

Farmers' markets in Prague: a new challenge within the urban shoppingscape

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Abstract Farmers' markets are a relatively recent phenomenon in Prague, Czechia. The first of them was opened in the autumn of 2009, but the real boom started in the spring/summer of 2010. The survey introduced in this paper is concerned with the study of alternative food networks and farmers' markets. It offers the results of methodological triangulation based on: (1) the data obtained via the questionnaire survey, (2) market organizers' reflections on the customer structure, motivation for shopping at farmers' markets and the question of social exclusivity of farmers' markets in Prague as revealed in interviews, and (3) the field notes from the participant observation at the markets under study. The results show that farmers' markets are emerging all around Prague in localities of different social status, so the poorer citizens are not necessarily excluded from the access to markets. The differences between markets, in terms of size, range of goods, and term seem to follow the inner city/hinterlands divide rather than the socio-spatial differentiation of the city. New consumer patterns clearly result from the cultural environment, specific context, and also from the different development path of the post-socialist consumer society.

Keywords Farmers' markets · Motivations · Exclusion · Czechia · Prague

Abbreviations

AFN Alternative food network
FM Farmers' market
LCA Life cycle analysis

Introduction

Retail transformation and changes in shopping styles represent an inseparable part of the transition processes in the post-socialist countries where the rapid introduction of a free market system stimulated radical economic and social restructuring (Spilková 2008a). Multinational retail companies markedly reshaped consumption landscapes introducing supermarkets, hypermarkets, discount stores, and other types of large-scale retail outlets. With the introduction of these facilities and the increasing range of goods offered after a long period of limited shopping opportunities under the communist regime, consumer behavior of Czech shoppers quickly adopted western shopping trends and practice (Spilková and Hochel 2009). Nevertheless, juxtaposed to the "mall" of the Czech Republic (Spilková 2008a), there is a newer movement away from mass shopping in places like malls towards smaller spatial forms of shopping, similarly to what happened in the US and Western Europe in the beginning of the new millennium (Smith and Jehlička 2007). Some consumers are seeking a more "intimate" shopping experience and rebuilding lost social relations while shopping in farmers' markets (FMs) or in small specialized shops (Zukin 2004). Still, despite these dynamic changes within Czech society, there is a lack of academic work in the field of retailing and its spatial and social features.

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the autumn of 2009, but the real boom started in the spring/summer of 2010. The opening of FMs was met with great enthusiasm and consumers flooded to these markets. This paper draws on knowledge mainly from the North American and British experiences with alternative food networks and FMs. It evaluates the situation in a country where such retail changes have recently become evident and research on these phenomena is also just emerging.

If this represents a new countertrend spreading in the urban environment of the biggest Czech cities, could this behavior indicate that contemporary Czech consumption patterns are shifting to more ethical and green lifestyles? In developed societies (Bell and Valentine 1997; Guthman 2003) these include in part vegetarianism, organic food consumption, and farmer-to-consumer marketing. Are alternative food networks equally established within a specific entrepreneurial environment in the post-socialist countries with transition economies?

The survey introduced in this paper was concerned with the study of alternative food networks and FMs. In the first part of the paper we introduce the issues of alternative food networks within geography and set the research questions for the first phase of the survey on Czech FMs. The second part describes the survey of Prague's FMs during the first year of their existence and our survey methodology. Brief characteristics of data collection and processing by mixed methods are presented. The following section of the paper discusses the results of the survey and highlights the most interesting findings. The concluding section of the paper summarizes our findings and stresses the need for ongoing research into this important issue.

Alternative food networks and farmers markets in the geography agenda

The research agenda of retail and consumption geographies has developed around many themes. FMs and alternative food networks in general gained considerable interest on the part of both consumers and scholars during the last decade, partly thanks to the fact that during several outbreaks of food insecurity episodes (e.g., foot and mouth disease, bird flu, swine flu) consumers became more interested in fresh food and a healthy diet (e.g., Murdoch 2000; Renting et al. 2003; Guthman 2003). Some also distrust the practices of food processing or dislike the anonymous environment of supermarkets and shopping malls and are aware of an increasing number of food scares (Raynolds 2000).

More and more scholars stress the positive effects of the so-called local food movement on both environment and consumption culture. See special issues edited by David Goodman in *Sociologia Ruralis* (2002) and *Journal of*

Rural Studies (2003), Whatmore et al. (2003), Seyfang (2009), Renting et al. (2003), and others on the significance of the alternative food networks (AFNs). Most of the works discuss the environmental importance of food localizing. The reduction of “food miles” (distance travelled between the consumer and the producer of the food) can be reached by internalization of the full cost of food production and decreasing the amount of energy required to move food products from field to table (Renting and Wiskerke 2010; Martino 2009; Duram and Oberholtzer 2010; Coster and Kennon 2005; Nosi and Zani 2004; Norberg-Hodge et al. 2002; Kloppenburg et al. 1996). The food miles concept, however, seems to be rather contradictory and raises suggestive questions uncovered mainly in the works related to life cycle analysis (LCA) tools, which, on the contrary, claim that large-scale distribution networks are more efficient than smaller scale networks (Oglethorpe and Heron 2010).

Besides the omnipresent stress on shortening the supply chain, the community building function of local food distribution channels seems to be in the focus of the AFNs literature. There is also the notion of “extended” short food supply chains (e.g., fair trade, international certification schemes) where other aspects enter the stage—the moral and the political (Hughes 2005; Watts et al. 2005). Hand in hand with the “quality” turn in consumption (Goodman 2003), Goodman (2009, p. 10) argues that the new opportunities are open to producers who can adopt those conventions of quality by demonstrating (local, close) territorial provenience or “embeddedness in localized socio-ecological processes.” According to Goodman (2009, p. 10) short food supply chains represent a re-embedding, re-socializing, and re-localizing of food systems and are “a major institutional expression of the reconfigured production-consumption relations.” They may be seen as means of enjoying economic gains from the commodification of the so-called “locavore challenge” (Alkon 2008) and they represent a great potential for both producers and consumers.

