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Perspectives of Locality in Madison, WI:
Knowing Farmers, Food, and Fields of View

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ABSTRACT

Wisconsin’s deep-rooted traditions of farming and activism fuse to form a unique and dynamic local food landscape. This comprehensive overview of local food landscapes explores alternative definitions of local food, describes ecological and cultural landscape features, examines motivating factors driving food identity, and produces a spatial data model mapping geographic extents of “locality.” Limited research has been conducted to define “local” in terms of the geographic distance between production and consumption, despite its inherently spatial nature. The landscape of “locality” serves as a fuzzy concept in which meaningful boundaries can vary considerably according to context or conditions. Previous research studies prefer to define “local” based on well-recognized marketing arrangements, such as direct-to-consumer markets. This research study determines the geographic extent of locality according to Madisonian’s conceptions of local food. Survey methodology gathered general public opinions of geographic “local food” boundaries using a map experiment. Our research study used geographic information system (GIS) technology to overlay the survey results and model landscape extents using fuzzy transparency maps. Additionally, interviews conducted with a local food crusader Chef Tory Miller and an assistant manager of a cooperative grocery store expressed the duality of local food as both tangible and abstract. Our findings indicate that Wisconsin identity plays an important role in Madisonians’ geographic local food identity.
INTRODUCTION

In an era of supermarkets and vast transportation networks of food, consumers still desire “local” food. The concept of locality relies heavily on human interpretation of the surrounding landscape. People use this culturally derived landscape to establish social identities and create meaning to highly subjective notions such as “local.” Thus, there is some question that goes into what people categorize as local food and what characteristics most strongly influence the categories. Our research project will determine the geographic extent of locality according to Madisonians’ conceptions of local food. We are interested in the changing perspectives of this landscape between producers, commercial businesses, and consumers, as well as the motivating factors and length of residency play a role. By examining these subjective viewpoints, we hope to reveal patterns of spatial connections to the landscape and how those viewpoints fuel local food consumption in Madison.

To define abstract ideas of landscape, homeland, food as identity, and reconnection to the land, we drew upon the findings and methodologies of previous academic research. Relating these concepts will be vital for our purpose of linking spatial identity with food and expose how these broad concepts influence upon the formation of local food systems, specifically direct markets and the Dane County Farmers’ Market. Existing research studies on the Dane County Farmers’ Market provide a foundational basis for research methodologies in our local food market case study. We gathered literature on the impact of direct markets in Wisconsin from recent publications, allowing us to evaluate the local food trend with a modern timestamp. Broader discussions of landscape from multiple time periods provide many perspectives on the complex concepts of this imaginary landscape.
BACKGROUND CONCEPTS

**LANDSCAPE**

When examining a broad concept of locality with respect to landscape, one must first adopt a stable definition. For our study we will consider a landscape that “denotes the interaction of people and place: a social group and its spaces, particularly the spaces which the group belongs and from which its member derive some part of their shared identity” (Groth 1997, 1). Rural landscapes provide the spatial origins of agriculture and are intimately interwoven with ideas and discussion of local food. While much of our research will occur outside of the rural landscape, the current landscape values profoundly impact conceptions of rurality. Lowenthal presents five current dominant perceptions of the rural landscape. For the purposes of our study, we will use his perception of “Landscape as Heritage: Heritage was once about grand monuments, great heroes, and unique treasures; it now applauds the vernacular and typical” (Lowenthal 1997, 184).

Historical notions of Wisconsin as an agricultural state continue to influence perceptions of food. This heritage can be expressed and explored in subtle ways like a visitation to the farmers’ market. Landscape is tangible, subjective, and spatially situated similarly to ideas of homeland, which will be discussed in the following section. Sets of familiar features compose the homeland, however, “while the cultural landscape is a ‘material’ thing...it also is simultaneously a way of visually and spatially ordering and organizing the world around us” (Schein 2010, 223). This malleable concept provides a basis for our researchers’ treatment of an imagined geography of locality as a landscape.
**HOMELAND**

The concept of homeland is integrally linked to definitions of locality. Yi Fu Tuan states that, “Human groups nearly everywhere tend to regard their own homeland as the center of the world” (Tuan 1977, 149). This concept of home as center provides a central prototype for locality, under which surrounding spaces exist as partial members of the homeland. However, while Tuan provides a spatial basis for home as center, he also portrays home as malleable and moveable. Humans create ‘Anthropocentric Homelands’ which move in space along with their creators (Tuan 1977, 150). Therefore, locality cannot be seen as a static phenomenon; conceptions of its spatial extent now may have varied greatly in the past and may continue to change in the future.

A home also contains physically identifiable landmarks that enhance attachment and spatial identity (Tuan 1977). Tuan’s analysis of homeland incorporates both concrete and abstract notions. While an attempt to define the home can certainly rely upon physical markers and boundaries, one must treat it as a fluid and dynamic concept. This humanistic research provides a strong conceptual basis for understanding individual attachment and creation of place, which can then apply to larger constructions of society.

**FOOD IDENTITY**

While spatial identity’s influence upon the extent of local food must be examined, so too must food play a role in establishing a spatial identity. Aitchison and Everett (2008) provide a case study of Cornwall, England which analyzes the effect of food tourism on regional identity. They use Hall & Sharples definition of food tourism as “visitation to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants and specific locations... it is the desire to experience a particular type of food or the produce of a specific region...” (Everett & Aitchison 2008, 151).
This definition of food tourism will be used to augment our research on the Dane County Farmers’ Market. As Everett and Aitchison state, this involves a conscious acknowledgement of the cultural and social significance of food. The basis of the research indicates that sites can stimulate regional identity and enable a culture to invest in and critically engage with a local food identity. These critical sites of the physical identity manifestation transport the ideals of regional identity from an individual to a societal level.

