are confidently going about launching new ventures to fill their coffers. One such venture is to exploit the once intentionally-neglected inner city market in the U.S. Such a venture is

attractive to the capitalists for four primary reasons. First, the Euro-American population is declining in numbers ... Secondly, the suburbs, an enclave of middle and upper-middle class Euro-Americans, has experienced commercial oversaturation ... Thirdly, U.S. based transnational corporations, those companies that market their goods and services in foreign countries, are increasingly finding that many of these foreign countries are politically unstable, thus causing a risk to their foreign investments ... A fourth reason that inner cities are becoming attractive places to do business is that, unlike third world countries, the infrastructure in inner cities is already in place (1999:63).

Chinyelu also notes that large, corporate, chain businesses, move into the inner city and displace local businesses as well as informal business and community networks (1999:67). The example Chinyelu gives is that of the informal Harlem market on 125th Street, where vendors have sold merchandise under the radar of regulations (1999:70–71). As outside businesses desire a location in Harlem, greater pressures, in the form of regulations have been placed on the informal vendors. According to Chinyelu:

Many reasons were given as to why the vendors had to be removed, such as they were unlicensed, they were not paying taxes, they sold bootleg merchandise, they sold the same merchandise as the store owners but at cheaper prices, they allowed little room for pedestrians to walk on the sidewalk, and they littered the area. Even if some of these complaints were valid, there was never a serious effort by the city to remedy these grievances, other than with the death sentence of removal (1999:71).

The crackdown on the informal market in Harlem, suggests Chinyelu, is a result of the pressures from outside businesses to diminish the competition (1999:71).

According to Chinyelu, the displacement of local Harlem businesses by outside and corporate businesses has resulted in the narrowing of consumer choice for residents of Harlem as well as the absence of local dollars circulating locally (1999:61–78). In fact, Chinyelu describes something similar to “the company store” model where workers are employed by a particular business and then must spend their earned money at this same business in order to buy food, and other household supplies. The dollars that once

circulated within the Harlem community, continuously investing in the community, are now leaving Harlem, draining the area of its wealth. Chinyelu claims:

Here again, like they've done in any number of third world countries, the masters of capitalism follow their mercenaries into their most conquered land, this time it being Harlem, to subject the natives to economic bondage (1999:78)

The point that Chinyelu makes about a new strategy of businesses to locate in the inner city can be witnessed in New Orleans as Wal-Mart located in the newly gentrified Lower Garden District neighborhood in 2004, and in 2005, a new Lowe's home improvement store located along Elysian Fields Avenue near the Gentilly neighborhood. The locations of these outside corporate businesses in New Orleans has been the subject of some debate. While the opening of Lowe's was met with little to no media or public criticism, the Wal-Mart location was hotly contested. The fear of local merchants was expressed in large signs placed in storefront windows along Magazine Street that said, "NO Wal-Mart." The question remains however, even with the arrival of some corporate stores in the inner city of New Orleans, can a conclusion be made that soon the city will experience a greater influx of outside business, similar to Chinyelu's description of Harlem? It could be argued that the captive urban population of some neighborhoods in New Orleans, like the Ninth Ward, will attract the expansion interests of businesses. Or, it could be argued that the location of corporate businesses in New Orleans, are following gentrification, where households with greater wealth and buying power are claiming neighborhoods.

The recent Whole Foods battle in the Mid-City neighborhood called Bayou St. John is an example that points to a continuing trend of supermarket chains abandoning the inner city in order to build bigger and make more money in the suburbs. Whole

Foods Market has been located in the Bayous St. John neighborhood for decades and has the qualities of a small corner grocery store specializing in organic and health foods. The Mid-City Whole Foods occupies an 8,000-square-foot building on Esplanade Avenue (O'Brien 2005:10). This small grocery store has become a staple or an anchor for the Bayou St. John neighborhood. However, Whole Foods, over the years, has also become a growing chain across America, building large box stores that rival Wal-Mart. In 2002 Whole Foods built a 28,000-square-foot store in an Uptown New Orleans location presenting New Orleanians with the reality that Whole Foods is not a small co-op or local store but a national corporation that is seeking expansion. In May of 2005, Whole Foods will open another large store, a 52,000-square-foot store in Metairie, and has announced it will close the small Mid-City store in April of 2005. This announcement was a wake-up call to many Bayou St. John and downtown residents who rely on the Whole Foods Market for their shopping needs (O'Brian 2005:10).

The questions remain concerning the driving forces behind grocery store location, including the location of Whole Foods Market in Metairie. Is the Whole Foods Market's abandonment of their Mid-City store an example of a trend that has affected New Orleans neighborhoods for many years? Is the Whole Foods Corporation relocating in order to reach the niche shopper with greater buying power? Perhaps the location choices of corporate retail businesses and grocery stores are more a matter of locating in areas where elimination of local competition is possible while still being able to tap into a workforce that will settle for minimum wage jobs. It remains to be seen if New Orleans grocery store locations will follow Whole Foods to the suburbs, or follow Wal-Mart and Lowe's, which have located in the inner city.

In the larger context of globalization, the World Bank and the Free Trade Organization have become the targets of protest. Corporations become demonized as they are seen as “tightening their hold over the world’s food supply, inciting farmers and other citizens around the world to call for boycotts, to attack fast-food chains and to uproot genetically engineered crops” (Norberg-Hodge 2002:1). According to Helena Norberg- Hodge, Todd Merrifield and Steven Gorelick, all this turbulence has its origins in colonialism with the spread of new ideals about food production, specifically the introduction of mono-cropping for items like cacao and sugar, and in the industrialization and globalization of food and farming (2002). As a result, local and world protesters and food activists are in search of new models of food distribution that bring the food economy home and which create sustainable food sheds for cities and nations. Farmers markets, which are similar to the old New Orleans public markets, are espoused as one of the solid alternatives to global agribusiness and are encouraged as a protest technique that will benefit local economies in the process of disrupting corporate monopolies on food. Local New Orleans activists and community organizers are staking a claim in the political debate. The world issues of food must be considered in the evaluation of New Orleans and its access to food, as no community on the planet is free of global influence.

Local Market Revitalization in a Global Economy

With the destruction of the markets in many cities, and with the privatization of the markets in New Orleans, the wholesale system of produce distribution has almost entirely replaced local farmers. It has dramatically altered the relationship between urban and rural, and it has altered the relationship between neighborhoods and community. In

the destructive aftermath of urban renewal around the United States, where entire neighborhoods were destroyed in the name of “progress,” there has been born a renewed interest in neighborhoods, and in the community life of the street within neighborhoods (Caro 1974). This community life includes people sitting on their porches, neighbors visiting, a comfortable place for mixing, mingling, and people watching, and for all of the social networks that once flourished in the traditional walking cities. New Orleans is in the process of rediscovering that what sustained this life was a central market or a market street where one could buy locally grown produce and a freshly baked loaf of bread while visiting with the farmer who grew the tomatoes for the evening meal or catching up on the latest family news with the local baker.