Although they are interdependent, there are at least three major strands of critique connected to alternative food networks. The first refers to naive celebration of local scale as a non-problematic space of consensus opposed to the criticized global economic space. There is ongoing discussion of the danger of defensive localism (Winter 2003) or parochialism, which could grow into “xenophobia against non-local” (DuPuis and Goodman 2005). The second criticism focuses on the social exclusivity of the AFNs. Some authors consider AFNs to be exclusive clubs of privileged consumers (Goodman 2009), namely the white urban middle class (DuPuis and Goodman 2005). Their initiatives are often partial (e.g., organic food, food miles, fair trade) and based in specific cultural contexts

(Morgan 2010). Freidberg (2004) and DuPuis and Goodman (2005) believe the impact of these “unreflexive politics” (Harvey 2001) on other actors of food system deserve critical examination. The third main critique stresses the neoliberal character of the alternative food movement (Seyfang 2009; Jehlička and Smith 2011) relying on market mechanisms and the “responsibilization” of individual consumers instead of changing the politics towards sharing the responsibilities (Seyfang 2009; Hartwick 2000). It is mainly the second aspect we turn to in this paper.

Allison Brown (2001, 2002) provides historical insight into FMs research, stating that until recently, there has been only limited research on the issue of direct marketing, short food supply chains, and FMs. She was one of the first scholars to look back at the history of FMs (in the US) and to summarize studies scattered across publications, including economics, rural sociology, geography, ethnography, horticulture, and food studies. In her review, Brown (2002, pp. 172–173) lists many positive impacts of FMs on the local economy, such as increase in the number of jobs, new businesses, diversification of regional agriculture, increase in farm profitability, business incubators, increase in customer spending, attraction of tourists and their spending. She also mentions the influence on rural landscape formation, the friendly shopping atmosphere, and the role of FMs as a testing ground for new products. Similarly Hinrichs (2003), Zukin (2004), and others highlight the positive impacts of communication between producers and consumers of local food on FMs, increasing reflexivity and building mutual trust between producers and consumers. As in the case of AFNs in general, the discourse of social and environmental justice and their reflection in specific FMs initiatives stemming predominantly from the white urban middle class raises interesting research questions (Alkon 2008).

Knowing who shops at FMs and why helps in understanding the recent boom of the farmers' markets and whether there is a process of social exclusion going on. Zepeda (2009) offers an overview of findings about farmers' market shoppers in different regions of the US. Her findings show the typical FM shopper as a woman who enjoys cooking, does it frequently and for someone else. She is more interested in freshness and nutrition than cost and participates in other types of “alternative” food consumption. She likes buying organic food, shopping at food cooperatives, health food and ethnic food stores, having her own vegetable garden, and may belong to a health club (Zepeda 2009). In addition to the US, the United Kingdom and Canada are main centers of both AFNs incidence and research. Carey et al. (2011) analyzed consumers' motivations for shopping at four FMs in Scotland and concluded that besides food freshness, cooking enjoyment, and the nutritional and health value of produce, resource conservation and support for local farmers appeared to be

important reasons for purchases at FMs. They ascribe the importance of resource conservation to the “overarching context of sustainability discourse which is prominent in the UK at the time of writing this article” (Carey et al. 2011, p. 304). At Brantford FM in Canada, food freshness was the most important factor, followed by support for local farmers, food healthiness, and social interaction/community factor. The authors use specific characteristics of the Brantford market (long tradition, relatively long period of consumer loyalty) to explain the importance of social factors. Natural factors were relatively weak and food scares played a minor role in motivations of shopping behavior (Feagan and Morris 2009).

Even though the international comparison is difficult due to different methodologies as well as research scale, we can see that the findings about FMs shoppers vary (e.g., environmental issues in Scotland and Canada) and that the context plays a big role. In this article we offer the analysis of new and unexplored FMs shoppers in post-socialist settings and comparison with the findings from elsewhere. We investigate the new consumer culture created through the merging of food consumption, ethics, social differentiation, and gentrification (Goodman 2009).

The objectives of the paper are therefore to reveal:

1. Which types and variations of FMs can be distinguished within Prague's shopping landscape? Here we aim to find differences in the physical and organizational form of particular markets (Brown 2001; Coster and Kennon 2005), and also in social constructions of the environment of particular markets. We expect the different types of “gourmet ghettos” emerging within the Prague's shopping landscape using the narrative of sustainable agriculture, small farming and rural qualities to support reconnection of urban dwellers to nature and the countryside (Alkon 2008). This query for a typology also relates to the social spatialization question raised in the third objective.
2. What do the FMs mean for their customers and what motivates them to shop there?

In accordance with Ronald Inglehart's theory of post-material values, people living in conditions of material security, especially younger ones, satisfy their basic needs and turn to higher values. Post-materialists are thus more concerned with the ecological crisis; they place greater emphasis on the community-building function of the markets, social contacts, and activities of individual people (Kuřková et al. 2009). We expect the Czech shoppers have already turned to higher values similarly to their counterparts from Western Europe and the US. Among the main motivations, besides the omnipresent wish for fresh goods and better taste, there will be: the support of local production and local farmers (Lyson 2004; Coster and Kennon

2005; Brown and Getz 2008), environmental issues (Kloppenborg et al. 1996; Alkon 2008; Schupp and Sharp 2012), and social contacts and communication issues (Szmigin et al. 2003; Sage 2003; Moore 2006; Little et al. 2010).

