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## Cultivating a Culture of Food Justice: Impacts of Community Based Economies on Farmers and Neighborhood Leaders in the Case of Fresh Stop Markets in Kentucky

Heather Hyden

*University of Kentucky*, hlhyden1@gmail.com

Digital Object Identifier: <https://doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2017.018>

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Heather Hyden, Student

Dr. Keiko Tanaka, Major Professor

Dr. Patricia Dyk, Director of Graduate Studies

Cultivating a Culture of Food Justice: Impacts of Community Based Economies on Farmers and  
Neighborhood Leaders in the Case of Fresh Stop Markets in Kentucky

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in  
Community and Leadership Development  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Heather Hyden

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Keiko Tanaka, Professor of Community and Leadership Development

Lexington, Kentucky

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### Cultivating a Culture of Food Justice: Impacts of Community Based Economies on Farmers and Neighborhood Leaders in the Case of Fresh Stop Markets in Kentucky

In this thesis, I focus on two tensions within the alternative agro-food movement. First is a question of who/what community is allowed to define food systems problems and then implement solutions. For example, food desert metaphors rely discursively on defining communities as being “without”, which perpetuates needs-based narratives, in which only professional “experts” know how to solve problems of food access. These representations ignore the creativity, agency, and resiliency of everyday food justice mobilizations happening at the grassroots level. Second, what form can solutions take within hegemonic constructions of development? I build a theoretical model based on Black geographies (McKittrick, 2013) and feminist economic geography (Gibson-Graham, 2006) and apply it to a unique model of a grassroots-driven alternative agriculture initiative in Kentucky, Fresh Stop Markets (FSM). Further, with the use of the Community Capitals Framework (Flora & Flora, 2008), I analyze the value(s) of participating in FSM for both farmers and procurement organizers (farmer liaisons). My conclusions signal a need for increased investment in human, social, and cultural capital systems to create a culture of food justice in our communities. These investments allow for both farmers and limited-income consumers to benefit and create long-term sustainability, which center equity and cooperation.

**KEYWORDS:** Alternative Food Systems, Food Justice, Alternative Economies, Community Food Systems, Black Geographies, Feminist Geographies

\_\_\_\_\_Heather Hyden\_\_\_\_\_

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By

Heather Hyden

Dr. Keiko Tanaka

Director of Thesis

Dr. Patricia Dyk

Director of Graduate Studies

2-1-2017

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not be possible without the collective power of farmers, neighbors and community organizers who work every day for food justice across Kentucky. My deepest gratitude extends to New Roots Inc. staff, board, farmer liaisons and the farmers who provide fresh, healthy produce every season. I would especially like to thank the Lexington Fresh Stop Markets crew.

I would also like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Keiko Tanaka for her mentorship, financial and emotional support and patience as I toiled through this project. As an academic leader, mother, Rural Sociologist and alternative agriculture leader, I owe her my utmost respect. Finally, my thesis committee kept me intellectually grounded and provided endless affirmation and care. Thank you, Dr. Karen Rignall, Dr. Patrick Mooney and Dr. Ron Hustedde for this support.

Further, it is critical that I mention the support of my mentor, Dr. Rosalind Harris for walking alongside me in reading McKittrick and Wood's Black Geographies theory. And most importantly, for her love and passion for critical community engagement. Finally, I must thank her for mindfully listening and compassionately guiding me through graduate school. She is a lifelong mentor and friend.

In closing, I must acknowledge support from the Kentucky Foundation for Women and the emotional guidance of my dear friend Emily Herrington and all of the powerful female leaders in my life. They are, but are not limited to: Cassia Herron, Michelle Howell, Andrea James, Joy Harris, Kristen Williams, Karyn Moskowitz, Dr. Carolyn Finney, Dr. Garrett Graddy, Dr. Nicole Breazeale, Kathryn Engle, Dr. Anna Secor and the members of the Speeding Vaginas.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

On August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016 a press release notified the Louisville community that plans to develop the West Louisville Food Port had been scrapped. Elevated by its developers to become the largest food hub in the country across countless national and local media outlets, it was a pet project for Mayor Fischer and according to the project website, it was “poised to become one of the most transformative urban reinvestment projects of the decade,” (<http://westlouisvillefoodport.org>). The developers came from extremely wealthy and elite families who made substantial contributions to Fischer’s campaign and helped fund his administration’s local food efforts. They financially steered the ship of the local food movement touting from the Mayor’s office with suspicion from grassroots leaders with one failed food hub under their belts.

Where this transformative development was expected to break ground was on 24 acres of vacant land (formally Phillips Tobacco) in the disinvested communities of Russell, Shawnee, and Portland in West Louisville. The city sold the land to them for \$1.00. All of the pieces seemed to exist for a glorious urban revitalization project with a local food economy twist. There was going to be 200 jobs, retail space, an indoor vertical farm, aggregation, processing and storage for local food distribution, and a few stories even claimed the development would be working to address food insecurity. From an outsider perspective, it seemed too big to fail. But, after three years of planning, \$3 million dollars spent, and countless questions from local residents left unanswered, the world renowned architectural mock-ups were rolled up.

For grassroots, food-justice organizers who had worked for decades on their own version of local food system *transformation*, this was not a surprise. Two hundred jobs and vertical farms were not going to change the historical and structural systems that have created food inequity in West Louisville nor farm insecurity in rural communities. Lack of community engagement at the beginning of the project design process reflected their disinterest in the quality of lives in the community. Many community leaders felt disrespected from day one. No one had asked the residents what they needed before plans were drafted. Nor did they attempt to ask food justice organizers who lived blocks away what they thought was needed to grow the local food economy. Myopically focused on scalar tactics of localization through the development of built infrastructure, the everyday lives, creativity, and expertise of nearby residents had been discounted, illustrating how food desert analogies rely discursively on defining communities as being “without.” This view perpetuates dominant, needs-based narratives in which only professional “experts” know how to solve problems of food access. The human, cultural, and social capital of the predominantly African-American community in West Louisville had once again been trivialized.