The relationships individuals build around their food “are constrained by need and context, but they are also expressions of authorship” (Tuan 1977, 64). Our research will reveal these relationships between individuals and their food. Food systems and the resulting notions of identity and spatial situation are examples of this relationship. The homeland is a product of these relationships, emerging identities, and spatial locations (Hinrichs 2000). The interaction of these institutions informs individual actors’ perceptions of the landscape.

**FARMING TRADITION**

In the past, producing one’s food was a necessity of life. This simple notion bound people intimately to the land and their food. Communities created festivals around the planting and harvesting seasons, beseeching good crops and bountiful harvests (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture 2010). A connection with food was inherent because it coincided with survival, so it naturally coincided with cultural traditions.

The United States food system began to shift from local to national and then global food sources following World War II. This shift was spurred by lower transportation costs and improvement in refrigerated trucking, which allowed perishable produce to be shipped across the globe at affordable prices (Martinez 2010). These increases in technology reinforced the
transition to non-local food systems by providing more food options and convenience for consumers while simultaneously decreasing small farmers’ ability to produce competitively.

Following this transformation, academic research in food studies underwent a rapid expansion. The notion of identity was taken up again, to which food was directly and intimately linked. This was strongly supported by the claim that “sentiments of belonging via food do not only include the act of classification and consumption, but also the preparation, the organization, the taboos, the company, the location, the pleasure, the time, the language, the symbols, the representation, the form, the meaning, and the art of eating and drinking” (Scholliers 2001, 7). This close connection between food and identity did not only emerge in academic circles, but also in wider spheres.

RECONNECTIONS TO SPACE AND FOOD

Today the average U.S. citizen is three generations removed from production agriculture causing many of the traditional connections with land and food have become strained. Recent polls have revealed a trend in consumers’ desire to know where and how their food is produced (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture 2010). According to the Food Marketing Institute (2009), national data suggest that local food consumers are similar in their motivations for buying local, even if they are demographically diverse: The majority of respondents to a national study cited freshness (82 percent), support for the local economy (75 percent), and knowing the source of the product (58 percent) as reasons for buying local food at direct markets or in conventional grocery stores (Martinez 2010, 29). This evidence suggests significant demand for locally produced foods, reflecting an increasing interest by consumers in supporting local farmers and in better understanding the origin of their food (Martinez 2010).
Image 1 provides an example of this desire at Capitol Centre Market in Madison, WI. Labels placed on certain food items provide the exact distance traveled to the store from its Wisconsin producer. While these labels are not limited to products from farms, they form a clear association between the store and Wisconsin-made products. It is evident now that mainstream food systems have absorbed this growth of “relocalization” of the food system. Feagan echoes this point in stating that local food systems must be treated as permeable systems, working within and in conjunction with larger food systems (Feagan 2007).

**FOOD SYSTEMS**

There is a question of how one’s food gets from the soil to your table. They answer lies in the notion of a food system. Food systems contain the institutions that structure producer-consumer relations (Hinrichs 2000). Although “local” has a geographic connotation, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that there is no consensus on a definition in terms of the distance between production and consumption. According to the definition adopted by the U.S. Congress in the 2008 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (2008 Farm Act), the total
distance that a product can be transported and still be considered a “locally or regionally produced agricultural food product” is less than 400 miles from its origin, or within the State in which it is produced (Martinez 2010, 3). Since there is no universal definition of local food, we will evaluate these markets by defining types of local food markets.

The two basic types of local food markets are “direct-to-consumer” markets and “direct-to-retail” markets, also known as direct markets and intermediary markets, respectfully. In direct marketing, transactions are conducted directly between farmers and consumers, making it an immediate personal exchange (Hinrichs 2000). Venues for direct-to-consumer markets include farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture (CSAs), farm stands/on-farm sales, and “pick your own” operations (Martinez 2010, 5). Farmers’ markets and CSA’s represent a larger institutional manifestation of local food distributors than individual farm stands (Hinrichs 2000). Emerging direct marketing projects reflects a need for local food systems as an alternative to transnational corporate vendors. Individuals then imagine a locality serving their desire for this alternative system of obtaining food. Exchanges between actors in this food system reflect how land is spatially used and how actors relate to this space that draws together individual producers and consumers.

The other type of local food market, intermediary marketing, is selling local produce to specific buyers for resale (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture 2011). This includes direct sales by farmers to restaurants, retail stores, and other institutions. These intermediary distributors channel relationships between producer and consumer; thereby creating institutions that foster identity and relationship to community and food (Wisconsin Department of Agriculture 2011). By connecting producers with large-volume distributors, the local food markets are coordinated.
on a larger scale than ever before. Coordination leads to stable demand for product and allows farmers to plan their crops accordingly.

**DANE COUNTY FARMERS MARKET**

While direct markets are a primary economic food model type, their sustainability is dependent on the unique situation in which it is implemented. In the case of Madison, Wisconsin, a direct market was created in 1972 in the form of a farmers’ market. The creation of the Dane County Farmers’ Market illustrated the “development and growth of a direct marketing institution within a culture of segmented marketing institutions” (Merriman 1980, 4). This particular farmers’ market was unique because it was a result of hard work and motivation by two individuals rather than consumer demand. Nevertheless, consumer demand for the market exponentially increased between the first market and the fourth week of its operation. David Merriman, a PhD student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, wrote his dissertation on the formation and success of the Dane County Farmers’ Market in 1980, just eight years after the farmers’ market was created (Merriman 1980). Since the market had just recently been developed, the author was able to interview the few major figures involved in its birth as well as collect primary data through surveys and general observations.