3. Is there social exclusion or social spatialization within the newly emerged FMs in Prague? Tregear (2005) and many other authors (e.g., Freidberg 2004; Goodman 2009; Morgan 2010) state there is a strong class dimension to the social relations of consumption of the ‘organic’, the ‘local’, the ‘regional’, and the ‘alternative’. Many authors point out that the customers at farmers markets tend to be educated, urban, middle-class, and middle aged (Brown 2002; Guthman 2003, 2008; Tregear 2005; Moore 2006). We hypothesize that the same will be true for the Czech FMs and mostly middle aged and well-off customers will be attending these markets in Prague. Social spatialization is defined as spacing of classes, moralities, and commonplace spatial assumptions, daily practices, and functional and symbolic divisions of this new retail environment (Goss 1988; Shields 1989). We expect to find some evidence of these aspects as well.

Methods

To gather the initial information about the nature of consumption and consumers’ habits at the newly emerging FMs a mixed-methods approach was applied, which is defined as a research strategy employing more than one type of research method. For this paper, the data were collected by merging quantitative and qualitative techniques as one of the three ways recognized for mixing quantitative and qualitative data (the two remaining ways are connecting and embedding, Creswell 2003) during the summer and autumn of 2010. This period was chosen because this was the very first year when these markets were in operation in the capital city of Prague. In the autumn, most markets were run on a regular basis and had resolved start-up problems.

The preparatory phase of the survey consisted of mapping the retail environment at the newly emerged FMs and of participant observation. Participant observation is one of the qualitative methods that aims to describe “what” happens, “why” it happens, “when” it happens, and “who” participates in the observed activity (Flick et al. 2004). The observer, however, does not act as a passive participant in the activity, but to some extent may enter the activity and interact with the studied individuals. The data can be collected by various auxiliary methods such as interviews, diaries, video or audio recording. Despite many

original methodological problems when it was not accepted as serious research, participant observation is now considered a flexible, methodologically plural and context-related method. During this stage photo-documentation of the selected markets was collected together with a large quantity of field notes in the form of a field-research diary and field note sheets for each particular farmers’ market venue.

The main phase of the survey took place during the months of October and December 2010 when 424 respondents were interviewed by previously instructed undergraduate students at thirteen FMs within the area of the capital city of Prague. These sites represented every farmers’ market that was run regularly in Prague at that time. This survey thus presented a unique opportunity to gain a snapshot of FMs in their very first year at the most important market venues in Prague. The questionnaire covered a range of questions on the reasons for and frequency of patronizing farmers’ markets, but also dealt with the consumption habits of the respondents in general and respondent characteristics and socioeconomic profiles. During the construction of the questionnaire, we based the categories and options in the multiple choice questions on the knowledge gathered from the vast AFN literature review, and from the Czech literature on shopping habits during transformation (Spilková 2008a). Farmers’ markets were a completely new phenomenon and no previous research had been done on this type of shopping environment in Czechia. To evaluate the potential threat of social exclusion, one of the aims of the survey was to identify social groups that shop at farmers markets. The respondents were selected by convenience sampling method. Simultaneously, the need to include all socio-demographic groups in the proportions present at particular farmers’ markets was taken into account (i.e., interviewers were instructed to pay attention to and follow the socio-demographic structure of “their” farmers market).

The data obtained from the questionnaire survey was recoded into numerical form and then processed by a simple statistical analysis using the SPSS statistical software package. The main methods of statistical analysis were descriptive or exploratory analysis and cross tabulations that looked for significant relationships between particular characteristics of the customers and the markets. The results of these analyses are presented in the following sections.

Having described and characterized the particular types of FMs, the project proceeded to its next phase: the qualitative phase. The research methodology of this paper thus is a good example of methodological triangulation because the initial survey phase was followed by structured, in-depth interviews with the organizers of the particular markets. Structured interviews using open-ended questions

with the FM organizers were used to supplement the survey data about consumers. We perceive organizers as important nodes in the network of relations of each farmers' market. Organizers usually spend a lot of time at the markets (some of them are organizers and market managers at the same time) and gather feedback from vendors as well as consumers. Some of them have even conducted their own small surveys, so they are able to provide insightful information. The interviews with thirteen organizers were conducted in spring and summer 2011, at the high season for FMs. The interviews lasted approximately 1 h and covered 5–6 questions on consumers as well as a broader set of topics including reflections on vendors and organization of markets in general. The consumer-related parts of the interviews were transcribed and the answers were compared and categorized. The most illustrative answers were used to supplement the output of the statistical analysis.

Results

This section offers the results of methodological triangulation used in the presented project and stems from: (1) the data obtained via the questionnaire survey, (2) organizers' reflections on the customer structure, motivation for shopping at FMs, and the question of social exclusivity of FMs in Prague as revealed in interviews and (3) the field notes from the participant observation at the markets under study. First, an overview of the existing markets is presented focusing mainly on the form of the markets and their functioning. Second, the social environment of the markets is surveyed and displayed in sections looking at customers of the FMs and their motivations for shopping at the markets and other characteristics. Third, the organizers' views are presented to depict the situation in the newly emerged sector within the city's shopping landscape.

Types of farmers markets

The research covered thirteen FMs that were run in Prague in autumn 2010. During participant observations we focused on some basic characteristics of these markets, especially location, size (i.e., number of stalls), days of operation (i.e., weekdays or weekends), and the range of goods offered. The biggest FMs in Prague are organized periodically at a set time on a particular day of the week and create a unique lab for the observation of new shopping trends and behavior formation of Czech consumers. There is a difference also in the size of the markets: the largest may have about 30–50 stalls, while others, mainly those in peripheral parts of the city, comprise only about 10–15 stalls. As of summer 2011 there were already more than 30

market places in Prague, where FMs were organized regularly. Other FMs were held in other Czech cities and new ones were being organized. The ongoing boom is supported by the grant scheme introduced by the Czech Ministry of the Environment in April 2011 which allocated more than 400,000 Euros among the organizers of farmers' markets in the Czech Republic. The majority (8 out of 13) of the researched FMs are organized by NGOs. There are two markets organized by a municipality, both located in Prague's hinterland (Suchdol, Čakovice). The market at Pankrác is organized by a professional agency on behalf of the municipality (the agency organizes two other markets in Prague) and the market in Vysočany is run by the shopping mall that hosts the market. There are several multiple organizers of FMs in our research sample. Markets at Kubánské náměstí, Jiřího z Poděbrad, and Náplavka are organized by an NGO, "Archetyp" (the NGO started another market in the historical center of Prague in spring 2011), while markets in Klánovice and Dolní Počernice are organized by two women from Klánovice (they also run one more market in Prague's hinterland).