To elaborate on the extent of disrespectful tactics leveled at West Louisville residents, Mayor Fischer said the project was, “too big for some people to grasp,” and further that, “The bottom line is we’re a little bit ahead of our time.” He added, “To me, the big shame is when you *don’t dream big* [emphasis added]” (Bailey & Downs, 2016). This was a slap in the face for community leaders who had been working on their own grassroots, local food initiatives for decades. Whose dreams were not big enough? And why could the Mayor not support dreams that were already being actualized by West Louisville residents? This clearly proved how entrenched the city’s local food agenda was with local elites. In the pursuit of big, the innovation and leadership of limited-income communities was made invisible.

I open my thesis with this story because it illustrates two contentious debates within the current alternative agri-food movement as I have experienced them working as a public health practitioner, community organizer, and graduate student. First is a question of who/what community is legitimate enough to define food systems problems and then implement solutions? In short, whose voices are invited to participate in food system transformation and what parts of their problems are heard? Second is what form can solutions take within our existing, hegemonic constructions of what development is supposed to be? What I have seen is a lack of imagination that limits what is possible. Development strategies are guided by a monolithic idea of “growth” and the goal of increasing profit margins, while silencing or rendering invisible the everyday, lived experiences of those most harmed by our dysfunctional food system.

Charles Levkoe (2011) argues that alternative food initiative projects that do not include democratic processes (in this case a community-driven planning process) reify political oppression. He offers a theoretical framework for transformative food politics that, “addresses the root causes of challenges within the industrial food system, rather than the symptoms,” (2001, p.688). Recent critiques of the local food movement have also pointed to its failure to address racial and economic inequalities (Alkon & Ageyman, 2011; Cadieux & Slocum, 2015; Guthman, 2011; Holt-Giménez, 2015; Sbicca, 2012). Scholars have specifically pointed to the ways these efforts resemble “early colonial encounters between Europe and others...which often entails *bringing* individual improvement rather than *allowing for* (or supporting) collective action” (Guthman, 2011, p. 157). Truly, the Food Port developers thought they were bringing jobs to the downtrodden West Louisville community. But front page articles about the project, which represented the white developers in the foreground with a large swath of vacant land in the background and no one else as partners,

certainly elicited images of colonialists on unclaimed land. As A. Breeze Harper reminds us, “food justice cannot be a reality . . . if the overwhelmingly white food movements, fail to engage in antiracism and critical whiteness-awareness activism,” (2011, p. 235). And, I know a few community organizers who tried to call the developers in as the project was in process and were not taken seriously. It is clear that we cannot conflate local food projects with attempts to achieve food justice. We also need new ways of defining ‘development’ to truly realize lasting and equitable change.

### **Defining Food Justice**

In a piece published last year, Cadieux and Slocum (2015) ask: “What does it mean to do food justice?” On the surface this seems a simple question, but it is not. So many of us in food movements are struggling to translate the work of our organizations amidst a discursive space full of often overlapping, yet competing food movement identities. Emergent scholarship around food justice *theory* may provide us with much needed new languages to support our self-reflexive processes of realizing who we are, what we are doing, and why we do it. As Cadieux and Slocum argue, “if food justice means anything, it may stand for nothing” (2015, p. 15).

Potentially one of the greatest hurdles for developing work plans for more “justice-centered” food systems is the vague and multifarious definition(s) for “food justice.” Sbicca’s work (2012) elaborates how diverse interpretations of food justice can create complications for organizations. Gottlieb and Joshi (2010) in their book, *Food Justice*, provide a comprehensive action-centered definition as:

- (i.) seeking to challenge and restructure the dominant food system, (ii.) providing a core focus on equity and disparities and the struggles by those who are most vulnerable, and (iii.) establishing linkages and common goals with other forms of social justice activism and advocacy-whether immigrant rights, worker justice, transportation and land use rights. (p. ix)



Agyeman and Alkon (2011, p. 5) share a similar definition, but place more emphasis on “economic empowerment,” “environmental sustainability,” and “the influence of race and class on the production, distribution, and consumption of food.”

In this thesis, I offer a case study of an emergent food justice movement in Kentucky, or a network of alternative economic spaces called Fresh Stop Markets. Compared to *solving* food access issues through *built* market spaces, these markets altogether are more dynamic and process-oriented spaces that emphasize relationships and culture-building. They exemplify that alternative food economies are possible with investments in an anti-oppression framework (Sbicca, 2012) that takes seriously how those most affected by our dysfunctional food system define their own problems of food injustice. Fresh Stop Markets invest and utilize the human, social, and cultural capital that constructs the spaces around which a culture of food justice can flourish.

By applying food justice theory to the everyday practices of a project like Fresh Stop Markets, we can bring into clearer focus: ways in which grassroots organizations attempt to navigate the food justice movement; especially how diverse actors describe their role(s) in relation to themselves, their organization, and others; “where gaps develop between ideal and action, strategy and capacity, or where people struggle in translating between reflection and action” (Cadieux & Slocum, 2015, p. 34).

Through the integration of Black geographies, feminist economic geography, and community development theory, this master’s thesis uses participatory action research to dissect Fresh Stop Markets as illustrative of food justice practice. I focus specifically on their cooperative system of food procurement to evaluate the impact of this emergent economic system on the local farmers who sell to the markets and the farmer liaisons who lead their buying process.

## Community Research Partnership

Two years ago I sat across from a Community Farm Alliance (CFA) member and friend to dream about better food justice work in Lexington, KY. At the time I was still an organizer for CFA and was transitioning to graduate school and a new city. I remember gesturing wildly and laughing harder than I had in months. The laughter came from our shared dark sense of humor about disappointments with the local food movement; our failures in organizing; failures in grant writing; conversations that we wished we could have; voices that need to be heard but are never invited to participate; times when we wanted to scream at our funders, local government officials, and ourselves. It is easy to get burnt out on this work.

Then we refocused on dreaming. I told him, “stop what you are doing and call Karyn Moskowitz from New Roots Inc. Do it as soon as you leave here. Fresh Stop Markets are everything. I talked about their leadership development model, and the cooperative economics, and how shares are purchased on a sliding scale, and the energy of the pop up market spaces, led by African-American women. I mentioned the food justice workshops where shareholders direct what *they* want to learn about instead of being talked down to about dietary guidelines. I could have never imagined this thesis emerging from such a meeting over a couple of beers.