Many cities around the United States have reassessed their vision for their downtowns and town centers. A new vision of cities as sets of sub-areas and as “spaces of individual experience,” has been promoted by urban activists, city planners, and business advocates (Abbott 1996). According to Carl Abbott, in city after city, concepts of neighborhood revitalization have been affecting the efforts of community activists to alter the disconnected urban environment and to bring back some semblance of the old neighborhood (1996). There is a romanticized quality to the efforts that emphasize the old walking city and its numerous conveniences. Abbott explains, that this old style neighborhood is credited with creating a unique community atmosphere unlike suburban development in which populations leave a deteriorating urban wasteland behind (1996). In addition, the shift in America to a service based economy, in which tourism is a major player in economic decisions, has affected the vision and future planning strategies of cities.

One strategy in planning that began in the early 1970s, is the use of markets and main-street development as tools to improve communities and to spark economic development (Gratz 2001; Gratz & Mintz 1998; Festing 1998; Day 1997; Jumper 1974; Padbert 1971; Pyle 1971). Community revitalization, “multiplier effect” economic development (where a central market or market street sparks other development in the area), tourism enhancement, and preservation are the championed results of the new urbanist vision, and farmers markets are seen as vital players in this process (Ybarra 2005; Curry 2004; Hora 2004; Elie 2003; Nabhan 2002; Gratz 2001, Gratz & Mintz 1998; McCarthy 1996; Spitzer & Baum 1995; Pyle 1971). Examples of the farmers market craze can be found in New York’s Union Square Green Market, San Francisco’s Ferry Building Farmers Market, and Shaker Square in Cleveland, Ohio. In fact, in 1980 there were 1,200 farmers markets in the United States, which grew to 2,400 in 1996. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the number of farmers markets has increased nearly 80% since 1994. In the year 2004 the USDA reported more than 3,600 markets with a national annual average of market sales reaching \$888 million dollars.

Carl Abbott’s explanation of the historical progression of five strategies for downtown development offers a backdrop and a context with which to consider public market history and farmers market development in the United States and in New Orleans. Abbott explains that from 1945 to 1955 the downtown in American cities was conceived as a “unitary center” (1996:408). From 1955 to 1965 downtowns were “understood as failing real estate markets” requiring “clearance associated with the urban renewal program” (1996:408). In the time frame of 1965 to 1975, Abbott acknowledges the

reactive movements against urban renewal and the image of downtowns as a “federation of subdistricts” calling for “conservation, historic preservation, and human-scale planning” (1996:408). The downtown, seen as a “set of individual experiences” from 1975 to 1985, was a continuation of the subdistrict analysis from the decade before and demanded new regulations for design and “public assistance for cultural facilities, retail markets, open spaces, and other amenities” (Abbott 1996:408). Finally, from 1985 to the present (2005), downtowns have been viewed as command posts in the global economy (Abbott 1996:408).

Understanding the changing ideology of urban development in downtowns with Abbott’s historical outline, the revitalization of farmers markets in urban centers can be interpreted as part of the reaction against urban renewal and as part of a new effort to mark cities as spaces of experience. In addition, farmers markets have become a strategic tool in the efforts of urban and food activists to maintain local distinction and promote local economic development in the face of a growing global economy. In New Orleans and around the United States, farmers markets have become symbols of hope for urban centers, locales for activism and change, spaces for community cohesion and economic development, as well as targets of critique. Farmers markets, in the free market of American capitalism and under hyped slogans of “individual responsibility” and “ownership” from neoliberal doctrine, are experiencing critique from those who reside in “food deserts” and from those who question the legitimacy of the market concept in revitalizing neighborhoods.

An early example of the use of a farmers market in the new urbanist efforts to revitalize a city center is the Rouse Company’s plan for Boston’s Faneuil Hall/Waterfront

project, which began, in accordance with Abbott's trajectory, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This newly developed attraction of open spaces, retail complexes and a farmers market exemplifies what has come to be called "festival markets" (Abbott 1996:421). The "festival markets" incorporate a diversity of uses within their construction, yet much of what began in market projects like the one in Boston as a locally supportive and "home grown" atmosphere has been altered with time and with new assumptions about tourist based economies. According to Roberta Gratz and Norman Mintz, "Local businesses (once the backbone of Boston's Faneuil Hall/Waterfront project), now have a diminished presence...Chains dominate...the local feeling of the food court is about all that remains of its original feeling" (1998:222). This concern for the loss of small and local businesses and the loss of the local feel or culture of a public space is reminiscent of the current grumbles about Magazine Street in New Orleans. A *Times-Picayune* article detailed the fears of longtime local business owners along Magazine Street as they experience the pains of a successful market street (Thomas 2005:1). Magazine Street merchants see rents skyrocketing and feel the pressures of the rising costs. The fear is that chain stores like "The Gap" or "Banana Republic" will replace stores unique to New Orleans such as "Winky's" and "Trashy Diva."

The criticisms and fears that are voiced against the corporate or business model of market development can be compared to the praises given to producer only farmers markets and the farmers markets in which locally grown produce and locally produced food items are the focus. The early 1970s saw the rebirth of farmers markets that were small, usually grass-roots initiatives begun as efforts to stimulate deteriorating neighborhoods in both urban and rural settings. New York's Union Square Greenmarket

exemplifies these grassroots efforts. Urban activist, architect and planner Barry Benepe opened the Union Square Greenmarket in 1976 with fifteen farmers in what was promoted as an effort to clean up Union Square and spark redevelopment in the surrounding area of the park (Gratz & Mintz 1998). According to Roberta Gratz and Norman Mintz, “Marketers gradually displaced some of the unsavory users” of the park, mostly “drug dealers, prostitutes, and the homeless” and sparked “the revitalization of the area” (1998:213). Small businesses and many fine restaurants began opening up around the market area while the changed face of Union Square demonstrated the impact of the farmers market. The concept quickly grew. Gratz and Mintz explain that, “Greenmarket is actually the trademark for what is now a network of 23 farmers markets scattered around New York City. These markets attract at least 200 farmers, and register more than twenty million dollars. Half of that sales total is registered at the Union Square Greenmarket, the only one to function four days a week, attracting 5,000 daily shoppers and 20,000 on a busy Saturday” (1998:213).

Big cities like New York are not the only witnesses to the “multiplier effect” of farmers markets. Pasco, Washington with a population of 18,000 people revitalized its downtown Main Street by following the Union Square Greenmarket example. In 1985, the city of Pasco constructed a simple but permanent steel shed for a weekly farmers market. The market and its success has been credited with the growth that has taken place in the downtown. According to Gratz and Mintz, “New businesses are emerging out of the market, a renewal of an age-old but timeless economic process” (1998:216).