The types of FMs in Prague coincide to some extent with the inner structure and organization of the whole city. Oůředníček and Temelová (2009) divided Prague into concentric zones corresponding to the periods of the city's historical development (city center, inner city, outer city, and hinterlands). We can identify two main types of FMs in Prague (see Table 1): big inner city markets consisting of more than 30 stalls with a wide assortment of products as well as possibilities to sit and have a coffee or a beer, some of them with babysitting opportunities. These markets are often crowded, with long queues for some products, especially vegetables, smoked meats, and bakery products. The demographic structure of consumers is varied; families with children, young couples, middle-aged people, and pensioners (or retirees) are all present at the markets. This group also includes big weekday inner city markets, some of which are run twice or three times a week. The difference from the Saturday markets is that they are not as crowded, serving predominantly mothers on maternity leave, pensioners, and, in the case of neighborhoods with mixed functions, people working in the locality. They differ from the second group mainly in size.

The second big group consists of smaller markets conducted on weekdays in the hinterlands of Prague. Those usually have less than 15 stalls, the assortment is limited, or the choice of individual products is smaller, for instance, without opportunities to have a coffee. As in the case of inner city weekday markets, the dominant groups of consumers are mothers on maternity leave and pensioners. The atmosphere observed at those markets could be described as peaceful or "rural" with people meeting friends and neighbors and chatting with sellers. "They (customers)

Table 1 An overview of the Prague farmers' markets under study

Type	Location
Big inner city markets	Dejvice, Jiřího z Poděbrad, Karlínské náměstí, Kubánské náměstí, Náplavka, Pankrác
Small hinterlands weekday markets	Čakovice, Dolní Počernice, Suchdol, Uhříněves
Indefinite	Klánovice, Vysočany, Holešovice

The market at Pankrác takes place only on Wednesday. All the other markets are organized either on Saturdays or on both weekdays and Saturdays

know that they will have fresh goods... of course many of them already go for some specific goods, especially to the bakers... I think that the sellers start to know the customers, they chat a bit, often they know what the order is going to be because people shop there regularly” (Klich, Uhříněves).

Then there are a few markets that do not fit into these categories, most importantly the market in Klánovice. Though it takes place on the outskirts of Prague, it is similar to a Saturday big market with more than 30 stalls and a wide assortment of products, especially the high number of stalls selling vegetables. On the other hand, it has a “rural character” with chatting neighbors, and it seems to be more focused on shopping than on spending time (i.e., there is no cafe). The market in Klánovice was the first in the new history of FMs in Prague, so it is well known. There is one more market that does not fit into the two categories described above: the market run by the Fénix shopping gallery in Vysočany. While taking place on Saturdays in the inner city, by its size, assortment, and number of visitors it resembles small weekday markets in the hinterlands but without the community spirit. It is the only market that is not located in an open public space (usually a square) but rather inside a shopping mall. The FM in Holešovice is also unusual as it is the only big vegetable market that has survived in Prague. Fruit and vegetables are sold from Monday to Saturday in a big hall located in the market area. Since autumn 2010, twice a month on Saturday the range of products is supplemented to form a FM as we know it from the other localities.

Customers of the farmers' markets and their characteristics

The questionnaire survey covering thirteen FMs in Prague involved 424 respondents. The sample comprises 64 % women and 36 % men with an average age of approximately 45 years. When looking at the age structure in more detail, two peaks in terms of the FMs visitors may be observed. The most numerous age group visiting FMs are people aged 26–40 years, particularly those aged 31–35. The next peak is of elderly people around 61–65 years of age. About one third of the respondents live in two-member

households. A similar (slightly lower) number of respondents live in three- or four-member households. Therefore, singles represent just a small group of customers at FMs. Almost two thirds of respondents do not have any children aged 15 years or under in their household. However, half of the people up to 50 years of age do have at least one child in their household. A significant majority (91 %) of respondents lived in Prague and about 6 % lived in the suburbs of Prague. Only 3 % came from outside the city of Prague and its suburbs.

The classification of respondents' occupations was based on Fujishiro et al. (2010) and Robin et al. (2007). The largest occupation group is represented by intermediary professionals (lower management, teachers, physicians, and other jobs requiring tertiary education). The other large occupational categories are: administrative support and lower professionals (jobs requiring secondary education) and pensioners. Unskilled manual workers are very rare customers of FMs and, similarly, skilled manual workers usually represent less than 10 % of customers. There is a relatively high proportion of administrative support and lower professionals in the sample. This may, however, be partially caused by respondents' unclear expression about their occupation which did not allow for correct category placement when coding the responses.

High-level professionals mostly visit Dejvice and Náplavka markets. Intermediate-level professionals are the most frequent customers of Dejvice, Suchdol, Vysočany, Náplavka, Jiřího z Poděbrad, Dolní Počernice and Kubánské náměstí. The other markets are visited predominantly by administrative support and lower professionals (Karlínské náměstí 40 %, Holešovice 40 %, and Klánovice 36 %). Pankrác market is visited mostly by students (which explains the highest share of the youngest age group at this market mentioned above) and administrative support and lower professionals. Occupational categorization confirms that Čakovice and Uhříněves markets are usually visited by elderly people or pensioners (Fig. 1).