Within the first months of graduate school, we were already organizing our neighborhood around a 2015 Fresh Stop Market in Lexington. I tried to resist participation in organizing. Graduate school was supposed to be my retreat time. Yet, there I was attending church dinners with now Fresh Stop Market leaders. And then, after a year of recalcitrance, I was sitting across from the New Roots Inc. director discussing how I could help the organization through my thesis. Fresh Stop leaders call this being sucked into the “vortex.”

In collaboration with New Roots, Inc., I aim to achieve four objectives through this participatory action research project, including:

1. Examine how an existing cooperative, alternative food network is mobilized on the ground;
2. Identify how existing communication and interaction systems enable or constrain multi-stakeholder cooperation;
3. Develop recommendations for improving their existing farmer and consumer cooperation networks; and
4. Explore the usefulness of feminist and Black geography theory as an analytical framework for understanding cooperative alternative food networks.

### **Statement of Significance**

In this thesis, I will argue that alternative agriculture economies are possible, and investing in community organizing is critical to addressing social inequalities. An examination of community organizing as a technique in food system transformation will make a significant contribution to existing thought and practice in the alternative agriculture movement. Specifically, there is a need to explore how investments in social and human capital through community organizers could contribute to a more just food system. By looking at the mechanics of a food justice organization like New Roots Inc., this thesis answers calls for more research that identifies how people who are involved in food justice work see themselves and their work in relation to others, as well as how resources are mobilized to achieve organizational goals. Also, to the extent that the impacts of Fresh Stop Markets can be articulated, this thesis explores the degree to which state-funded entities and policy makers see it as a legitimate “best practice,” which influences the availability of funding and other support for cooperative alternative food initiatives.

## **Outline of this Thesis**

This thesis consists of 11 chapters. Chapter two will outline the organizational structure of New Roots Inc. including its relationship to the Fresh Stop Markets. It will also describe the mechanics of how the markets operate.

Chapters 3 and 4 explain how I carried out this study. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodological approach taken when developing my research design, and collecting and analyzing the data. I also explain my researcher positionality and how it influenced my findings. Chapter 4 outlines my research design including survey and interview instruments and participant recruitment. It also describes the elements of the community-based participatory research design and how I used participant observation in the study. Finally, it explains the data analysis framework including theoretical approaches and how it is informed by past studies.

Study findings are presented in four separate chapters to help the reader understand the diverse aspects of data collected. In Chapter 5, I develop a theoretical model for understanding how Fresh Stop Markets operate and how feminist and Black geography theory is useful for explaining the food justice and economic justice components of FSMs. Chapter 6 presents findings that help to research question one, especially describing the farmers and farmer liaisons who operationalize the FSM procurement system. Chapter 7 helps to answer research question two by explaining the value in participating for both farmers and farmer liaisons. Chapter 8 presents data to define the challenges for farmers and farmer liaisons to participate. Finally, Chapter 9 uses data collected from farmer interviews, farmer liaison focus groups, and participant observations to explain the recommendations for improving the FSM procurement system.

In Chapter 10, I expand on the recommendations for improvement offered by farmers and liaisons by contextualizing changes needed as ways of developing a more intentional cooperation infrastructure for long-term sustainability of the organization. I also elaborate on how the asset systems findings of Fresh Stop Markets are valuable for food justice movement building, especially helping to inform future investments in system transformation. Finally, I offer future research directions and discuss the limits of this thesis research.

Following the need for critical reflexivity in food justice scholarship (Goodman et al., 2011), in Chapter 11 I offer personal reflections on the process of becoming a researcher and the complexities of working alongside my friends and colleagues through a formal community-based research design.

## Chapter 2: Organizational Overview

### What is New Roots Inc.?

New Roots Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization based out of Louisville, KY that began in 2009. They are the umbrella organization that helps mobilize Fresh Stop Markets. Currently, they operate with an annual budget of approximately \$237,000 and have two full-time staff people in Louisville (2.5 at the time my research began). There is also one strategic partner organization in Lexington with a half-time VISTA and a quarter-time employee to support two markets in that area. Also included in the organization are hundreds of volunteer leaders.

New Roots has a food justice mission, which proclaims that, “Just like air and water, everyone has a right to fresh food” (New Roots, n.d.) Their purpose statement further elaborates why they exist: “New Roots works with fresh food insecure communities to create sustainable systems for accessing the farm-fresh food we all need to be healthy and happy” (New Roots, n.d.). The organization is also guided by a set of six bold values, which help to describe how they define food injustice and what leads their theory of change. I discuss the implications of these value statements in Chapter 5. While Fresh Stop Markets are the organization’s primary project, they also facilitate three other food justice initiatives: The Makeba Lee Fund, The Fresh Stop Training Institute, and Gendler Grapevine Interfaith Food Justice.

The organization is led by a 15-member board and operates from a horizontal leadership structure, which lends a great deal of autonomy to staff. At the present, there are three vacant seats including a farmer, attorney, and someone with human resources experience. Members are elected to the board based on a rigorous selection process with multiple levels of selection criteria. The categories for selection include: age; gender; race,

ethnicity, and disability; resources; qualities; personal style; areas of expertise; and number of years serving on the board. It is a value of the organization for their board to be representative of the communities they work alongside.

New Roots Inc. was founded by a long-time community organizer who had deep connections with local farmers across Kentucky and Southern Indiana. The non-profit structure is organized to support the implementation of Fresh Stop Markets (FSMs). Originally, the director received mentorship from the first Fresh Stop model in Cleveland, Ohio called CityFresh. However, in its early years, the Cleveland model diverged from New Roots Inc. (NR) by making large investments in aggregation and processing built infrastructure, whereas NR followed a slow growth theory with grassroots community organizing.

The first market was started at Redeemer Lutheran Church located in the Shawnee neighborhood of West Louisville. One of the market's first farmer liaisons from the neighborhood is now a full-time staff member who procures food for all nine markets in the Louisville region.

### **What is a Fresh Stop Market?**

NR is the umbrella support structure to facilitate Fresh Stop Markets; but what are the markets? In this section, I will provide an overview of the market model including what roles NR staff and board play in facilitating them, and will conclude with an outline of the cooperative elements of market operations. In Chapter 5, I offer a theoretical model for understanding FSMs based on Black geography, feminist economic geography, and community organizing theory.