With the success of farmers market growth however, some have come to question and critique farmers markets as part of a larger process of gentrification. As Gratz and

Mintz pointed out, the markets are gleefully seen as the catalysts of displacement of “drug dealers, prostitutes and the homeless” (1998:213). Labels like these can also be interpreted as classist and even racist as “drug dealer,” “prostitute” and “homeless” become synonymous for “poor,” “unemployed” and/or “Black” (c.f. Chomsky 1993). In addition, there is a growing concern that the economic success of the farmers markets will precipitate their doom. Consider the example of Brookline, Massachusetts, where a farmers market that has been on the corner of Webster Street near Coolidge Corner more than twenty years is being replaced by an eight-story hotel. This old style market center was not a project of new urbanism but rather an historic relic of what new urbanists hail as ideal. Yet, in the changing perceptions of neighborhoods with their “revitalization,” comes destruction of community networks similar to urban renewal. The difference is that the neighborhood is marketing itself as a reinvigorated urban community of old. In this movement to better neighborhoods, we see the displacement of people with modest means, the disappearance of locally owned stores, and the squeezing out of public spaces like the Brookline Farmers Market. Gentrification in the guise of new urbanism places farmers markets on shaky ground where they become victims of their own success and where neighborhood redevelopment becomes a synonym for displacement.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GREENING OF NEW ORLEANS

Crescent City Farmers Market

At 8:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning on the corner of Magazine Street and Girod, in the heart of the New Orleans Central Business District, the colorful tents of the Crescent City Farmers Market can be seen from a distance. The sounds of a jazz band often echo out into the streetscape while a hustle of anxious bodies parade into the market space to purchase the seasonal offerings of regional farmers and urban gardeners. The market has transformed the blacktop parking lot into a festival-like mirage in a sea of skyscrapers. Painted beyond the tents is a pastoral mural illuminating the featured event. This jovial atmosphere of transformed space occurs every week with the gathering of produce carrying trucks and the chaos of setting up tents and produce stands for the city's "mother" of all markets (Figures 4.1 through 4.6).



Figures 4.1 and 4.2: People shop and talk at the Saturday Crescent City Farmers Market located on the corner of Magazine Street and Girod.



Figures 4.3 through 4.6: Vendors at the Saturday Crescent City Farmers Market sell a variety of items from seasonal herbs, fruit and vegetables to homemade preserves and fresh flowers.

New Orleans was late to catch the wave of farmers market development that began sweeping the country in the 1970s and 1980s (Gratz 2001; Gratz & Mintz 1998; Festing 1998; Day 1997; Jumper 1974; Padbert 1971; Pyle 1971). Farmers markets across the country have been taking root in urban and rural locations as part of the efforts of grass roots activism, city planning initiatives, and groups of farmers creating producer only markets. The Economics Institute at Loyola University, under the direction of Richard McCarthy, began the project of establishing a farmers market in New Orleans in September 1995. The Saturday Crescent City Farmers Market began a new chapter in the discourse of New Orleans public culture. The Crescent City Farmers markets reflect the history of the public markets in New Orleans. They utilize and build on New Orleans

history, culture and festival atmosphere for their success. Each market is more like a special event (where live musicians, local chefs, and local farmers and gardeners are the focus) rather than a typical shopping trip to the nearest chain grocery store. “Place-making,” described by the Projects for Public Spaces organization as the creation of “people places, alive with vitality and commerce” (1995) as well as community, and New Orleans rich food culture are highlighted at each market event. The markets feature the regional fruit and vegetable varieties of the southern delta and play on the agrarian history of place and of individuals. The individual vendors at the markets, as much as the food, become the draw. Often the weekly event will feature a New Orleans chef and will invite New Orleans musicians to play for shoppers as they browse the market’s stands and chat with vendors. This festival style or event-type market place differs from the “festival markets” such as the one at Boston’s Faneuil Hall, and instead draws on the festival culture that is perhaps unique to New Orleans. In a city and region of festivals it is certainly a clever addition to the urban landscape.

According to Darlene Wolnik, the assistant director of the Crescent City Farmers Market:

The food culture of New Orleans is the actual tapestry of the city—Mardi Gras, Jazz Fest—all of these things come about with food and I think that is the culture.

By utilizing New Orleans culture the market finds its distinction from other farmers markets. Wolnik explains:

Fun and identity, that makes it special. The fun of it is distinct from other markets. New Orleans is a town of fun beyond all other things. We make it fun for the shoppers. We want the shoppers to say “gee that was hilarious I have got to go back there.” Richard McCarthy, (the director of the Crescent City Farmers Market) went in this direction. It is interesting, because he didn’t go the direction of “help the farmers” or “its nutritious,”

he said instead “we are going to have a Yam-Boree” and “we are going to celebrate the yam,” or “I Yam in support of the market”, crazy puns like that. Or “celebrate the Creole tomato and do the Strawberry Jam.” All of that has such an air of fun. What was authentic and special about the region and culture quickly became what is authentic and special about the market.

Also, Richard loves the story, the personal story of the vendors or shoppers. He tells the stories of the individuals with the history of the city tied in and it’s phenomenal. Every one of our vendors at some point has felt special because we have told their story.

According to Wolnik the market is really an experience:

Nobody would come every week just for the produce, as good as it is. It can be rainy, cold or hot and we couldn’t have made it more difficult with four locations at four different times – so that is not going to do it. We really make it an experience. Every market has its own identity, every market has been created.

In addition to the experience, the Crescent City Farmers Market has embraced a European model, which according to Wolnik “is really very much about a small scale, friendly, public space where many different events occur, it becomes the town square.”

The Saturday Market has grown, and the Economics Institute now has initiated three more farmers markets in the city. These markets transform the space of the Uptown Square parking lot (located near Broadway and River Road) on Tuesdays, the historic French Market on Wednesdays (Figures 4.7 through 4.10) and the American Can Company’s parking lot, in Mid-City (near Bayou St. John), on Thursdays. The farmers markets have reestablished a place where the urban and the rural meet. They have become places where people can meet and talk with one another while shopping for breads, and greens, and tomatoes and seafood. In addition, the farmers markets in New Orleans have boosted economic development in the neighborhoods in which they are located, and markets are now being promoted as a mechanism to increase the tourist

based economy in the city. Certainly the markets have demonstrated to vendors and shoppers and nearby residents that they can be catalysts for change.



Figures 4.7 and 4.8: The Wednesday Crescent City Farmers Market is located adjacent to the historic French Market



Figures 4.9 and 4.10: The Wednesday Crescent City Farmers Market has brought urban gardeners and regional farmers back to the French Market

The markets have also re-introduced healthier food and added an educated explanation about seasonality to the curious shopper. Many of the Crescent City Farmers Market vendors see themselves as teachers when it comes to seasonality. According to

Jeanette Bell (Figure 4.11) who has been selling her homegrown roses at the Saturday market since 2001:

People are accustomed to going to the supermarket and regardless what they want is there. So this market emphasizes the seasonal aspect in a way that creates anticipation. For example, I'll say, guess what, in December we're going to have those Myer lemons or in July we're going to have figs.