The data show that, with exception of two markets, at least 60 % of customers come from the adjacent neighborhoods (the same Prague district). There are two markets (Náplavka and Jiřího z Poděbrad) that are more frequented by those “going around” just for a walk, etc.

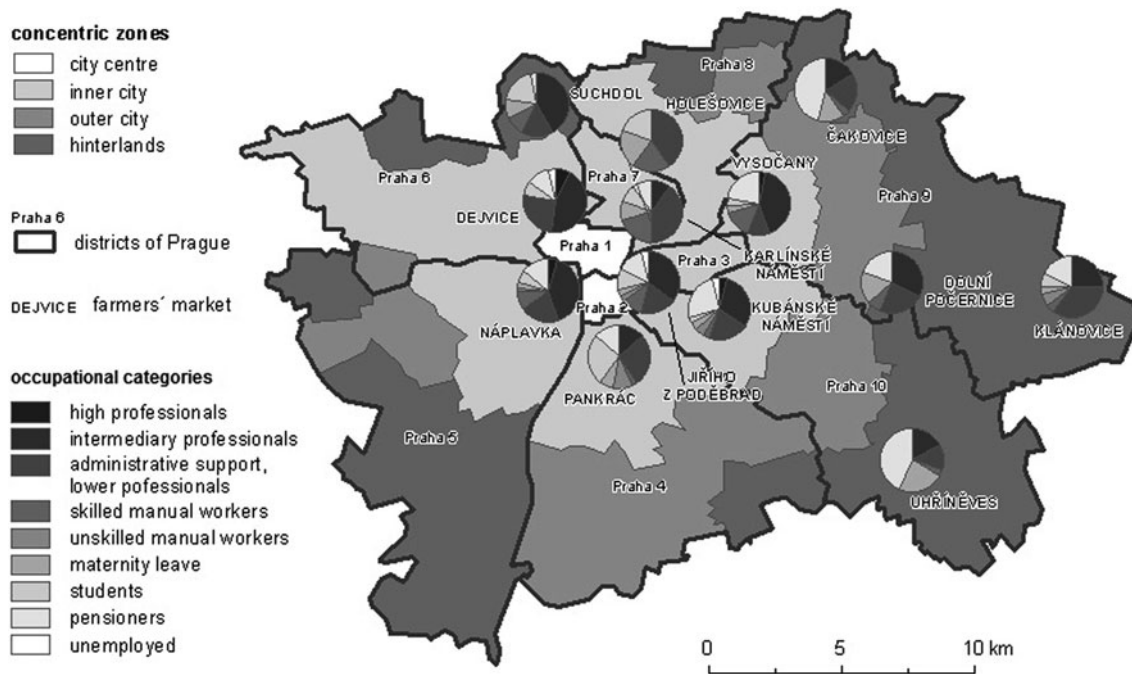


Fig. 1 Prague's farmers markets and the occupational structure of their customers

Motivations, patronization, and frequency of visiting farmers' markets

More than two thirds of the respondents in the survey shop at FMs because they believe that food purchased there is fresher and better tasting than food from regular stores. The local provenience of purchased goods, which customers consider to be environmentally friendly, is also important. See Table 2 for motivations for shopping at FMs. One third of respondents mentioned "other" reasons, of which the first most frequently mentioned motivation is that FMs offer Czech made food (made by Czech farmers in the Czech Republic, 7 % of all respondents). Many respondents also visit FMs because they are curious about what they can come across there. The opportunity to get as much information as possible about the food is appreciated by 11 % of respondents.

The most frequently purchased goods at FMs correspond to the most frequently cited motivations for shopping there. People usually purchase fresh food, particularly vegetables and fruit, meat, smoked meat, other meat products, and fish. Other frequently purchased goods are dairy products, including cheese, and bakery products (Table 3).

Almost one half of respondents patronize FMs regularly every week (Table 4). Nevertheless, another one quarter of respondents declares they visit FMs only occasionally. One third of respondents also tend to visit other markets in addition to the one where they were questioned. Only a very small proportion of respondents shop at markets outside Prague.

In accordance with the general trends, the majority of respondents do other grocery shopping in supermarkets and

Table 2 Motivations for shopping at farmers' markets

	N	%
Motivations		
Freshness, taste	290	68
Other	138	33
Local provenience, which is environmentally friendly	114	27
Curiosity	78	18
To get maximum information about my food	47	11
Animal rights	43	10
New fashionable trend	15	4
Other motivations in detail		
Czech product/farmer	30	7
Other	22	5
Fun	17	4
Other assortment	16	4
Proximity	11	3
Atmosphere	10	2
Support of local production	8	2
Coincidence	7	2
Particular good in general	6	1
Lower prices	5	1
Quality	4	1
Healthier food	2	0

hypermarkets (Table 4). Because customers of FMs emphasize the quality of food, it is not surprising that discount stores, which generally offer low quality and cheap goods, are one of the least popular shopping places

Table 3 The most popular assortment categories

Purchased assortment	N	%
Vegetable	315	74
Meat, fish, smoked meat	158	37
Fruit	141	33
Dairy products including cheese	112	26
Bakery products	92	22
Beverages	38	9
All goods	22	5
Honey	19	4
Eggs	10	2
Other	9	2
Flowers	6	1
Mushrooms	5	1
Seasonings	5	1

Table 4 Shopping habits of customers of farmers' markets

	N	%
Shopping frequency at farmers' markets		
Only occasionally	97	23
Every week	206	49
Two times a month	64	15
At least once a month	39	9
Two times a week	12	3
More frequently	6	1
Places for other food shopping		
Supermarket	239	56
Hypermarket	162	38
Self-service shop	83	20
Small counter shop	45	11
Discount store	36	8
Elsewhere	19	4

for customers of FMs and stand even behind self-service shops and small counter shops.