Fresh Stop Markets are “pop-up” cooperative buying markets that are organized bi-weekly for 20 weeks for a total of 10 markets in the Spring, Summer, and early Fall. The

markets provide local produce to each market's shareholders on a sliding scale based on income. The markets work with 35-75 shareholders every other week, and unlike traditional community supported agriculture (CSA) schemes, there is no expectation for shareholders to purchase all shares at the front end of the season, nor are they committed to participate in every market day. Last year the NR markets worked with over 1,000 families through a network of 50 farmers and sold approximately \$100,000 in produce. There are 12 Fresh Stop Markets in Kentucky and Indiana, including eight in Louisville; one in New Albany, IN; two in Lexington; and one in Brandenburg, KY. The markets are located predominantly at neighborhood churches, but are also found in shared farmers market pavilions and a local housing authority office.

New Roots Inc. does not start FSMs. Neighborhood leaders contact NR and express a desire to start a market, which begins the process of determining the opportunity for a market to exist. Ideally, capacity to start a market is determined by a community's ability to organize leadership teams to operate the markets. It is not the goal of NR to serve as primary operators for the markets. Staff are meant to act as facilitators to support the organizing efforts of the local community.

Once it is determined that there is enough capacity to start a new market, the new leaders are included in the FSM network, which includes peer to peer mentorship, leadership training, and food justice workshops. The foundational structure of all FSMs is the leadership teams that support market operations. Suggested teams are: (a) farmer liaison, (b) outreach liaison, (c) day of liaison, and (d) chef liaison. Teams are led by volunteers and/or partially-compensated, temporary staff. The farmer liaison team is in charge of mediating between the shareholder community and the farmer community to procure at least 10 items for each FSM every other week. I describe their role in detail in Chapter 6. The outreach team works to



recruit new shareholders and to maintain relationships with the existing shareholder community. They also help with public relations and marketing for special events. The day of team is in charge of receiving produce on the day of the market, counting and sorting the produce, and displaying it beautifully at each produce item's table. Vegetable ambassadors are the most common FSM volunteer leaders who are part of the day of team. They sit or stand behind each produce item and encourage shareholders to try new things with recipes and personal testimonies. The chef liaison is in charge of recruiting professional and lay chefs for cooking demonstrations on the day of the market.

The focus of this thesis is on the farmer liaison team, which includes team members from each market, staff who have past experience as liaisons and who provide mentorship to team members as well, as one full-time staff person who was hired during the writing of this thesis to coordinate all farmer liaison teams. Generally, the role of farmer liaisons is to act as a middle-woman between each market's shareholders and local farmers. They are the local food buyers who co-produce lists of desired items, build and maintain relationships with farmers and create purchase orders. Some liaisons also submit final orders to farmers every two weeks. A more in-depth description of role(s) of farmer liaisons is found in Chapter 6.

### **What is Cooperative about Fresh Stop Markets?**

The primary form of cooperation found in FSMs is between consumer shareholders. Shareholders pool their diverse resource abilities together to increase the collective buying power of all shareholders so they can make bulk purchase orders. This allows for individual shares to be sold on a sliding scale based on income and farmers to be paid wholesale prices. There are three income levels: \$12 for shareholders receiving SNAP benefits or on a fixed income; \$6 for WIC mothers (\$6 is subsidized by the Makeba Lee Fund), and \$25 for anyone who can pay more. While the share price is technically based on WIC income guidelines,

shareholders are never asked to prove their income, thus creating an honor system and preventing shareholders from burdensome paperwork. By pooling resources together from a range of purchasing powers, the collective group has more buying power with local farmers. This form of cooperation is celebrated by leaders as a community-based economic model of working together to meet the needs of the community. Counter to many efforts at eliminating food deserts, FSM shareholders are skeptical of the ability of big box grocery stores to offer equitable, comprehensive, and sustainable development in their communities. Capitalist ventures like Kroger are seen more as invasive and extractive. For example, at one of the community interest meetings that I attended as a participant observer, leaders and staff described the FSM cooperative economics model as being an old-school form of meeting basic needs in the community that brought people together, while the current capitalist, profit-driven food system is divisive, individualist, and predatory on poor, minority communities.

An informal system of cooperation is between farmer liaisons and local farmers. There are no formal procurement contracts, memorandums of understanding (MOUs), or cooperative operational/guiding principles for doing business that commit FSM shareholders to their farm partners. There has been experimentation with formal agreements in the past. One of the most unique aspects of the Fresh Stop Market cooperative buying club model is the opportunity for shareholders to meet and develop a produce wish list with local farmers. This is called forecasting, and it ideally takes place in December. The goal of this exercise is to give power to consumers who have been limited by poor quality options in their neighborhoods. The second goal is to plan ahead with farmers before they purchase seeds so they know how many shareholders to expect and what items they would like to see throughout the season. This is a powerful process for consumers who may have never been asked what they want to see grown for their neighborhood. For farmers, it is a chance to enter into an informal sales contract

(informal in the sense that there is not a legally-binding agreement, but formal in the sense that it based on solidarity with leaders and shareholders). It is a trust-building process with the expectation that if unexpected events occur, there is transparent communication between both parties. The process does not occur with all growers, but with two or three primary farmers who have already agreed to supply either a large portion of the markets, a large quantity of one or two special crops and/or multiple crops for a majority of the markets. The emphasis of this process is not on crop planning as much as an empowering space for shareholders to influence the upcoming season's produce offerings. There are also no formal democratic processes used to facilitate these gatherings.

Fresh Stop Markets' unique cooperative buying model has been defined recently by scholars in the alternative agri-food movement (Anderson et al., 2014) who argue that these type of organizational efforts represent "second-generation" localization efforts in the food justice movement. Where the first phase represents market development, this new phase includes projects that have matured beyond prioritizing monetary exchanges between farmers and consumers to include transformational relationships that connect a community of food system stakeholders whose collective power is organized to address root causes of food insecurity. Found in second generation efforts are projects that are attempting to build community-based economies that are more inclusive and centered on developing solidarity for movement building. In Italy, the Solidarity Purchase Groups (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale; G.A.S.) are also reflective of this trend towards movement building beyond markets development. Christina Grasseni (2014) describes how farmers and shareholders co-produce economic value through solidarity practices such as providing extra support to farmers affected by flooding, earthquakes, and other disasters. Also, similar to FSM, with G.A.S., the shareholders do not dismiss farmers for not holding an organic certification, rather they place

more value on building individual relationships with the farmers and visiting their farms to build trust in their growing practices. Thus, social capital through trusting relationships is more valuable than the organic label.