Paul Arceneaux (Figure 4.12), the Crescent City Farmers Markets pesto vendor and a Parkway Partners urban gardener explains that:

One of the biggest things the market does is teach people that things grow in seasons.

In addition to teaching shoppers about seasonality and health, the markets are solid participants in the preservation process of historic buildings, neighborhoods, farms and the public culture of New Orleans.



Figures 4.11 and 4.12: Jeanette Bell sells her homegrown roses to a customer on the left, while Paul Arceneaux, on the right, displays his latest pesto creation.

According to Benjamin Fried in a recent article featured on the Project for Public Spaces website, “a good public market is not only an economic engine, it’s also a social gathering place that builds community” (2003:1). Certainly the atmosphere at the Crescent City Farmers Markets is bursting with community activity and is indeed a community gathering space. The shoppers parade from table to table asking questions, schmoozing with vendors. Vendors truly seem to be enjoying the outdoor atmosphere and their role in the market setting. People of all ages and ethnicities come and go with bushels of flowers and bags of Creole tomatoes. For good or bad, this farmers market experience in New Orleans is an event, not a chore.

Status Up

Some have criticized the Crescent City Farmers Markets in New Orleans for not addressing the disparity of food access in the city. The markets are seen as locating in upscale, “safe,” neighborhoods that have ensured their success. It has been suggested in conversations with people who live in New Orleans’ “food deserts,” many of whom have never shopped at the market due to transportation issues, that the market is not meant for them. The locations of the Crescent City Farmers Markets are seen as following the supermarket model, where location is chosen on the basis of perceived buying power and where each purchase indicates class distinction.

The organizers of the Crescent City Farmers Market are aware of such criticisms and insist that the market locations are a product of community partnerships that avoid neighborhood politics. In addition, market organizers like Darlene Wolnik see the pattern of farmers market proliferation as a step in the right direction for addressing food security

in New Orleans and insist that the “farmers markets are for everyone.” The Crescent City Farmers Market has made efforts to demonstrate to shoppers that much of the produce at the market is affordable for all income levels by conducting price comparisons.

According to Wolnik:

Comparison of prices showed that there was little difference in price but it was hard to compare because the market offers items that are not available at the grocery like fresh okra, Louisiana strawberries, satsumas or Creole cream cheese. It’s like comparing apples and oranges. The price of greens at the market however, cannot be beat at any large chain grocery stores.

In addition, market organizers insist that the market is fulfilling its mission to build sustainable economic development in the greater New Orleans area while benefiting farmers and urban gardeners and those who shop at the market.

Still, some vendors at the market are aware of the distinction that is served up and their role in the promotion of the market. Vendors provide products in a niche shopping environment and vendors see the market shopper as not the “typical” shopper. Instead of performing the chore of grocery shopping, the market shopper is participating in an event where shopping is employed to lay claim to an identity of status. According to Daniel Miller, shopping as part of material culture studies “is not just approached as a thing in itself. It is found to be a means to uncover, through the close observation of peoples practices, something about their relationships” (1998:4). The vendors at the market acknowledge these relationships and the element of status.

According to Paul Arceneaux, the pesto vendor at the market, “there are many different reasons for people to shop and different markets have different groups.” He explains that the Thursday market is “more of a prepared food market. You get the people who work and they are on their way home. They are looking for something quick

to eat.” On the other hand, Paul sees the shoppers at the Saturday market as “dedicated foodies.” Jeanette Bell discusses the similarities between the social status of the clientele at the farmers markets and Whole Foods Market:

Whole Foods services that portion of society, the upper crust portion of society. They still want the nicer things. They still want fresh things, well prepared things. We have the same clientele as Whole Foods. People who want the fresh things. The fact that they would want it from Whole Foods means that they’re the kind of person who would want it from the market.

The educated shoppers at the market and the “dedicated foodies” who are those folks, according to Paul Arceneaux, that are “going to wake up on a Saturday morning when you can sleep late, get to the market for 7:30 A.M. to get in line to pick up some tomatoes,” are acknowledged by the vendors in endearing ways. The descriptions given by Jeanette Bell, for example, demonstrate sentimentality, as though her personal validation is found through the consumptive process. Bell explains why people buy her flowers:

If they just want something that looks decorative they buy from other vendors who sell the big mixed bouquets. But if they want one Camellia they come and see me and I like that. If they want to do something for a party and they want it to look like it’s from their garden they come to me. And sometimes they’re going to visit someone in a nursing home or hospital and they want a little something that looks like its from the garden and from their heart... The Santa Fe restaurant (for example), doesn’t like things from the florist. They call them chemically over-processed. They like anything from the garden. They have become accustomed to natural looking flowers, so the flowers from the florist never look natural to them.

The distinction that Bell describes concerns more than the market shopping experience. Distinction of class and taste is what people are buying at the market in its symbolic form (cf. Bourdieu 1998).

According to Daniel Miller the concept of “the treat” usually “regarded as an extra extravagance that lays outside the constraints of necessity” is an essential part of the

shopping experience that ultimately revolves around the centrality of thrift (1998:40). At the Crescent City Farmers Market, the centrality of thrift may be seen as that which is to be avoided, for the market experience is itself “the treat.” The market is set up as more of a festival atmosphere than a supermarket. The atmosphere described by Darlene Wolnik as “fun” and “an experience,” implies that just by choosing to go to the market one is “treating” themselves. Certainly “the treat” as Miller describes it, is different in various contexts. At the farmers market “the treat” is part of what is for sale. As Jeanette Bell notes, “the treat” could be for someone else or for the shopper. Who “the treat” is for (self or someone else) becomes irrelevant as “the treat” is consistently purchased with underlying motives which point back to the shopper and their reflections of self. In this motivation, this reflection—is distinction (Bourdieu 1984).

Slow Foods and Radical Greens

The Crescent City Farmers Markets have brought New Orleans into the “greening” process where quality, locality, taste and issues of health influence purchases rather than bright packaging and slick marketing campaigns. In this process, one finds politics of food and health, images of self and body, and the purchase of distinction and status. While the Crescent City Farmers market, with its focus on culture, fun and identity may not appeal to everyone, its appeal to a larger audience in New Orleans seems more a matter of access. As the farmers market concept becomes introduced and accessible to a greater number of people, i.e. those who live in food deserts, and as people identify the farmers market model with the old public market system, neighborhoods

throughout the city have started looking to implement a similar model. At the same time, farmers and urban gardeners are looking to participate.