The rules and procedures of beginning this farmers’ market exposed definitions of locality and temporal trends in direct-to-consumer institutions. In terms of defining locality, the director of the Dane County Farmers’ Market determined that only vendors whose farms were located in the state of Wisconsin were allowed to sell at the market (Merriman 1980). As the market increased in popularity, a spatial transition of farms moving away from Dane County was revealed, while at the same time an increase in number of vendors represented at the market was evident (Ballweg 1993). The continued stability of the Dane County Farmers’ Market indicates
that the historical structure of the market can sustain itself. The concept of direct markets has continued to be effective through present day, with farmers and consumers alike reaping the benefits of excluding the middleman.

**WISCONSIN FOOD BRAND**

The current status in local food movements is contextualized by Feagan as containing “an almost visceral urgency to reterritorialize space in the efforts of LFS advocates, practitioners, writers, and consumers” (Feagan 2007, 38). This emphasizes the importance of creating a definition of locality, despite its vague subjectivity. Wisconsin’s original entrepreneurs, its farmers, are reinventing the wheel. This reinvention comes in stark contrast to the nationalization of the food system following WWII. Farmers’ markets and community supported agriculture programs are bringing a resurgence of new agriculturalists in the state. The local food market is transforming the landscape and culture of agriculture by affecting how food is grown and how new food systems will are built. In essence, these progressive farmers are putting a new face and place to food.

A report by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters (WASAL) provides a possible plan for the reterritorialization of food in Wisconsin. The creation of a “Wisconsin Grown” brand would have the potential to raise consumer and producer awareness of the place of food; thereby reaffirming and strengthening the regional identity of Wisconsin (WASAL 2007). This displays that one can build upon current frameworks to reterritorialize food in Wisconsin. The WASAL stresses that consumer education, with a large emphasis on the education of youth, provides a foundation for food identity in future generations (WASAL 2007).
Image 2 exemplifies a “Wisconsin Brand” in place at Madison Fresh City Market. The grocery store specifically markets certain foods as a vaguely defined “true local.” While the marketing strategy makes no attempt to define this local food, it plays upon notions of Wisconsin’s farming heritage by portraying an idyllic farm setting on the map. This existing literature presents a basis for the current status of efforts to define locality.

**FARM-TO-TABLE NOTION**

A new age concept of “know-your-farmer, know-your-food” has emerged in the restaurant market in recent years, even though restaurants have always been using farm ingredients. Chef Tory Miller of Graze and L’Etoile-two local and sustainable but distinctive restaurants in Madison, WI-has implemented this one definitive culinary concept. He recognizes that “farm-to-table” is the new bandwagon trend people see as “old-school” or “more-natural” but explains that the food movement matches exactly what chef’s have been doing since the
1980’s; using farm ingredients without advertising it (Miller 2012). The main difference seen in these locally-sourced restaurants involves small farms and co-ops making weekly deliveries to sous chefs and line cooks instead of commercial grocers (Post 2012). Edible Madison, a magazine focusing on Southern Wisconsin’s food and agriculture through the stories of local farmers, food producers, and chefs, provide an in-depth analysis of the symbiotic relationship between the farmer and the chef:

“Both endure relentlessly long hours, working with factors constantly in flux, fueled more by a sense of creation than of any promise of financial reward. Both the farmer and the chef create something from hand, meant to be both sustaining and satiating—whether it be a bowl of freshly picked blueberries or the resulting blueberry baked custard” (Post 2012).

Farm-to-table restaurants also hugely benefit the farmers. Chef Tory Miller understood just the second time he went to the Dane County Farmers’ Market that buying his food from the market was making a difference in people’s lives (Miller 2012). After this realization, his mission was to eliminate all commercial farming operations and commercial beef and fish. He states, “At the end of the day I feel very rich because it’s a sense of pride I have as a chef that I’m not going to make a small farmer wait two weeks for my check” (Miller 2012). The farmers are equally enabled, through both business and family security. A grass-fed beef farm confirms, “We really focused on restaurant sales from the beginning. It makes up about 75 percent of our sales. And so L’Etoile and Graze, being with us through thick and thin, they’ve enabled us to turn our farm into the ecological treasure that it is” (Post 2012).
SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Another component of farm-to-table restaurants is engaging with the community. Chef Tory Miller shops at the Dane County Farmers’ Market every Saturday morning, creating a public presence by pulling wagons displaying the names of his restaurants. Image 3 below captures these wagons, along with Chef Tory Miller and his foragers, in front of the Madison Capitol building. The wagons are designed in an aesthetic manner that is integral to their function. By photographing the wagons in front of the Capitol building, one can interpret the restaurants as a place imbued with local pride and identity. It gives the impression that the wagons, the Chef, and his helpers, are intimately tied to the landscape, along with everything the wagons stand for. Simply, it portrays the epitome of a slow-food concept. Chef Tory Miller could easily have all his food dropped off at the restaurant, but instead chooses to wake up early and pull his wagons around the farmers market. In turn, he is able to form personal relationships with the farmers and members of the Madison community. This creates a positive social awareness that links him to the cultural group of people who are passionate about eating locally.