While FSMs are not structured as formal cooperative businesses, there are elements of reciprocity, collective resource control, and decision-making that help to define it as a cooperative economics model. Leaders, staff, and farmers have also expressed a desire to consider ways for the organizational structure to resemble a more formal cooperative business. This thesis research is a first step in that collective conversation. However, a restructuring process could be devastating to an organization with limited capacity. Evaluating the farmer liaison system of cooperation helps in the identification of challenges in the system and allows the farmers and liaisons a platform to offer their own recommendations for improving the system.

### **Community Organizing Infrastructure**

The technique for community development used by NR is relationship-based, community organizing. In differentiating it from other local community food projects, the Director (Moskowitz, 2013) speaks to the valor the organizing approach:

Often professionals who work for government agencies or large nonprofit organizations will attack a problem *on behalf* of those perceived as unable to speak for themselves. Alternatively, *community organizing* is characterized by the mobilizing of volunteers or leaders. (p. 24)

Processes of community organizing are scantily understood within existing alternative agri-food literature. The activities that make up day to day operations of organizing for FSMs can help develop a better understanding for other practitioners who are not as familiar with the mechanics of this community development technique.

Activities that I have observed from five years of working with FSM organizers are: individual house meetings (both with farmers and in the process of recruiting new shareholders); strategic partnership planning; advocacy through policy memos, direct action, and leadership in state and national policy organization; leadership development training; conflict mediation; forecasting with shareholders; grassroots-led market teams; peer to peer mentoring; annual leadership recognition events; and op-eds.

The organization has not led a policy or direct action campaign, but several FSM leaders are personally involved in local and statewide social justice organizations and campaigns. Often, market set up time became an informal space for discussing campaign strategies and connecting with other leaders across issues. Therefore, an internal culture of advocacy and political organizing did exist. The markets helped facilitated these spaces of deliberation.

## **Conclusion**

The FSM model is a cooperative buying club for limited income families. In this chapter I have attempted to describe the mechanics of the organizational structure and the cooperative components of its emergent alternative economic system to help clarify it to the readers. What I hope to further elaborate in subsequent chapters is the complexity of this system from the perspective of those who mobilize it every day. There is no static model for a FSM, rather there are values, people, and processes embedded in its practice. Chapter 3 and 4 will outline and verify my research methodology and design. Then, Chapters 5-10 will present my findings.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Introduction

Recently, food justice scholars have advocated for what they call an “anti-colonial food justice praxis” (Kepkiewicz et al., 2016) approach to research. They are asking scholars to consider their privilege, be self-reflexive, and work more alongside as a research partner rather than follow traditional hierarchical dynamics of researcher and researched. Such studies are intentional towards working *with* community partners and aim to actively address organizational concerns or lead to policy or systems change. It requires a significant amount of vulnerability and displacement from conditioned positions of power for the researcher. Self-awareness of the positionality of the researcher is crucial, but intentional, and committed listening is most important. The project of the following pages is to exemplify anti-colonial food justice praxis. In the sections that follow within this chapter, I will outline how the project was started, define my positionality, explain the evolution of research questions, and draw on critical praxis theory and action research theory to specify my approaches.

### Positionality of Researcher

I come to this project as a white woman in my late 20s. My childhood was spent in rural towns, and later in Memphis, Tennessee. I grew up in a highly dysfunctional, limited-income household and was expected to “cook” microwaveable meals for dinner. I *lived through* food insecurity before I *learned* food justice theory.

In my first community organizer job, I worked with low-income teenage mothers. I saw first-hand how overlapping structural and individual conditions compound to create food insecurity. Beyond scant access to reliable transportation and distance to the nearest full-service grocery store, housing insecurity was a major challenge that dictated when, how, and

where their families ate. Notorious slumlords did not return calls to replace broken refrigerators and stoves, while poor insulation guaranteed astronomical utility bills. Their situations were not simply a matter of “if they only knew where their food came from” (Guthman, 2008). Instead, their crisis of affordable housing, precarious employment at low wages for extensive hours, and a lack of safe and affordable childcare compounded to constrict them from shopping at the local farmers markets. They had a wealth of wisdom and knowledge about food insecurity, but it didn’t look like the kind of knowledge that local farmers market advocates wanted them to know – magically, by somehow leapfrogging all of the aforementioned problems.

That experience and the subsequent years I have spent in the field as a food justice organizer is what shapes my understanding of food insecurity. My positions on issues of food injustice come from difficult and vulnerable places. They are embodied as a deep anxiety. I take a deep breath and find solace in Patricia Hill Collins’ compassionate stance that knowledge can be significantly enhanced by the personal and cultural biographies of an *outsider within* (1986). It feels empowering to know this type of sociological science exists.

Through this project I have embraced a position as an *outside* activist *within* the academy. I have worked in food system change for over seven years with most of that time spent as a grassroots, small farm policy organizer. Two years were spent working for the local public health department in Nashville, TN. I have seen this work from both a government and activist lens and have been involved in multiple food policy reform campaigns from farm to school to organizing a statewide food policy network. However, even with my extensive personal background, there were moments during the research and writing process when I had very little confidence about my ability to carry out research appropriately. But, it has been a

transformational opportunity to work in powerful new ways with friends and colleagues whom I have known for several years.

### **Evolution of Research**

During my initial meeting with NR's executive director, it was agreed that I would serve as an evaluator and coordinate a farmer interview guide created by New Roots' data and metrics board team. One goal of the evaluation was to create a report that provided an overview of their farmers' operations, production capacity, market profile, barriers to expansion, and challenges in maintaining economic viability. In addition, they wanted to evaluate the impact of Fresh Stop Markets on their farmers, including challenges and how New Roots could make working with them better. In the evaluation I was generally looking at the cooperative produce procurement system between farmers and farmer liaisons from the position of being an outreach coordinator. Specifically, I looked at what value farmers gleaned from selling to Fresh Stop Markets and what aspects of cooperation were challenging. Data collection methods included one on one intensive interviews with farmers and two in-depth focus groups with farmer liaison leaders.