The popularity of organic and fair trade food products is not widespread among farmers' market customers. Organic food products are preferred to conventional by 31 % of respondents, while 25 % of respondents favor fair trade food products. As Prague FMs mostly sell products of Czech origin, fair trade products are usually not offered there. Bio/organic products create the minority of the assortment and are not prioritized by market organizers.

Analysis of the relationships between particular characteristics of farmers' markets and their customers

Cross tabulations and Pearson Chi-Square coefficient (95 % significance level) were used to measure the relationship between customers' characteristics, researched

FMs, and customers' shopping behavior. The choice of a particular market for shopping closely correlates with motivation for visiting FMs ($\chi = 282$; $p < 0.001$). However, there is one dominant motivation among most markets: freshness and taste. Except for one market (Jiřího z Poděbrad), the largest proportion (usually 60–80 %) of respondents are motivated by the freshness and better taste of purchased products. At two markets (Jiřího z Poděbrad 61 % and Čakovice 47 %), respondents also tended to highlight the local provenience of goods as an important reason. There is a couple of inner city markets visited for leisure or because of curiosity (Kubánské náměstí 34 % and Karlínské náměstí 50 %). However, motivations for shopping at FMs do not significantly differ between inner city and hinterland markets.

Shopping frequency closely relates to the choice of a particular market ($\chi = 117$; $p < 0.001$) and the cross tabulation shows that there are three groups of markets according to shopping frequency. The markets with the highest proportion of "only occasionally" responses are Dejvice (41 % of its respondents), Holešovice (60 %), and Pankrác (47 %). Kubánské náměstí, Karlínské náměstí, and Vysočany have more diverse structures of shopping frequency (the majority of customers shop there every week, only occasionally, or twice a week). Other markets (particularly small hinterlands weekday markets) are most frequently visited every week.

The choice of a particular market for shopping correlates with gender ($\chi = 35$; $p < 0.001$), household size ($\chi = 107$, $p < 0.001$), occupation ($\chi = 160$, $p < 0.001$), and place of residence ($\chi = 1245$; $p < 0.001$). At most markets, women tend to participate more than their male counterparts; however, there are three markets (Suchdol 87 %, Uhřetěves 90 %, and Čakovice 87 %) where women crucially predominate as customers. These markets take place on weekdays in residential areas in the hinterlands of Prague, so the customers are predominantly women on maternity leave and pensioners, among whom female shoppers usually dominate.

There is a slightly weaker correlation between the choice of a particular market and household size. Smaller households (1–2 members) dominate among customers at Dejvice (70 %), Karlínské náměstí (70 %), and Náplavka (54 %), which are big markets located in the inner city. Customers of other markets most frequently belong to households with three and more members. From the age structure and household size, we can assume that customers of farmers' markets are predominantly parents of small children as well as teenagers and young adults.

Farmers' market organizers' views

The findings about consumers obtained from participant observation and the questionnaire were compared to the

perspectives of the organizers. When reflecting on the age structure of market visitors, there is a difference between weekdays and weekend markets. On weekdays mothers on maternity leave with small children prevail, while on weekends whole families are more likely to be seen.

The organizers of five markets (Jiřího z Poděbrad, Kubánské náměstí, Náplavka, Karlín, and Čakovice) even cited mothers/families when asked about “the ideal customer for their market.” They stressed the “*higher value of such a family shopping trip than in the case of a shopping mall*” (Sedláček, Archetyp) and the “*gratitude of mothers who can buy everything needed for cooking and let the children wear themselves out at the same time*” (Soroková, Čakovice). Karel Czaban, the organizer of the market in Karlín sums it up: “*The ideal customer is a family... children have something to do, there is even a day care for small children... parents can do their shopping in peace... People tend to have a glass of wine there and this is what I liked most at the foreign markets... that you don't only go shopping, but you go there to chat with people, have a coffee or wine, it is relatively cultivated*” (Czaban, Karlín).

All the organizers interviewed also mentioned pensioners as one of the main groups of customers on FMs. According to the organizers, the shopping habits of pensioners differ in at least three main ways from those of young parents. The first is time, as pensioners often come early in the morning, while younger shoppers come later on both weekdays and weekends. The second is the assortment bought, as pensioners often buy vegetables. Some organizers go into further detail and mention conserved ready meals or distinguish gender: male pensioners are said to buy smoked meats while women shop mostly for vegetables. There is a consensus among market organizers that pensioners do not buy more expensive products such as meat and cheese. The third aspect is the time spent at the market. Pensioners are said to “come, buy, and leave,” although during participant observations at the FMs in Prague, in many cases pensioners (especially women) were seen chatting with each other for a relatively long time. However, compared to younger market visitors they probably do this without having a coffee or other beverage.

The presence of pensioners at the market is explained by their remembering times when this was a normal way of shopping and as a form of nostalgia (Sedláček, Archetyp; Kaštilová, Pankrác; Klich, Uhříněves). Several organizers mentioned price level in relation to pensioner shopper, but only once, in the case of Čakovice, was the conclusion that high prices discouraged some of the pensioners from shopping at the market. Usually they were said to buy different sorts of products than younger shoppers and in smaller amounts, while the positive social effect of meeting friends in the attractive space of a FM is seen as prevailing over the economic effect. A quote from Klára Svobodová,

the organizer of the markets in Klánovice and Dolní Počernice is quite illustrative: “*For example, I am happy when some granny comes, who I know is short of money, and she has set something aside to be able to come each Saturday and buy two cakes and some vegetables. I think it (shopping at the farmers' market) is more of an affair of the heart for these consumers.*”

In some markets, these two major groups are joined by other specific types of consumers. For example Jiří Sedláček from Archetyp talks about the “responsible consumer,” relating this attitude predominantly to foreigners. He defines the responsible consumer as that “*he is aware ‘why’, that it has some sense, that he has done something good by shopping (at a farmers' market), that as well as the body he has enriched his soul... Feeling good is a good thing.*”