The Crescent City Farmers Market has sparked a political whirlwind of grass roots movements concerning food. A number of activist groups and community organizations, concerned about food security, public health, and food quality and locality, have grown out of the initial efforts of Richard McCarthy and the farmers market. For example, organizations such as a local chapter of the Slow Foods Movement, Food Not Bombs, Earthshare Gardens, New Orleans Food and Farm Network, the New Orleans Food Co-op, the Community-Based Mitigation Committee, STEPS for a Healthier US, and the Downtown Neighborhood Market Consortium, are all working toward improving food access in New Orleans (Tables 3.1 and 4.1).

As one steps into the world of “green,” it becomes clear that the concerns over food issues are numerous and varied. The Slow Food Movement for example was founded in Italy in 1986. According to the Slow Foods website, its original aim was to:

Counter the tide of standardization of taste and the manipulation of consumers around the world ... The movement believes that any traditional product encapsulates the flavors of its region of origin, not to mention local customs and ancient production techniques. With this in mind, Slow Food is working not only to protect the historic, artistic and environmental heritage of places of gastronomic pleasure (cafés, inns, bistros), but also to safeguard food and agricultural heritage (crop biodiversity, artisan techniques, sustainable agriculture, rural development and food traditions).

The New Orleans chapter of the Slow Foods Movement focuses on preserving “traditional” methods of food production and food items that are thought to be distinct to the region. For example, “Creole Cream Cheese” produced by the Mauthe’s, a local Louisiana family who sells their dairy items at the Crescent City Farmers Market, has

been added to an expanding international list of food items that are declared “Slow Food.” This list acknowledges those food items that may be on the verge of disappearing from production and are thought to hold cultural significance to a place. Essentially, the Slow Foods Movement is embracing a type of cultural conservation or preservation (c.f., Redner 2004).

Food Not Bombs has a distinct political message that the United States should be more concerned with feeding people than with building and using bombs and fighting wars. According to the Food Not Bombs website, there are hundreds of chapters sharing “free vegetarian food with hungry people and protesting war and poverty throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia and Australia.” The local Louisiana chapter feeds hungry people a free dinner weekly.

Others like EarthShare Gardens and the New Orleans Food and Farm Network are interested in finding creative strategies to ensure food security or access to healthy food and healthy food education. They are also working to ensure social justice. Residents who live in “food deserts” like the Ninth Ward where there are no large grocery stores are the target for such campaigns as mobile produce stands, community kitchens, community gardens, and urban farms, all of which seek to increase the access of food to residents.

The Community-Based Mitigation Committee (CBMC) and the Downtown Neighborhood Market Consortium (DNMC) are concerned not only with increasing access to healthy and affordable food in the Ninth Ward neighborhood, but also with creating spaces for community cohesion and economic development. The CBMC and the DNMC are looking to farmers markets as the catalyst for change. Two market locations are currently being discussed along St. Claude Avenue. One proposed location for a

Ninth Ward community farmers market is on the corner of Press and St. Claude which borders the Marigny, Bywater, St. Roch and St. Claude neighborhoods, and the other is on the corner of Tennessee and St. Claude on the east side of the Industrial Canal.

From the perspective of community activists in New Orleans, the use of a farmers market or the creation of public space where the goals are to create community cohesion, local economic development, and a space where health education can be disseminated, is seen as a grass-roots strategy for success. Greta Gladney, a member of the Downtown Neighborhood Market Consortium (DNMC) and native New Orleanian who grew up in the Lower Ninth Ward talks about her experience at the New York “green” market and how this affected her vision for the Ninth Ward:

I went to New York City and I lived in Brooklyn for most of that time. I came back to New Orleans after 3 years. In New York I would visit the farmers market or “Green” market every Saturday at Grand Army Plaza and at Union Square. What I really liked about it was of course there was a large variety of produce and herbs and meat. You could also find eggs, wool, cheeses, breads, pastries, apple cider, flowers, plants, a wide variety of things to buy and crafts too. I liked how it could translate to other neighborhoods and I liked that the shoppers were really diverse, all ages, little kids in strollers, multi-ethnic, everyone came out for that Saturday event. What I saw at the farmers markets I brought back with me to New Orleans.

Also, when I was in New York I had the opportunity to go to Kenya to visit the Green Belt Movement and I stayed with Wangari Maathai. She started a tree planting movement. What I learned was that she had gone away to study abroad in biology and when she returned to her village the rivers had dried up because of the soil erosion and all the trees had been cut down to plant coffee and tea (the remnants of British colonialism). The women had to walk farther away to gather wood for fires, water and arrow root for dinner. Wangari went back and started the Green Belt Movement by planting trees in her back yard and then she went to the government and told them of her plans to plant over one million trees. It took off. Women began organizing in their villages and planting trees. Then they began to cultivate their own seedlings and began nurseries for the trees.

When Gladney returned to New Orleans after her experiences in New York and Kenya she began her journey to become a community activist and organizer:

I saw things as being pretty much the same in my community but I was different. The neighborhood was the same, the problems had not gone away or changed but I brought back ideas and experiences that could be used here in New Orleans and to address problems in the Lower Ninth Ward. I also found New Orleans with fresh eyes because I realized that blacks and whites in New Orleans have a very different experience in the city. I came to see New Orleans as a developing country and the Ninth Ward as a village in that country.

The DNMC with the help of Greta and the CBMC is poised to create two farmers markets in the Ninth Ward:

We are interested in creating a local economy where local dollars circulate locally. We will create jobs because we will employ people at the markets. We want to create an additional venue for farmers to sell their produce and we are also working to encourage micro-enterprising projects for crafts so people can start a business or supplement their income. We are working on a growers association to utilize vacant lots to grow produce. We are encouraging locals to grow for themselves and to sell at market. There is also an opportunity to develop a local economy with local produce.

The markets (in the United States and in New Orleans) were historically the places that people came to sell their wares and trade their goods so a farmers market is a micro-cosmos of markets and trade.

Greta and the DNMC are concerned about some of the issues that have faced other cities where gentrification and the success of “revitalization” has had a negative effect on the existing community:

We don’t want to petition our city leaders to bring in a supermarket. We want a farmers market instead. There needs to be something that the community owns, it is important that the Ninth Ward, African American community take responsibility and ownership of something. Also, it has been the experience of the Ninth Ward that political leaders or big business come into your community and then they leave. They are not committed long term to improving the quality of life for the people in the community. They don’t live there. Politicians come and go.

According to Greta Gladney, the DNMC is dedicated to developing a farmers market that “will address issues of food access, food security, food distribution, health, community cohesion, economic development and diversity.” It is the hope that a market in the Ninth Ward will transform the urban landscape in a positive way. Gladney points out that the problems she identifies in the neighborhood, “mainly, poverty, education, crime and health” are interrelated. She acknowledges that, “it’s going to take the work of neighborhood associations, merchants, schools, churches, everyone working together to effect change.” She sees the farmers market as a way “to engage all of the stakeholders and for community to take ownership.”