Image 3: Chef Tory at November Dane County Farmer’s Market with foragers (Klousia, 2012 www.ediblemadison.com/articles/view/chef-tory-miller-his-seasonal-pantry)
METHODS

Kenneth R. Olwig articulates how space and place are conceived visually and how that can be expressed through symbolism in language or graphics (Olwig 2011). One common strategy for gathering data is through widely distributed surveys. Our surveys were distributed at the Dane County Farmers’ Market over the course of two Saturday events. This location provided a valuable setting to gain the appropriate “target population” which is “sufficiently specific to permit each individual component to exhibit the same defining characteristics” (Jensen 2010, 78). This location will allow us to gain insight from Madisonians with some general defining characteristics of relationship and engagement in local food. One can assume that those filling out the surveys have some general working knowledge of both Wisconsin geography and local food systems.

Respondents completed approximately 70 surveys. These surveys determined the attitudes, preferences, and characteristics of consumers of local food (see Appendix Item 1). It captures the range of relationships in the food system. Our method of questioning forces participants to reflect upon their purchases, attachments, and definitions of local food. Questions sought to reveal length of residency, amount of local food consumption, involvement in the local food culture, motivations in purchasing local food, and perceptions on the current status of the local food system in Madison (Appendix Item 1).

The survey concludes with a mapping activity defining the spatial extent of “local food.” Our geovisualization of the boundaries of locality involved overlaying participants’ maps in order to build a cohesive Madison map of local food (Appendix Item 2). Robbins provides a basis for using “questionnaires asking people to list or rank environmental categories or concepts, [and] mental mapping exercises to evaluate what and where are important
environmental elements (Robbins 2010, 248). Our survey uses both techniques to better understand these vague notions of local food. This map provides a fuzzy membership for locality, with those areas in white representing a large degree of inclusion by participants, to areas of black with no inclusions in the local definition. We will use this visualization to gain a greater understanding of the spatial extent of local food. This visualization was then combined with questions of motivations and demographic information in order to understand how these factors influence the boundaries of local food.

Large-scale surveying is not possible due to our lack of time and funds; however, our research focuses on identifying the ways Madisonians obtain and interact with local Wisconsin produce. Previously Everett and Aitchison used surveys and interviews to form a regional consensus of identity around food tourism. We attempted to do the same by integrating our notions of landscape, homeland, food identity, and food system. By interviewing restaurateurs and distributors we came to understand how local commercial institutions conduct the relationship between producer and consumer. Contacts with Chef Tory Miller of L’Etoile and members of the Williamson St. Co-Operative, both of which are high profile Madisonian institutions, provide these insights (Appendix Item 3&4). These interviews assisted in articulating perceived relationships between consumers and farmers, consumers and restaurants, consumers and grocers, and consumers and the market.

Previous studies on the market and other markets serve as a guide for our public survey method (Merriman 1980). Our data collection will differ due to time restraints. By interpreting the specific way individuals relate to their landscapes through the various institutions present in the landscape, we constructed a definition of locality as a landscape. The use of previous studies demonstrates a trend toward the increasing popularity of consuming local food. The growing
number of vendors, publications, awareness, and popularity of the Dane County Farmers’ Market shows the trend toward reconnecting food systems to homeland.

RESULTS

SURVEY RESULTS

After testing our hypothesis, we observed perceptions of “local” food by first measuring the percentage of food consumption respondents consider to come from local sources. Of the 75 respondents, the largest percentage (40%) claimed that 21-40% of their food comes from local sources (Table 1). Around one-fourth of respondents claimed they consumed less than 20% of their food locally, while the same amount of respondents claimed up to 60%.

Our results showed that no participants consumed more than 80% of their food locally. We found that the percentage of food consumption from local sources had increased significantly until around 50%, and then began to decrease sharply. This indicated to us that respondents are unable to source more than 50% of their food from local sources.

We next measured the preferred purchasing locations for local food. Participants were allowed to choose all locations that applied. Please note that participants who responded to not purchase any food from local sources did not continue the survey. Our results reveal that 96% of participants purchase local food at the farmers’ market. This may have been biased because we delivered the surveys at the farmers’ market. The magnitude of difference between farmers’ markets and the other top choices was small, with around 80% purchasing from co-ops and 63% directly from farmers (Table 2).

We found a significant observed trend that approximately half of our sample population belongs a local food organization. Our results indicate that of the 77 participants surveyed belong
to local food organizations, 46% responded they belong to a food co-op and 45% responded they belong to none. This question provided the option to choose all answers that apply. Participants belonging to Slow Food Madison, Community Supported Agricultural (CSA), and Other were 11.0%, 9.0%, and 8.0%, respectively (Table 3).

We measured motivations for buying local food using a ranking system. Our results indicate that healthier food options ranked first as the biggest motivator to buy local food. This was followed by food quality/freshness, environmental concerns, supporting the local economy, and influences from peers/family members, respectively (Table 4).

We observed significant trends in the ranking of local food availability and pricing. The majority of respondents (53%) ranked the availability of local food as “High” and we found a significant positive correlation (Table 5). Our results show the ranking of local food prices produced a significant clustering around “Average” and “High”, with 48% and 44%, respectively (Table 6).