We knew the work would be collaborative, therefore I began designing it as a participatory action research project (PAR). However, the research plans dreamt up in the first month of meetings barely resemble this final project. As I have learned from other scholars who have engaged in this research approach, "university-based researchers must interrogate and resist their impulses to hasten, manage, or otherwise control the always evolving, frequently surprising process of PAR" (Smith, Bratini, Chambers, Jensen, & Romero, 2010, p. 422).

I had overly romanticized ideas of how the research team and I would interact. Theoretically, I imagined we would meet as a team bi-weekly. But, the reality of distance



(Lexington to Louisville) and the fast pace of the organization meant that many of our debriefing sessions happened over the phone, via text or email, and after events. We did communicate regularly (sometimes daily), but the situation was not ideal for handling tough decisions or ensuring clarity.

The final research objectives and questions from my approved proposal are as follows:

Q1. How are cooperative alternative food initiatives mobilized in a local setting?

Q1-a. Who is involved and what are the roles of key participants?

Q1-b. How are resources mobilized?

Q1-c. What are constraints?

Q2. What are the key benefits and challenges for major actors in participating in Fresh Stop Markets?

Q2-a. What resources does New Roots Inc. provide to those actors who participate in Fresh Stop Markets?

Q2-b. How does New Roots Inc. assist those actors to overcome their challenges?

Q3. What are the areas for improvement in the cooperative system?

Q3-a. How can the farmer liaison team improve?

Q3-b. In what ways could New Roots Inc. support farmers more in the future?

Q4. What imaginations of “food justice” inform the organization of Fresh Stop Markets?

Q4-a. What multiplicities of people, activities, histories, and purposes are represented in New Roots Inc. convened spaces?

Q4-b. How are problems defined and what solutions are developed?

Q4-c. How do New Roots Inc. staff, Fresh Stop Market farmers, and shareholders perceive their participation in Fresh Stops Markets as alternative?

More than simply descriptive, we wanted our approach to be *practical*. A goal we considered while constructing research questions was to support lines of inquiry to investigate each dimension of the cooperative system. The dimensions include: the people (farmers and farmer liaisons), the communication/interaction system (conflicts and benefits), and overall perceptions of value.

Also, we wanted to position our inquiry efforts towards enhancing critical alternative agriculture scholarship. My analysis identifies how the organization *does* food justice work through the lens of Black geography and feminist economic geography theory. My goal is to elaborate on the everyday politics of food justice organizations, particularly the transformational potential of community organizing techniques for systems change. Through this process, we are able to contribute “lessons learned” from the underrepresented perspectives of farmers, volunteers, and staff to the ongoing conversation about ends and means in local food justice initiatives. Listening closely to the insider voices of farmers and farmer liaisons simultaneously confirms and problematizes widely held assumptions about who benefits and how in the food justice movement. Thus, I imagine myself as a researcher within the newly emerging postcolonial method of inquiry, as an outsider positioned to help amplify voices that enervate “the power of the dominant discourse” to “create spaces for competing community discourses to emerge” (Wallerstein & Duran, 2008, p. 40).

One crucial realization emerging from this bottom-up view concerns the assumptions held by stakeholders and policy makers about the goals of local food initiatives and how these grow the health of communities. Where the local food movement emphasizes terms like “nutrition,” “economics,” and “sustainability” and seeks capitalocentric solutions to long term problems, a focus on food *justice* is a different effort altogether, indicating different ways of

defining problems, engaging those who are most directly impacted, and pursuing solutions that are often unmeasurable to traditional funders.

## **Chapter 4: Research Design**

In order to work intentionally alongside New Roots Inc., a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach that includes participant-observation, focus groups, and in-depth interviews was necessary. This system of collaboration, “offers a democratic model of who can produce, own and use knowledge” (Pain, Whitman, & Milledge, 2007, p. 2).

As a PAR project, the approach included two levels of community engagement. The “community” was defined as the liaison-farmer network of Fresh Stop Markets. The first level of engagement included the research partnership with the New Roots Inc. Executive and Assistant Director, one farmer liaison team leader, and one board member. As community study personnel, they shared in the responsibilities for designing data collection instruments, recruiting research participants, facilitating focus groups including note-taking and evaluating the data collection process, analyzing the data, and developing recommendations based on findings.

The second level of community engagement was the development of recommendations for change. They were co-designed in a three-step process. First, farmer and farmer liaison team recommendations were collected through interviews and focus groups. Next, they were collated to reflect common concerns and suggestions. Finally, all research participants had an opportunity to review the combined recommendations and respond to me and the research team with feedback through a public presentation. This provided a member-checking process to the project and ownership of the theory of change as developed by the participants themselves.

### **Research Design**

## **1. Key informant farmer interviews.**

Purposive, quota sampling was used to recruit participants. Eighteen farmers were interviewed, which is a representative sample from a pool of over 50 farmers who have sold to the markets. Minimum quotas were used to capture the diversity of farmers based on the following: (a) farmers who serve Lexington Fresh Stop Markets (n=2), (b) farmers who participate in a produce cooperative (n=4), —it was found during the interview process that two farmers in the cooperative did not sell to New Roots Inc. in the 2015 season, but had sold to or partnered with the organization in the past three years— (c) farmers who are new sellers < 3 years (n=3), (e) growers who have sold to Fresh Stop Markets for more than 3 years (n=4), (f) urban growers in Louisville (n=2); and (g) farmers that can be defined as “Beginning Farmers” by the USDA (n=3). According to the USDA’s limited resource farmer/rancher website (2010), “a Beginning Farmer or Rancher means an individual or entity who: “Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years. This requirement applies to all members of an entity.”

Recruitment was volunteer-based. Community study personnel helped recruit participants by providing contact lists and sending emails. Consent forms were signed before the interviews began. Participants participated in-person (n=11), by phone (n=4), or by email (n=3). Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour and were recorded with a digital tape recorder. The farmer interview guide was already developed by New Roots Inc. board and staff members before I became involved in the project. The instrument I inherited resembled a structured survey, and I amended it to include open-ended questions and removed some multiple-choice and yes/no questions. Interviews were transcribed then uploaded into an online Qualtrics survey form for interpretation of questionnaire style questions while open-

ended responses were coded by hand by me. The draft interview guide is located in Appendix B.