Urban community organizers who are interested in transforming the food landscape of their neighborhoods in New Orleans have plenty of examples from which to learn. The Anacostia neighborhood in Southeast Washington D.C., for example, is an urban area that is characterized by high unemployment, crime and poverty and has no supermarkets, similar to the Ninth Ward community and other “food deserts” in New Orleans (USDA 2001). Anacostia began a farmers market in July of 1999. Their farmers market is located in the parking lot of the Temple Baptist Church at 1225 W. Street and has increased the access to fresh produce for Anacostia residents. Other examples include the numerous food co-ops that have successfully located in urban centers like Central City Co-op in Houston, Texas. Community sustained agriculture programs (CSA), like Past Time Farms, which is located on the north shore in Louisiana, are introducing another alternative where individuals buy stock in the farm and receive in return seasonal produce for their family on a monthly basis. Individuals stake a claim in the ownership of the farm and take the risk, with the farmer, as to the success of the crop

yield for a particular year. There are over 1,000 CSAs around the country. Also, one can look to the mobile community food initiatives sprouting up from Scotland to Tucson, Arizona, which are bringing food to areas in need. This mobile alternative is reminiscent of mobile produce vendors that once flourished in every neighborhood in New Orleans.

The Community-Based Mitigation Committee (CBMC), which is planning to partner with the DNMC, has been creative in its search for partners to develop a farmers market in the Ninth Ward as they partnered for a one-time market event with the Crescent City Farmers Market's "White Boot Brigade" shrimpers. The White Boot Brigade shrimpers, named for the white boots that shrimpers wear, have participated in several traveling market events to increase the awareness of local seafood. The Crescent City Farmers Market model was employed for the one time event but the CBMC also focused on the health aspect of increasing resident's access to fresh produce by partnering with STEPS for a Healthier US, Parkway Partners and Bywater Hospital. Bywater Hospital conducted free diabetes and blood pressure tests for shoppers at the market event (Figures 4.14 through 4.18).



Figure 4.13: The welcoming sign for the CBMC/White Boot Brigade public information event



Figure 4.14 and 4.15: We can see in these pictures how the colorful tents, signs and farmers market atmosphere transformed the empty parking lot at Martin Luther King Jr. School on the corner of North Claiborne and Caffin Avenue, into a bustling community gathering space



Figures 4.16 and 4.17: On the left, Bywater Hospital gives free health screenings to market attendees. On the right, Chef Herb, from Chef Herb's Bistro gives a cooking demonstration using fresh Louisiana shrimp provided by the White Boot Brigade shrimpers and other local ingredients.

The food movements in New Orleans and around the country are creating a new paradigm, by emphasizing local food access in a global economic structure, and by focusing on sustainable and local development. The numerous food access strategies in New Orleans including the use of health education, and farmers market development as

community cohesion and economic development, is painting the town green. The larger idea for many is to bring the food economy home and to create a sustainable food shed for our city where residents in “food deserts” and in every neighborhood can have access to fresh local produce and local food items. For food activists like Darlene Wolnik, for example, the locality of produce takes precedence over other issues such as whether produce is organic or not. Wolnik expresses the need to affect food policy in New Orleans and points to the numerous organizations that are working toward the goal of food security. She says, food security and the focus on “culturally appropriate foods are very important for New Orleans. We don’t just want a tomato. We want our Creole tomato.” At the same time, purchasing locally grown and prepared items keeps local dollars circulating locally. For example, the Crescent City Farmers Market reported over \$1.7 million dollars in annual sales for 2004. This means that \$1.7 million dollars directly impacted the bottom line for the more than 60 local farmers and fishers who sell at the Crescent City Farmers Market. This reported success of the Crescent City Farmers Markets and the success of farmers markets nationally reinforces them as one of the alternatives to global agribusiness.

The Crescent City Farmers Market is a central institution in the expanding food advocacy and food security world. Not only has the market brought New Orleans into the “greening” process, the organization has also continued to expand its own efforts to affect food policy and to implement new diversifying measures. The Crescent City Farmers Market has taken additional steps to reach a more diverse population by encouraging farmers to participate in the USDA’s Senior Coupon Program, which provides a small stipend to low-income seniors to purchase fresh produce items from the

market. Also, the Crescent City Farmers Market is taking steps to pilot a food stamp acceptance program at their markets in coordination with STEPS For a Healthier US. With the slogan “We turn your plastic into wood,” the market has developed a way to accept credit cards and is now able to accept the Louisiana Purchase Electronic Benefit Technology or EBT cards. The customer is able to exchange a certain dollar amount, in increments of \$5.00 dollars, for wood tokens that are accepted by all of the vendors at the market. These tokens are then turned into cash by the market to reimburse the vendors at the end of the day. With this system for the acceptance of food stamp cards and WIC program funds, and with more initiatives to place farmers markets around the city, more residents will have access to the healthy local varieties of food. In addition, the Crescent City Farmers Market has acted in an advisory role for numerous farmers markets that have grown around the region. As Wolnik notes, “The future of New Orleans is based on people stepping forward and creating their vision of food systems, economic and ecological sustainable development. People must remain active and more people must step forward” in order for the green roots to blossom. The Crescent City Farmers Market and all of the radical greens are indeed planting the seeds of change.

Looking around the region from New Orleans, one can see the expansion of farmers markets. To the east, there is the Vietnamese market every Saturday morning (Figures 4.19 and 4.20). To the south, also operating every Saturday, there is the German Coast Farmers Market (Figures 4.21 and 4.22), and to the west is the Baton Rouge Farmers Market. To the north there is the farmers market in Covington. In the center of this expansion is New Orleans, with four farmers markets growing in different neighborhoods around the city. The Crescent City Farmers Market organization has

aided many of the markets in the region, acting as a mentor in their development and expansion by hosting farmers market conferences and farmers market training sessions.



Figures 4.18 and 4.19: The Vietnamese Market located in New Orleans East



Figure 4.20 and 4.21: The German Coast Farmers Market south of New Orleans

Just like the old public markets, the newly formed farmers markets in New Orleans have created a space for new arrivals from around the world to enter a new landscape and a new economy (McCarthy 1996). Peoples from Vietnam, South America, Mexico, the Caribbean, the Middle East and beyond are adding their own ingredients to farmers markets. As Richard McCarthy stated: “We are starting to see this exciting integration of migrants adding the new ethnic flavor to the Creole cultural experience”

(1996). One also sees the Crescent City Farmers Market embrace the region's farmers, urban gardeners and local shrimpers, creating a space that showcases the variety and bounty of our local and regional patches of urban and rural earth, our local seafood and our distinct culinary tastes even in the atmosphere of "free market fundamentalism" that is gripping the country. The farmers markets in the region and in the city demonstrate the marketplace as a perpetual space for the interchange of culture and all that is included in culture: history, language, foodways, ideas, actions and conversation.