Finally, we measured how long participants have lived in the Madison area to examine if a generational dynamic emerged. Our results show the majority of participants (44%) have lived in Madison 0-5 years. The next highest range was 25% of participants living in the Madison area for 20+ years.
Maps provide a poignant visual representation of our survey respondents’ local definitions. Map 1 exhibits the varying nature of these subjective definitions. One can see that the central prototype for local food in Madison is the city itself, with 100% of respondents including the area in their definitions. This harkens back to Yi Fu Tuan’s notion that “Human groups nearly everywhere tend to regard their own homeland as the center of the world” (Tuan 1977, 149). The homeland is center of the local food world, with other areas existing as partial members.

One can also garner from Map 1 that the state of Wisconsin holds a large importance within conceptions of local food. Areas to the north in Michigan and Minnesota do not stand out compared to the highlighted areas of northern Wisconsin on the map. This displays that Madisonians may not create equidistant extents, but rather extents highly influenced by a
common state food identity. This supports previous notions of the possible success of a “Wisconsin Grown” brand. Furthermore, this supports ideas that Wisconsin represents a landscape of heritage, expressed in food. However, many respondents drew a much more compact boundary of locality. Therefore, distance does play a role in defining the local, whether due to aspects of food freshness, environmental impact, or connectedness to the land. The extents in Map 1 all fall within the broader Midwestern region of the United States. No participants attempted to draw their extent past the western or eastern boundaries of the map. Finally, participants’ extents rarely drew their local food boundary more than two states over from Wisconsin.

Maps 2 and 3 examine the effect of participants’ motivations in purchasing local food on their definitions of locality. Our study categorized participants highly valuing local economy to be those who ranked the local economy as the highest or second highest motivation in their purchase of local food. Participants who ranked the local economy lower than second represent those not highly valuing the local economy. Those with motivation to support the local economy
tended to expand northward in Wisconsin with their definitions of locality. There are some notable exceptions where two participants included a large map of the map area in their definition, but boundaries generally trended northward into Wisconsin. However, as seen in Map 3, those who did not highly value the local economy tended to produce more circular and equidistant boundaries around Madison, reaching central Illinois in regularity. Therefore, the political boundary of the state plays a key role in the minds of those looking to support the local economy and farmers.

Next our study examined the effect of residency length on definitions of locality. Map 4 examined definitions of participants living in Madison for longer than 16 years (long-term residents), while Map 5 examined responses of participants living in Madison for less than 16 years (short-term residents). This integrally relates back to notions of homeland and connections to the land. Long-term residents tended to have a more compact definition of locality. Short-term residents were more likely to create boundaries that extended further into northern Wisconsin. This implies that long-term residence create more compact identities as they further enhance
associations with their “homeland.” This rootedness and interaction with the tangible landscape may cause long-term residence to create smaller boundaries of locality.

**INTERVIEW ANALYSIS**

1. **Chef Tory Miller (L'Etoile and Graze)**

Chef Tory Miller of L’Etoile and Graze has a diverse background in the culinary world. Born and raised in Racine, WI, Tory Miller always had a deep connection to food. This led him to the French Culinary Institute in New York City to begin his journey as a chef and hone his art in the prestigious culinary world. Chef Tory explains how he was always concerned about every ingredient that went into his food. This thirst for knowing exactly where his food came from led him back to Wisconsin where he eventually became the chef and co-owner of L’Etoile. Chef Tory explains,

“A year after owning L’Etoile in 2006, the farms could feel my commitment to them and I realized it was bigger than just buying food. People come to market for the local food community. There are lots of farms and stories, and you find yourself creating relationships. I try to spread out my purchases and be a part of all the farms” (Miller 2012).

This commitment to local ingredients remains throughout all seasons of the year. Rather than source vegetables from sources of which Chef Tory does not consider local, his restaurant will begin to can vegetables immediately in spring. At the time of our December interview, L’Etoile still had ingredients purchased in April. To Chef Tory, local in Wisconsin does not die in the frost with the vegetation.
After spanning both the physical and cultural geographies of both cities, Chef Tory recalls that in New York customers were more concerned about where they were eating versus what they were eating. In Madison, on the other hand, he is able to charge prices based exactly on food cost because his customers know that their money is going directly into their community of local farmers who produce their food. Chef Tory explains,

“I don’t care about the bottom line; I care more about people making food. I pay the farmers first, then the workers, then pay rent, then make sure I keep the lights on.” He continues, “Any chef can be creative, but at the end of the day we are in Wisconsin and people need dinner.” (Miller 2012).

This reaffirms previous ideas that have set Madison as a unique and vital location for the genesis and spread of local food culture. Madison is a location where the food itself takes center stage, not the image of the chef or wealthy patrons.

Chef Tory creates a definition of “local” which reflects both his professional and personal beliefs: strictly Wisconsin. If an ingredient comes from Iowa, it is listed as imported on the menu. He manifests local not by some equidistant boundary, but rather a perceived shared cultural identity. A unique landscape feature of Madison is its proximity to the Driftless Region. This is one of the best farming regions in the world because it was untouched by glaciers. Chef Tory describes it as, “an untapped natural resource with a deep-rooted dairy background.” Through a locator map of Dane County Farmers Market vendors, one can visually see the intense concentration of dairy, vegetable, and beef farmers in this area. This rich ecology has historically provided Wisconsin farmers top quality land to build their livelihood and family traditions. The Driftless Region serves not only as a natural resource, but also a landscape which Chef Tory can experience. Madison’s close proximity to this region allow Chef Tory to maintain two viable
restaurants in an urban landscape, while maintaining integral ties to the rural landscape which sustains its ingredients. The rural landscape of Wisconsin agriculture is not simply a resource, but rather an area of interaction and connectedness.