The purpose of the first set of interview questions was to create a snap-shot of farmers that included: demographics, sales percentage to Fresh Stop Markets, operational system, and threats to their livelihood. The second part explored their experiences selling to Fresh Stop Markets. Questions asked were: “What do you love about selling to Fresh Stops? What are challenges to selling to Fresh Stops? And how could New Roots make working with us better?” Each of these questions allowed us to understand who Fresh Stop Market farmers are in order to understand if a typology exists and to identify their on-farm challenges so that New Roots Inc. can develop solidarity with those issues in the future through a policy/advocacy board team. Additionally, the second set of questions allowed us to identify how farmers define value in participating and what challenges they have experienced.

## **2. Farmer liaison focus groups.**

Focus groups were convened with the help of community research personnel. These convenings were structured like a debrief meeting where farmer liaison leaders came together from different Fresh Stop Markets to evaluate the season and share best practices and lessons learned. I moderated the “meetings” using a semi-structured interview guide, while two community research personnel took notes and helped clarify questions for the group. The first focus group lasted one hour; and the second focus group was two hours.

Participants in focus groups (n=10) included: new leaders who have been on the farmer liaison team for two years or less (n = 5); established leaders who have been on the farmer liaison team for three or more years (n = 2); staff who also work as farmer liaisons to support all Fresh Stop Markets (n =3). Seven unique Fresh Stop Markets were represented (n = 7). The total (n=10) who participated are also representative of a sample of all farmer liaison leaders.

### **3. Participant observation.**

My four years of pre-existing history with New Roots Inc. and first-hand experience as a Fresh Stop Market organizer during the 2015-2016 seasons enhanced this method of inquiry. Field notes include: observations during events, reflections, and debriefs with community researchers, and personal reflections on the research process as well as critical reflexivity about my position as a researcher. Feminist and Black Geography theory informed the research reflexivity process.

#### **Analysis**

To better understand the everyday implementation of community organizing strategies through Fresh Stops Markets' cooperative procurement system, there are evaluative tools from interactional theory and community asset mapping to examine who is participating, what roles they perceive themselves playing, what benefits they define for participating, and when conflicts occur that interrupt the system. By looking at the mechanics of interaction among farmer liaisons and farmers, it is possible to understand how each group identifies success and what possibilities exist where each social field can better support the other, which is necessary to increase mutual cooperation.

Since the first part of the farmer interviews focuses on demographic make-up and operations, responses were simply compared based on the purposive quota sampling categories and provided as descriptive profiles for New Roots Inc.'s evaluation. But, as part of the overall systems analysis, the questions helped answer "who" is involved in cooperative alternative food initiatives. Emergent themes related to "challenges" and "recommendations for improvement" were coded based on frequency used. Responses to this set of questions were compared to data collected in farmer liaison focus groups to understand what common challenges and recommendations were defined by both farmers and farmer liaisons.

Due to the active nature of social interaction among farmers and farmer liaisons (and the additional resources they each mobilize to successfully procure produce for nearly 1,000 families in 2015), Bridger, Brennan, and Luloff (2011) would define Fresh Stop Markets as a *community*. Or through the lens of feminist economic geography, they are representative of an emergent alternative economic practice or community economy. Through both interpretations, it was critical to find an analysis framework to assess the impact of the community/economic practice from a systems perspective. Therefore, Flora and Flora's (2006) community capitals framework was used to take stock of assets gained in seven unique capital categories: human, social, cultural, natural, built, financial, and political. Through further analysis, I applied Emory and Flora's (2006) *spiraling up* thesis to analyze the flow of assets between capitals and how they influence each other.

I used Flora and Bregendahl's research (2012) as a model for identifying themes and I discuss this analysis tool more in Chapter 7. In the study they applied the community capitals framework to a similar food system project to define assets gained for farmers and shareholders who participated in four cooperative CSAs in Iowa. The cooperative system of Fresh Stop Markets resembles cooperative CSAs except that there are no upfront financial commitments for shareholders, and instead of organizing a cooperative of farms, FSMs organize consumer shareholders.

Because Fresh Stop Markets are more justice-driven, there are limitations to applying the community capitals framework (CCF). The CCF tends to be operationalized for groups looking at organizational sustainability rather than systems transformation. I made analysis adjustments based on feminist and Black geography frameworks in order to accommodate the unique model of Fresh Stop Markets. For example, I expanded the "built capital" category to include a broader definition of infrastructure to include social systems and structures.



Therefore, structures are not just fixed physical objects, but represent space as the place where history, processes, and relationships meet (Massey, 2005). Also, in the social capital category, I included “solidarity”; and in the cultural capital classification group I added “visibility” to ensure the coding scheme reflected the FSM focus on food justice. I explain my rationales more in Chapter 7 with specific examples.

It is also important to note that I am critical of the community capitals framework. Too often I have been in spaces where the tool is used as an apolitical cataloging method that seems to operate inside a vacuum where macro political-economic contexts are not explained and/or disregarded. I have rarely seen it used as a way to mobilize for systems transformation or policy change. But, I have intended it to be used as a community organizing tool to build a counter-narrative to food desert metaphors. It is used to spotlight the efforts of FSM leaders who live in so-called food deserts, but are also passionate neighbors who are skilled at local food procurement and cooperative economics. Underneath dusty food desert maps, I attempt to prove the value of their efforts for themselves, their communities and the farmers with whom they work. My intention is to reveal the resources mobilized by neighbors who were tired of waiting for the city to act, and how modest investments in community organizing has created an alternative food economy that is building a culture of food justice co-produced by farmers and consumers. In other words, it is a storytelling device to show how investments in human, social, and cultural capital create emergent assets for local farmers and the liaisons who work with them to procure food for FSM families.

### **Study Limitations**

Due to the limited timeline of this study and the scope of this Masters thesis, I was only able to interview 18 farmers from a list of over 50 from the research group’s original sample. One issue that arose was the inaccessibility of Amish farmers whose religious beliefs

did not allow them to be interviewed. In addition, in-person interviews were not conducive to some farmers' heavy work demands, especially as the season progressed closer to spring.