<u>Stakeholders</u>	<u>Values</u>	<u>Time Frame/ Approach</u>	<u>Scale/ Unit of Analysis</u>	<u>Source of Power</u>	<u>Interests/ Focus</u>	<u>Position/ Goals</u>
<i>Alternative Food System</i>						
<u>Community Food Security Advocates</u> 1. Ms. Lees Seed and Feed 2. Street-Produce-Vendors 3. Magnolia Market 4. Parkway Partners 5. Local Nat. Food Stores 6. Registered dieticians 7. RD Schools 8. Schools of PH 9. Dept. of Health & 10. Hospital Services	1. Economic viability 2. Food as an individual & community right 3. Environmental sustainability 4. Social equity & justice	1. Long-term 2. Proactive	1. Community Scale 2. Community development model 3. Systems analysis	1. Bottom-up controls 2. Strong social networks 3. Self-reliance & empowerment 4. Coalition building 5. Lobbying at the federal level (re: nutrition, farm to school & farm bill)	1. Urban based 2. Reduce social cost of hunger 3. Improve individual health via food access 4. Individual & community empowerment	1. Structural change 2. Build community food resources and access 3. Create economic opportunities 4. Promote public health 5. Protect local agriculture
<u>Sustainable Ag. Movement</u> 1. Southern-SAWG 2. Bayou Land-RC&D	1. Env. Sustainability 2. Biodiversity 3. Economic viability	1. Long-term 2. Proactive	1. Regional scale 2. Systems analysis	1. Bottom-up controls 2. Strong social networks 3. Organizing of farmers 4. Coalition building 5. Lobbying (re: farm bill)	1. Rural based 2. Direct marketing 3. Env. risk reduction & elimination 4. Maintain local seasonal food	1. Structural change 2. Protect local Ag. 3. Promote diversified options 4. Promote sustainable Ag. Practices
<u>Food Citizens</u> 1. CCFM 2. Food & Farm Network 3. Heifer International 4. LSU Ag. Ext. 5. S. U. Ag. Ext. 6. S. L.A. Farmers Market 7. NOLA Food Co-op 8. Urban Growers Ass. 9. Slow Food 10. Food not Bombs 11. Rotary Club 12. CFSC 13. United Way 14. DNMC 15. CBMD	1. Food as an individual & community right 2. Env. sustainability 3. Economic viability 4. Participatory democracy	1. Long-term 2. Proactive	1. Local & Regional scale 2. Systems analysis	1. Purchasing power 2. Community organizing 3. Local activism 4. Direct action	1. Connect urban and rural 2. Build community food resources 3. Individual and public health 4. Place-based seasonal consumption	1. Structural change 2. Develop food systems that are economically and culturally viable and sustainable

Table 4.1: A table demonstrating the alternative food system in the New Orleans region. Provided by STEPS for a Healthier US.

CONCLUSION

The city of New Orleans and its historical continuum can be witnessed in the development of the public market system and in the physical structures of the historic market buildings, in those that have been erased from the landscape, those that are in decay, those that are being used as neighborhood convenience stores or other small businesses, in the French Market and its appeal to tourism, and now in the farmers markets begun by the Economics Institute at Loyola University. It is to the old public market system and the historical transgression of this system that I have looked in order to understand not only the system itself, the intricacies of its beginning and its demise, but also to explore the connection of a local market system to the global “political economy” (c.f., Wolf 1982). I have also tried to uncover what role the markets have played in the culture of New Orleans and for the communities that once relied on the markets for their shopping needs and for community gathering spaces. I have tried to understand how, in a city like New Orleans with its incredible culinary prestige and food culture identity, some New Orleanians find themselves in a complex landscape of deterioration with little and/or difficult access to quality food.

Through historical descriptions of the public market system and the memories that some New Orleanians shared with me, the market experience is placed into “the social and cultural contexts in which distribution is embedded, seeing the complexity of distribution channels not simply as an economic phenomenon in its own right but as an effect or product of the social milieu” (Bestor 2004:7). New Orleans markets, both historically and presently, may be like all markets where, according to Ted Bestor, “trade takes place within a complex array of social ties and institutions without which economic

activity could not occur” (2004:12). Yet, in the memories of Arthur Tong, Emelda Skidmore, Vincent Ferrara, Sister Joyce Hanks and her father J.B. Hanks, the New Orleans market experience encapsulates a distinction. Perhaps the memories of New Orleans markets have been filtered through a lens of nostalgia and romanticism for a time gone by, or perhaps “place matters,” and the market’s place in the culture of New Orleans and in the lives of individuals and communities matters because, as Bestor explains, the “sense of space and place is connected with the creation of boundaries, identities, and affiliations” (2004:17).

The public market system in New Orleans, which began with the founding of the city in 1718 and which was formalized in 1779 under the Spanish, was a system that was transplanted to the New World. The public market system was designed to provision an urban population and was regulated to ensure that residents of New Orleans would have access to food that was of good quality and fair price. The regulation of food and the policy, which assumed the state to be responsible for ensuring food access, allowed for the growth of public markets, with at least one in each neighborhood of New Orleans. At one point the city owned and operated thirty-four public markets. The original marketplace, the French Market in New Orleans, was also the ground for the mixing of cultures in the context of colonialism. This marketplace and the expansion of the public market system beginning in the 1830s, transformed over time as new governments and new ideologies entered the city. With each new government a new vision for the city emerged in which the marketplace was a central figure. As the influences of the world changed so to did the markets. The many transformations in this context, where they grew and expanded out with the growth of the city, transformed from open air spaces to

modern buildings with front door entrances during the Depression years, and finally, were changed by privatization and deregulation beginning in 1946, lead to a movement of food markets from the inner city to the suburbs in the form of supermarkets.

The history of the public market system in New Orleans, and its transformations highlights the complexity of the process of the free market economic system, privatization, urban renewal, reform politics, and new urbanism, all of which impacted the food supply system in New Orleans. Eric Wolf's world system perspective, where the present world is best understood by tracing the growth of the world market, the course of capitalism, and by relating "both the history and theory of that unfolding development to processes that affect and change the lives of local populations," can be applied to New Orleans and its public market system (1982:21). The influences of European expansion, colonialism, and both the practice and ideology of capitalism affected New Orleans public markets. The birth of the New Orleans public market system was a result of colonialism. The later transformations of the market system can also be contextualized in the continued processes of global market expansion, and capitalism.