Chef Tory has captured the deliciousness from the land and turned it into a cuisine that reflects the landscape. His motive is simple: “I want to change areas of life that you can actually touch.” He further elaborates, “If I can’t go to that farm and touch the land and touch the animals, I don’t buy it.” Local is not a landscape of distance or abstract knowledge, but rather a landscape of experience. One can touch and visit the local. Local provides a setting of interaction with the land and its people. The sense of community imbedded in personal relationships with farmers is more than, “What can this farmer do for me?”

“At the end of the day, these farmers are real people who need money to survive. I see their new truck and tents at market or a new addition on their house and see how it’s affecting their business and their life…I take their thriving and turn it into something that we can thrive off of. I run my business, and my life, as a co-producer” (Miller 2012).

Local food provides a common identity; Chef Tory and farmers are integrally linked with each other and the land. When customers purchase food at L’Etoile or Graze, they are guaranteed that most items only pass through Wisconsinites’ hands and never once left the landscape of locality.

Chef Tory may be able to experience and interact with the rural landscape and farmers, but urban Madisonians generally cannot. Therefore, his restaurants serve as outlets for Madisonians to reach out to and thrive off of local food. Towards the beginning of his tenure at L’Etoile, Chef Tory needed to “hit people over the head with an education” when they came to the restaurant, listing the location of every ingredient served in a dish (Miller 2012). Now,
however, the restaurant is able to simply list one or two farms per dish. This signifies the growth of the Madisonian local food culture.

Chef Tory’s ability to experience and interact with the Wisconsin rural landscape has formed his tangible definitions of locality. His experiences have allowed him to become integrally reconnected to the rural landscape. Ingredients serve not only as resources for his craft, but also as symbols for the soils of the farms, and the faces of the farmers. Local is not an abstract notion, but rather an integral landscape of identity and interaction.

2. Willy (Williamson St. Co-op)

Another data source comes from an interview with an Assistant Manager of the Williamson Street Grocery Co-op, whom we will refer to as Willy. He is able to articulate the role of the Williamson Street Co-op as a feature of the local food landscape. We conducted an interview with Willy on December 13th, 2012. If we want to understand how Madisonians perceive local food, we must examine where they interact with local food. The Williamson Street Grocery Co-op is a major source of retail produce in Madison since 1974. It specializes in natural, organic, and alternatively grown food. The Co-op capitalizes on local food trends, a space promoting community and centrality, and a collection of interests to raise awareness. The Co-op creates a definition of local food encompassing the entire state of Wisconsin and otherwise a radius of 150 miles from Madison (Willy 2012). Rather than serving as a simple grocery store, the Co-op provides a place where Madisonians generate knowledge and perspectives around food.
The Williamson Street Grocery Co-op is a member-owned and operated non-for-profit grocery store. The grocery store, like many businesses, must determine innovative ways to promote their products. This is sometimes difficult for the Co-op because certain produce will vary seasonally. Cheese is, however, a consistent staple of Wisconsin heritage. The above graphic touts the overwhelming percentage of cheese sales that support Wisconsin farms, and the map spatially locates the source of these dairy farms. Image 4 is a prominent advertisement that values cheese production in proximity to Madison. By advertising this spatial extent, the Co-op shapes Madisonian concepts of where local cheese comes from.

Their Assistant Manager, Willy, was born and raised in Madison. Growing up shopping at the Co-op, he maintained the personal relationship he had with many people who worked there, eventually blossoming into a friendship. One of these friend’s recommendations led to Willy’s employment at the Co-op. His steadfast membership and commitment has allowed Willy to fully embed himself in the Co-op’s culture. He transitioned from grocery stocker, to shift supervisor, and eventually to assistant manager. His understanding of local food is based in Dane County. His exposure to local, organic, and natural food developed and continues to grow.
integrally in Madison, WI. The Co-op contains individuals with multiple motivations for membership. By promoting the interests of its members, the Co-op helps control the type of food sold in this market. Some members enjoy the integral role they play in determining the available food in the store. The Co-op promotes a definition of local that extends 150 miles from the Capitol or within the state of Wisconsin minimizing transportation costs (Willy 2012). This satisfies members who shop for environmental, energy, or regional reasons. Some members desire to tangibly relate their money with what they consume. “The more money I can relate to, the more I can stand against the subsidies I don’t believe in” (Willy 2012). Willy’s experience gives a face to our long established residents of Madison.

Growing up in Dane County, his family made him conscious of food consumption and food issues because they are relevant to the issues of Dane County and Madison. Madison is contiguous with the suburbs that butt against Dane County's fertile farmland, which made these food issues tangible. In this way, Madisonians are directly exposed to the financial and productive health of Wisconsin farmers. Madison is a unique location as the state capital for Wisconsin. It is a politically active atmosphere where ideas and issues are regularly discussed or brought into the city. When farmers need to discuss their role in the state economy, Madison is a regular venue. The Co-op facilitates the discussion of Wisconsin food issues as a collection of interested individuals through generations.
The Co-op offers space for communities to congregate, communicate, and raise awareness for food issues. When the Williamson Street Co-op refers to the pirate flag on the cover of their February reader (Image 5), the heart-and-crossed-utensils identifies eating local food with a benign but radical community against the social norm of fast, bulk, and processed foods. Since the Co-op is a cooperative, membership-based organization, one might say each member takes a share of the treasure. Co-op members facilitate workshops on growing practices. They educate on political, economic, and agricultural issues. Employees are knowledgeable and invested members of the Co-op, and regularly available for questioning in the store (Willy 2012). This sense of stake holding, as on a pirate ship, builds a sense of responsibility, cooperation, and trust in the Co-op to form a community identity around local food.