The relatively high representation of pensioners as an economically weaker group among farmers' market shoppers counteracts the hypothesis of the social exclusion in FMs in Prague. Also, the majority of organizers are not able to name any specific types of consumers who do not come to their FMs. Jiří Sedláček, though, suggests that “*poor people don't come, visitors of low cost shopping centers as Kaufland, Penny Market, Lidl... those who don't have much money and who really keep track of prices*” (Sedláček, Archetyp). However, belonging to the low income group does not always have to be the reason. Even in Klánovice, an old suburban locality of higher socio-economic status, “*there are people who won't go to the farmers' market and prefer shopping in Lidl even though they are definitely not poor*” (Svobodová, Klánovice and Dolní Počernice). The economic situation of a household is definitely an important factor but there are probably others to take into account. Karel Czaban, organizer of the FM in Karlín, offers an alternative interpretation for not coming to shop at FMs: “*Definitely, there are people whom it does not fit, they consider it a waste of time, they think it is all fraud. There are a lot of these skeptical people.*”

Although difficult to categorize, the reflections of organizers on consumers' motivations for shopping at a particular FMs could be divided into two groups. There are more material factors such as *assortment* (Pankrác, Karlín, Dejvice) and *locality* (Pankrác, Klánovice and Dolní Počernice, Dejvice) and less concrete, soft factors, such as “*atmosphere*” or *the social environment of the market* (Pankrác, Klánovice and Dolní Počernice, Karlín, Uhříněves). *Perceived freshness and better quality of products* was mentioned only three times (when compared to the motivations quoted by shoppers), always by organizers of small hinterland weekday markets (Suchdol, Uhříněves, Čakovice). Other motivations mentioned were *curiosity* (Čakovice) and *variety in shopping opportunities* (Suchdol). Reasons offered by the organizer for customers visiting FMs in Dejvice are predominantly of the material

kind: “*It is well-located, it’s nice here, we always try to have something new and interesting and farmers... the market is big, you really can buy everything you need*” (Dušek, Dejvice). The organizer from Klánovice, however, offers reasoning based more on soft factors: “... *maybe it is because of the atmosphere... the place has some drive even if there is nothing more going on than shopping... the sellers are nice, they are able to talk about the products, they mostly produce them themselves...*” (Svobodová, Klánovice and D. Počernice).

Organizers also reflect on the differences between the markets in particular zones of the city. As the inner city zone is characterized as a revitalizing node, although polarized between low- and high-profit functions and different social groups (Ouředníček and Temelová 2009), it is also the reason why the customers patronizing markets in this zone cannot be described as a homogeneous group. Jiří Sedláček described the differences in clientele between inner city markets organized by Archetyp NGO as follows: “*Each of the places has a different atmosphere, different genius loci. (Each place) even has different customers. This is decided by the demography, by the structure of inhabitants of the locality. Jiřího z Poděbrad is a more up-market area, wealthy foreigners live there, often from Eastern Europe, they have money and they are willing to pay more for quality. In contrast, at Kubánské náměstí, the demography is pretty much made up of pensioners. Pensioners are a low-income group; they can’t afford expensive shopping... that is why we concentrate on greengrocers there who have lower prices. Náplavka is a mixture of foreign and domestic tourism, with many foreigners. It’s a kind of a downtown locality.*”

The social differences exist between the localities within the hinterland zone as well. There are dynamic suburban localities as well as more stable and demographically older municipalities with an enduring rural character. Klára Svobodová compares ‘her’ FMs in Klánovice and Dolní Počernice (both in the Prague hinterlands): “*Here (Dolní Počernice) cheaper products are more successful... it works more as a typical village here, while Klánovice never was one. Here it looks like a village, people breed their own chickens, etc.... and this is reflected in the sales. For example a wine grower: if he doesn’t bring cask wine here, he has a problem. In Klánovice people don’t buy cask wine much but here it sells well.*”

Discussion and conclusions

This paper aimed to find the answers to some questions provoked by the recent boom of FMs in Prague. The motivation and social structure of consumers of FMs, the threat of social exclusivity, and the socio-spatial

differentiation of the markets were analyzed to provide insights about specifics of alternative food networks and their development in post-socialist countries. The results show that the substance of alternative food networks may have different drivers within the specific entrepreneurial environment of post-socialist economies. In these countries the level of confidence and mutual trust tends to be low (Spilková 2008b) and the tendencies for corruption or deceiving customers may harm the development of an alternative shopping environment and options. Consumer patterns clearly result from the cultural environment and habits (Večerník 2008), and also from the different development path of consumer society (Spilková 2008a).

When we return to our first objective and take a look at differences between markets, we must conclude that there is a certain degree of spatial differentiation at Prague’s FMs. The inner city localities tend to have bigger and better supplied FMs with a more upscale shopping environment attracting slightly different groups of customers with certain aspirations and motivations for their shopping. They also have a higher proportion of occasional visitors and passers-by who come out of curiosity and to pass some free time. Also, the inner city FMs often take place on Saturdays, which is an important factor in their accessibility for different groups of consumers. Zepeda (2009) argues that the characteristics of the market strongly influence the characteristics of the shoppers and stresses the importance of access (localization of the market, transport opportunities, non-conflicting timing of the market) for shopping at FMs. Similarly, in our study hinterland markets held on weekdays usually predominantly serve women on maternity leave and pensioners. Economically active inhabitants tend to have problems accessing FMs as the majority of them commute to work and do not arrive home before the market ends.

The level of social spatialization in post-socialist Prague is lower than in for example US cities and there is no clear evidence of the forming of so-called “gourmet ghettos” (Alkon 2008) or differently socially constructed markets. As the socio-demographic structure of shoppers is relatively similar at FMs in Prague we can find markets of the same type in neighborhoods with different social status. We suggest that the character of the market is not bound predominantly by social status, rather by the location and exposure within the city structure (on the center/periphery dichotomy), represented by its centrality, population density, and public transport density. As the inner city FMs are located in areas of combined residential and commercial functions, often functioning as a transport node as well, they are able to attract higher numbers of people and therefore have greater purchasing power.