In the examination of the public market system in New Orleans, I identified three patterns. First, I looked to the history of town planning in the New World, and the history of public markets in New Orleans. This early pattern of market proliferation in New Orleans highlights the possibility that with greater regulations, and state sanctioned responsibilities, a more even distribution of food can be achieved. The second pattern identified through the examination of New Orleans public market system is the abandonment of the markets from municipal control, as they were privatized beginning in 1946. With the privatization of the public markets and in the context of the post WWII

climate, where neoliberal economics took precedence and suburbanization became the ideal, the food supply, both the production and marketing of foodstuffs, changed. The suburbanization of food supplies has resulted in the creation of food deserts in New Orleans, where mostly low income African American neighborhoods do not have access to food from grocery stores. Finally, I have looked to the beginning of new forms of activism, which emerged in the 1990s in New Orleans, where food access and food security are the focus. Specifically, I have looked at the emergence of the Crescent City Farmers Market in 1995 as the beginning of food activism in New Orleans. The farmers market model developed by the Economic Institute at Loyola University has become an alternative to large grocery stores in New Orleans, and the Crescent City Farmers Market organization has become an active leader in grass roots movements concerning food access, food security, and food culture.

What these patterns of market proliferation, market abandonment, and activism afford, is an opportunity to ask questions about the motivations in food distribution, urban planning and in the politics of food access. As the public market system developed in New Orleans it became an integral part of the lives of New Orleanians, becoming the center of neighborhoods and community gathering places. The policies that changed the markets affected the social patterns of New Orleans and created new spatial isolation and distinctions that would alter community identity and community networks. Shore and Wright suggest:

In many respects ... policies encapsulate the entire history and culture of the society that generated them. To use Mauss's concept (1954), policies can be studied as 'total social phenomena' as they have important economic, legal, cultural and moral implications, and can create a whole new set of relationships between individuals, groups and objects (1997:7).

The reality of some New Orleanians living in “food deserts,” where once a public market existed in every neighborhood of the city, points to larger issues of “political economy,” race, and class. In the examples of Bom Jesus in Brazil (Scheper-Hughes 1992) and Harlem in New York (Chinyelu 1999) the effects of globalization and the economic polarization that can occur in the deregulated free market, suggest similarities between inner cities in the United States and towns in the Third World where colonialism shifted local patterns of production and marketing and now neoliberal capitalism is placing new pressures on the local economy. In New Orleans, where outside corporate supermarket chains dominate the market share in the inner city and in the suburbs, local production and marketing has transformed. The majority of produce available at the supermarkets in the New Orleans metropolitan region is not local. In addition, many supermarkets have not located in neighborhoods that are predominately African American and low income, creating areas of the city that are spatially isolated and categorizing those in food deserts as “other” (c.f., Trouillot 2003).

The causality of the disparity of food access is a contested subject. That some may benefit from farmers markets, supermarket locations, and the globalization and industrialization of food production, while others do not, may be apparent. The causality of this distinction however, is in debate. Economists like F.A. Hayek (1944) and Milton Friedman (see Hayek 1944) emphasize that with any regulation of the free market you lose individual freedom (Hayek 1944,1974). At the same time, it becomes the individual who is to be blamed for his or her own failures of economic success, residence, and even health. With this view, some might claim, for example, that it is the individual who is to blame for not eating enough healthy food, leading to a higher risk for diabetes, high

blood pressure and heart disease. Still others may look to the larger infrastructure, the modes of production and reproduction (c.f. Harris 1999) where the patterns of a free market and the structure of food policy and politics affect food access, and the thus health. If, as Michel Foucault suggests, the effectiveness of power lies in its ability to mask itself and “hide its own mechanisms” (1977:86) then perhaps, the power of the infrastructure that controls the structure of food policy in New Orleans and in the global market is hiding behind a mythology of individual responsibility. This individualism may mask the motivations of the benefactors of the free market as “individuals” become an “appendage of the machine” (Marx 1978:479).

Observers will see an example of the impact of the infrastructure of our economic system and the structure of our political practice by looking at the distribution of food in New Orleans and around the world. According to Steven Gorelick, a neoliberal free market ideological pattern has taken center stage where bigger becomes better (1998). In this world landscape, with the inundation of free market ideals and the ideology of individual responsibility, the recreation or maintenance of the old walking city where a public market or a market street was central to the community, is complicated.

According to journalist Alex Marshall,

If we want to revive or create urban places, we have to look at the design of the underlying systems that produced those places, and less at the design of the places themselves. Most of New Urbanism resembles trying to grow a rose by studying the patterns of its leaves and petals. That won't work. You have to study the seed, and the soil within which the seed is grown...If we want to revive the much-lauded practice of “community,” then we must understand that it is obtained through shared political choices and not through private purchases in the market (2003:xxii).

In other words, it is important to consider the historical context that created the old walking city, the public market, the “practice of community” as well as the circumstances, the system and the structure that changed the old model.

The efforts of the organizers of the Crescent City Farmers Market as well as other food activists, health advocates and urban planners in New Orleans point to the struggles of an expanding global market, the homogenization of food, and class difference in shopping “choice” and experience. Many are looking to the historical, the local and to culture to attempt to address these food concerns. The struggle to attain a locally produced food supply and local marketing venues is an uphill fight against a system that maintains distinction for the benefit of some.

At the Wednesday Crescent City Farmers Market, which has brought farmers back to the French Market, the history of New Orleans public markets comes full circle. Perhaps it is New Orleans’ unique rhythm and slow dance with time that allows one to stand in the place where New Orleans public market system began, and look at both the historic French Market and one of the city’s newest farmers markets. The public markets of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had intricate ties to neighborhood and community. In 2005 there is a revitalization of a public market system, as farmers markets sprout up to create new centers where farmers and city dwellers, producers and consumers, and where activists and neighbors come together to strengthen “community.”

The marketplace in New Orleans is, once again, a stage for interchange, exchange, and change. Whether the farmers markets will positively impact the numerous neighborhoods and communities of New Orleans is yet to be seen. Whether food activists will create a Ninth Ward farmers market, a Funky Kitchen, or a mobile produce

van, to address the issues of unequal food access and local production food, is not known. Perhaps with time the “greening” of New Orleans will blossom and the truck vendors or “fruit and vegetable men” will again become extensions of the newly formed farmers markets, selling local produce rather than acting as middlemen in the wholesale distribution of food. Perhaps there are strategies that tie the historical with the realities of the present and the future. It is exciting to try and see the world through green-tinted glasses and to imagine the colorful, festive tents of farmers markets growing, like flowers, in each neighborhood of the city.

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NOTES

1. The spelling of farmers market without the apostrophe, i.e. farmers' market, was chosen deliberately because the possessive form implies ownership. While some farmers markets have been initiated by and are operated by farmers, most are not. The majority of farmers markets have been initiated by non-profit organizations, activist groups, and by the economic departments of city governments.

2. Figures 1.10 through 1.31 depict the Works Progress Administration (WPA) construction and renovation of the public markets from 1937 to 1939.

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