The Co-op is a non-for-profit business. The focus of all employees and board members is to promote locally produced, packaged, and distributed foods. They do their best to promote this
As a co-op they are attentive to the concerns and desires of employees and members. But as a business they need options, and the local option is not always available. Certain foods are strictly available seasonally. The market trend is moving to organic, local, and alternative food sources. Madison is a small city of condensed area, but it is a growing market place. Buying local is a growing market trend. The Co-op must capitalize on this trend to remain in business. They promote a monthly Local Challenge. The challenge in some way promotes specific local foods for the month. This is a fun and interactive way to bring members into contact with local food.

Another way the Co-op promotes their farmers is through their Principle 6 program. Principle 6 is the principle of cooperative business that promotes cooperation among other co-ops. If the product is defined as at least two of the following: a) manufactured locally, b) comes from a cooperative source, or c) comes from a small farm, then the product is labeled P6. This helps shoppers make more informed decisions about the products they consume. Willy believes that with more knowledge, consumers are more likely to purchase a product. This program helps to advertise producers with whom the Co-op agrees on key production issues. This is intermediary knowledge production that extends back to producers and reaches out to consumers. The Co-op occupies this niche space of knowledge production. Knowledge empowers both producers and consumers of local food.

Williamson Street is a physical space generating knowledge in Madison about local food. Established in the Historic Williamson Street Neighborhood, the Co-op has been a locus of food issues since it opened in 1974. It quickly integrated itself in Madison’s activist culture of the 1960’s and 70’s. This activism promotes gaining knowledge to raise consciousness and awareness. For food issues, it means raising knowledge about food issues. The Co-op is
conscious about what farms and practices to support. For example, the Co-op has contracted with a poultry source to 1) reserve 200 birds for Co-op only production, 2) feed soy free feed to these birds, and 3) birds must be fully beaked. In this way, the Co-op has been able to send a message about animal rights. It also expresses a demand by their consumers to buy fair and just production practices.

Willy combines tangible events like watching egg sizes grow combine with statement about just and right production practices. Through this combination, Willy hopes to influence change in the food culture of Madison. Real social change needs to affect all Madisonians, especially lower income families. “Most mouths eat crap, and nobody has time to eat smart” (Willy 2012). This speaks to the convenience of subsidized and large farm production. This convenience, however, is sometimes less than desirable when examined with environmental, energy use, local economy and industry, or health concerns. Financial considerations are an obvious motivating factor. The social change will mean changing the image of feeding less fortunate with local food. Currently that image is of people who have money to act with market trends, to support local economy, health, or cut out big business from their budgets. While tangible factors such as the contiguous landscape of Madison and observing growth in the products play vital roles in Willy’s local food conception, “local” also represents a power idea. This idea is one of political activism; Willy may not see the changes on local farmers’ properties, but his locality favors the small farms over large businesses. To Willy, local serves as a powerful tool, a pirate flag which Madisonians can proudly wave.
CONCLUSION

Madison provides a unique spatial landscape to study local food due to its agricultural heritage, political heritage, and institutions such as the Dane County Farmers’ Market, L’Etoile, and Williamson St. Co-op. These factors lead to an engaged general population with poignant reflections on local food motivations and boundaries. Our study integrates these conceptions of local food in order to provide meaning behind the vague word of “local.” The mapping exercise exhibited the vital role of Wisconsin in notions of the boundary of locality, particularly in respondents with high purchasing motivation for the local economy.

Chef Tory and Willy reaffirmed the importance the state plays in people’s perceptions. However, many respondents, particularly those considered long-term residents, drew a more constricted boundary of local around Madison. This, along with Chef Tory’s hands-on experience, suggests the landscape of locality is tangible; it is a landscape that is regularly seen and experienced. With Madison serving as its central prototype, tangible experiences create deep rooted notions of homeland integrally influencing the definition of local. While local contains a tangible nature, it also serves as a powerful abstract idea. It can be represented as an equidistant circle with a radius of 150 miles, crossing state borders to areas a person has never visited. Therefore, local provides a powerful tool of expression and activism. From this we can understand the highly individualized notions of locality.

Our study can focus on some general trends associated with Madison, but cannot proudly proclaim an area as the “true local.” However, with stores and restaurants increasingly touting their “local” ingredients and food, the word may lose all spatial definition. By examining these boundaries of locality our study re-integrates this inherently spatial nature of the word, which current research fails to accomplish. We recognize our study cannot make broad based claims on
the extent of local, but we hope to establish a template for further research into the spatial extent of locality.

**FURTHER STUDIES**

Financial and temporal restrictions were placed upon our research. Further studies would allow us to complete a more extensive surveying process. Responses would be collected from a more diverse sub-section of the Madisonian population. This would involve sampling at locations such as grocery stores where we could engage with individuals who do not consider the impacts of local food on a normal basis. Our current sample of around 70 participants, mainly gathered from the Dane County Farmers’ Market, may not be representative of the population at large in Madison. Further research could appraise the merit of spatial study with respects youth’s formations of locality. If young people are forced to explore the geographic nature of food, it may lead to increased awareness of food systems. Future research may examine the significance of competing food systems and Food and Drug Administration’s regulation. Another demographic to sample would be lower income people to understand the effects of income on both the ability to eat locally, and perceptions and knowledge of local food. A broad based study across many economic backgrounds could reveal how the “local” and “non-local” food systems compete and combine within the overall food system.