Regarding the second objective of the paper (the motivations), it is obvious that food freshness tends to dominate

among the motivation factors for shopping at FMs abroad as well (Zepeda 2009; Carey et al. 2011; Feagan and Morris 2009). However, compared to farmers' market shoppers in the US, Scotland, or Canada, Czech consumers seem to care less about environmental issues, support for local farmers, resource conservation, or the community building function of FMs. These results suggest that there could be an ethical consumption dimension to shopping at FMs in Prague, but the dominant motivation is access to better quality food. This emerges from the fact that the quality of food sold by big retailing companies is often considered problematic; the topic of the Czech Republic "being the European dustbin" received significant media coverage recently (e.g., Holec 2011; Jánková 2009).

Following the 1989 revolution, Czech consumers were very price-sensitive, because the wages increased slowly compared to food prices. People were seeking the cheapest way to obtain their food and compromised the quality of the goods (Kušková et al. 2009). After the abolition of fixed prices in 1991, the prices increased by 57 % but the supply of goods increased much slower. Together with the uncertainty caused by high unemployment and ongoing political changes, consumption dropped rapidly and the level of savings, on the contrary, increased. After 1993, however, the growth of wealth in Czech households began and Czech consumers increased their consumption once again (Večerník 2008). There is an obvious "quality turn" in the preferences of Czech consumers who have become less price-oriented and increasingly stress the quality of purchased goods. Increasing demand for organic products and a shift from materialism to post-materialism can be observed in some parts of the population. This development is highly probable to happen also in the other countries with transforming economies after their purchasing power reaches at least one half of the level of the OECD countries (Smith and Jehlička 2007; Kušková et al. 2009).

Only a small number of respondents mentioned that they shop at FMs because of the local origin of the products, thus, we do not share the fears of defensive localism raised by western scholars (Winter 2003; DuPuis and Goodman 2005) nor the local food support factor (Lyson 2004; Coster and Kennon 2005; Brown and Getz 2008). To conclude, the post-socialist countries tend to accept the same ethical mode of consumption, which has developed in western countries. There are some signs (e.g., from the surveys organized by some environmental and green movement NGOs; see, e.g., www.nalok.cz) that the motivations may be shifting from pure hedonism to more ethical and green consumption habits such as those in the UK, US, and other developed countries. However, the causes and circumstances of the process do differ from the West. Post-socialist societies have been accepting the values of ethical and environmentally friendly consumption, but the

circumstances of the post-socialist economy and post-socialist social conditions make this process different. Thus while the result may seem the same, the process has its specific aspects. The issues of motivation, however, require further research as the markets enter the next season of their operation within the Czech shopping environment.

Within the third objective of the paper, we aimed to reveal the dimension of social exclusivity of the new FMs in Prague by answering the question: what kind of people shop at FMs and for what reasons? It seems that, compared to the foreign literature (e.g., Goodman 2009; Morgan 2010; Freidberg 2004), social exclusion is not a serious issue in the case of FMs in Prague. The survey results show that there are consumers of different age, family size, and occupation type and they are mainly motivated by food freshness and better taste. There is a slight predominance of urban middle class shoppers at Prague's FMs; however, there is also another strong group of FM shoppers made up of pensioners and elderly people. Mothers with children, young people, yuppies, and professionals motivated by freshness or the local provenience of their food enjoy the environment of the FMs. Pensioners and older generations shop at FMs to relive the experience gained in the era when FMs were a traditional and everyday part of their lives and of the shopping landscape both in the cities and rural areas. Some danger of exclusion could be seen in the case of the Roma ethnic group, whose members were not observed as shoppers at FMs even in neighborhoods with a higher percentage of Roma residents (like in Karlínské náměstí). Western foreigners, on the other hand, visit FMs frequently and help to define the shopping environment of the markets.

The insights gained from our study of Prague's FMs illustrate that in a shopping environment ravaged by lack of shopping opportunities under the socialist regime and artificially accelerated period of mass consumption in large-scale retail facilities, people welcome FMs as a unique shopping experience. They claim more hedonist motivations than ethical or environmental ones. FMs as an alternative to the anonymous, large-scale forms of shopping are visited by a wide spectrum of shoppers across the socio-economic and demographic divide and there are no obvious signs of social exclusion as we know it from many US or UK markets (Alkon 2008; Tregear 2005). This is obviously an outcome of the artificial equalization of the society during communism, which aimed to flatten the differences between the "rich" and "poor." The process of social differentiation is still under way and further differentiation can be expected, with effects on the shopping habits of Czech consumers.

Last but not least, there is another, let us say "emotive," reason for the difference between the post-socialist and free-market FMs. The majority of agricultural land in

Czechia is owned and cultivated by large agro-companies oriented towards large-scale production (Bičík and Jančák 2005). There is a negative attitude to these large agro-companies because they are perceived as the heritage of the socialist era and many people in the post-socialist countries remember forced collectivization. Family farms and small farmers thus represent an interesting novelty and alternative looking for its place among customers' choices. FMs clearly foster the creation of new relations between farmers and final consumers, and the revitalization of the rural–urban connection.

The situation of FMs in Prague is a lively issue, still in the process of development in terms of types of customers, typology of farmers' markets, and establishment of family farms on the Czech food market. It will be necessary to observe future trends to see if a differentiation of the quality of the markets into more luxurious (in inner city neighborhoods) and less attractive (in the hinterland neighborhoods) emerges and stronger social spatialization or even “socio-spatial exclusion” becomes pronounced. The development of the share of FMs on the Prague foodscapes also deserves attention as its growth may make the question of exclusion more important.

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