Studies may also be helpful before transplanting local food culture to new areas such as the “food desert” of Milwaukee. These would assist understanding the motivations and geographic extents of food locality in other urban areas. Focusing on these motivations and geographic extents of locality will assist a local food system catered to the desires and expectations of Milwaukee and surrounding producers. Milwaukee, further geographically and culturally removed from rural agriculture, may have vastly different motivations and geographic
extents of locality than Madison. Engaging the population at large with the key concepts behind local food would further enhance the possible success of local food in the urban Milwaukee landscape.
### Tables

#### Table 1: Percentage of Food Consumption Respondent Considers Comes from Local Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Local Sources</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-20%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-40%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-80%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-100%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 2: Purchasing Location for Local Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ Market</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly From Farmers</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-op</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Store (other)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 3: Percentage of Respondents Belonging to Local Food Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Sustained Agriculture (CSA)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow Food Madison</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Co-op</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 4: Motivations for Buying Local Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivations For Buying Local Food</th>
<th>Average Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthier Food Options</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Quality/Freshness</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Concerns</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Economy</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences From Peers or Family</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Rank of Local Food Availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average:</strong> 3.66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Rank of Local Food Price

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Low</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very High</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average:</strong> 3.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX

Item 1: Survey Questionnaire

SURVEY

1. How long have you lived in the Madison area?
   a. 0 – 5 years
   b. 6 – 10 years
   c. 11 – 15 years
   d. 16 – 20 years
   e. 20+ years

2. What percentage of your food consumption do you consider comes from local sources? (if you do not purchase local food, including dining at restaurant with local food choices, you may stop the survey)
   a. 0 – 20%
   b. 21 – 40%
   c. 41 – 60%
   d. 61 – 80%
   e. 81 – 100%

3. Do you belong to any of the following organizations in the Madison area? (Choose all that apply)
   a. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
   b. Slow Food Madison
   c. Food Co-Op
   d. Other local food organization: ___________________________

4. Rank the following in terms of their impact in your motivation to purchase local food: (1 being MOST important, 5 being LEAST important)
   ______ Healthier food options
   ______ Food quality / freshness
   ______ Environmental Concerns
   ______ Supporting the local economy
   ______ Influences from peers/family

5. How would you rate the availability of local food for purchasing? (Circle one)
   Very Low  Low  Average  High  Very High

6. How would you rate the price of local food? (Circle one)
   Very Low  Low  Average  High  Very High

7. Where do you purchase local foods? (Circle all that apply)
   a. Farmers’ Markets
   b. Directly from farmers
   c. Grocery Stores (Co-ops)
   d. Grocery Stores (Other than Co-ops)
   e. Other: ___________________________
Item 2: *Survey Map*

What is the extent of local food production in the area? Please draw on the map your definition of the range of local food. In other words, draw the farthest distance that you believe food can travel to still be considered local.

You may draw any shape or size you see fit. Please draw one continuous line with no filling within the boundary. There are cities and mile markers only provided for reference.
Item 3: Interview: Chef Tory Miller

1. Where were you born?

2. Did you have any experience eating local food growing up?  
   - Has your Wisconsin background influenced your local food ideals?

3. How is Wisconsin food culture different than New York food culture? Did New York influence your perceptions for how people think about where food comes from?

4. What about Wisconsin food is special to you that motivated you to come back here?

5. What did you understand about local food when you started working at L’Etoile and how did L’Etoile implement local food values when you first started there?

6. What was your influence on the menu and ingredients of L’Etoile? Did the use the farmers market before you worked there?

7. What was your perception of Madison’s demand for eating locally?

8. Since you first started working at L’Etoile, what changes have you witnessed within in the local food culture and how has it affected your business?

9. How and why did you think of Graze? Did you see a demand for a cheaper local-food restaurant?

10. How did your New York experience in terms of marketing to wealthier costumers and appealing to young professional transfer to using these skills in Wisconsin to market two farm-to-table restaurants?

11. In what ways has the spatial location of your restaurants - being on the capital square and next to the farmers market - affected your business?

12. In what ways do you interact with the local food community and the farmers? What relationships have you formed with the farmers and what effect does this have on the success of your restaurants?

13. How does your relationship with the farmers impact the quantity and quality of food that is necessary for maintaining two restaurants?

14. What is your reasoning for pulling wagons and foraging for food at market versus just having farmers deliver their produce in the kitchen?
15. How do your menu ingredients differ through the seasons?

16. How do you plan to further enhance the local food culture?

17. Do you have any suggestions for ways to improve local food availability to Madison?

18. What is your extent of food locality? (give maps)
   - How far do your ingredients come from?
Item 4: *Interview with Assistant Manager of Williamson Street Grocery Co-op*

1.) Where are you from originally, and how long have you lived in Madison?
2.) How did you discover Willy St.? How long have you been a member?
3.) How does the Willy St. Co-op promote local food culture in Madison?
4.) Where does Willy St. source their food?
5.) How does Willy St. connect patrons to food?
6.) What is the relationship between the Co-op and farmers?
7.) How did you become interested in locally sourced food?
8.) How do you participate in local food culture outside of Willy St.?
9.) What does Madison’s relationship to local food production mean to you?
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Robbins, Paul. 2010. “Human-Environment Field Study”. In Research Methods In Geography. West Sussex, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell Ltd.