Potential outlier responses were found. During an interview with a producer co-op, it was revealed that two of the farmers I interviewed had not sold produce to any Fresh Stop Markets during the previous 2015 season. Therefore, their interview responses reflect past experiences and perceptions of other farmers in their group's experiences. Also, during this interview, we learned that the co-op was in an inactive phase of development.

In addition, the farm interview guide was difficult to administer because the format was originally intended to be a survey. Future evaluations could explore the use of focus groups, which would facilitate peer to peer networking and knowledge exchange among growers or administer a structured survey with few open-ended questions to farmers during the farmer appreciation dinner at the end of the season to capture more responses in a timely manner.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the research methods and data analysis scheme outlined above, the following four chapters will present findings for my research questions. The theoretical framework section (Chapter 5) will guide the readers toward an understanding of the emergent model of Fresh Stop Markets. This helps accomplish my first and last research objective to: examine how an existing cooperative alternative food network is mobilized on the ground and explore the usefulness of feminist and Black Geography theory as an analytical framework for understanding cooperative alternative food networks. Specifically, I will use participant observations and content analysis to provide an overview of the organizational structure for the non-profit New Roots Inc. and how the Fresh Stop Markets are operated on the ground. My goal is to assist the readers in understanding the cooperative elements of the markets, how

the non-profit structure mobilizes resources to support the markets and how the mission and values of the organization guide operations. I will use Black geography theory to outline how New Roots Inc. approaches defining problems of food injustice. Then, I will use feminist political economy theories to describe the alternative economic system of Fresh Stop Markets. Finally, I will apply community organizing frameworks to define the community development approach of New Roots Inc.

My hope is for this chapter to frame the rest of the thesis by offering a theoretical model for Fresh Stop Markets. As an emergent project, it is not easy to define. Therefore, a theoretical model can help readers understand the multiple aspects of it and how they work together to support food justice. Additionally, the model development process has created new languages, which has been emancipatory for myself, my co-researchers, and anyone else involved in the project who has struggled to describe the “magic” of Fresh Stop Markets. There is new confidence that comes from being able to more effectively proclaim, “hey world, this is what we are!” and further, “this is why you should support us!” To do this through the imaginative lenses of theory and applied, practical frameworks of community development has made this task challenging and exciting as I have tried to comingle theory with the everyday practice of organizing the markets.

## Chapter 5: Theoretical Model for Fresh Stop Markets

### Introduction

In Chapter 2, I introduced the basic operational structure of FSMs. In this chapter, I aim to develop a theoretical model to describe the complexity of this emergent economic system. Specifically, I focus on the food justice components of the organization. Following the characteristics of food justice outlined by Cadieux and Slocum (2015), I introduce J.K. Gibson-Graham's community economies framework to outline the economic justice work of Fresh Stop Markets. Then, I offer Katherine McKitterick's Black geographies theory as an analytical frame that acknowledges and confronts historical, collective trauma, which is another food justice characteristic embodied in the work of Fresh Stop Markets. I close with an explanation of how these theoretical frameworks have enhanced the methods of inquiry in the next three findings chapters.

I was inspired to use these two theoretical frames after reading and reflecting on the newly developed New Roots Playbook (Appendix 4). This document was developed to guide new FSM leaders by clarifying the history, mission, values, and lessons learned. I was particularly drawn to their "values" section, which describes "what guides our actions each and every day" (p. 9). There are six values from the document: (We are at our best when we):

1. See the world through the **Eyes of the community**
2. Combine **Passion with Purpose**
3. Are **Fresh-Food Obsessed**
4. **Never Accept No** as the answer
5. **Disrupt, Improvise, Innovate**
6. Are **In It Together (pp. 9-10)**

For the purpose of this theoretical modeling chapter, I elaborate through new languages of theory how the organization “Sees through the Eyes of the Community,” “Disrupt, Improve, and Innovate,” and how their economic model is an example of how they “Are in it Together.”

A fundamental building block for the FSM theoretical model is that the markets are not static, physical locations but are fluid spaces where constant negotiations take place. Markets are meeting points where the politics of relationships and processes meet up. Feminist geographer, Doreen Massey (2005) helped shape this spatial framework for me. She argues that place is an event so, “there can be no assumption of pre-given coherence, or of community or collective identity. Rather the throwntogetherness of place demands negotiation” (p. 141). Applying this concept to the food justice movement allows for an in-depth analysis of the everyday mobilizations by movement actors to create more just spaces. As feminist geographers Rachel Slocum, Kirsten Valentine Cadieux, and Renata Blumberg have written (2016; building from the work Massey),

It might appear that agrifood space is a market, the kitchen, fast food retail, farms and watershed, food ‘deserts’ and so forth. But none of these would exist were it not for the relations and processes that made them (agricultural policy, systemic racism, gender relations, assumptions about health, food movement organizing). . . . Spatial politics is about *changing the relations* that constitute space. (p. 3, emphasis added)

### **What is Community Organizing?**

FSM stakeholders are actively creating new economic spaces by building on the existing human, social, and cultural assets present in communities that are often overlooked or considered resource scarce. And they are doing this work with grassroots community organizing techniques.

Over the past 40 years, community organizing as a social change strategy has become increasingly relegated to the periphery and more top-down approaches have proliferated in government agencies, universities, and the non-profit industry. DeFilippis and Fischer (2012) argue that this shift represents an over-professionalization of the community development field, which has been a reaction to neoliberal funding regimes and conservative political leadership. Additionally, Sites et al. (2012) conclude that, “the community development field experienced pressure to resemble traditional social planning approaches (e.g., an increased focus on data-driven and “evidence-based” practice) but with less tolerance for notions of long-term system change” (p. 43). I can identify with DeFilippis, as I have worked as both a community organizer for non-profits and a program coordinator within local government. Brahm Ahmadi (2011) applies this same critique to working on food system change with local governments: “It’s even tougher at the local level to get public officials to think in longer terms, when they’re always looking for ways to position themselves for their next campaign” (p. 157).

But, what I have witnessed more pervasively is a trend towards apolitical programming and devolution of funding from grantors for general staff support. Thus, what over-professionalization in the food justice movement looks like *is* the local food movement. Increasingly, government agencies are piloting Local Food Coordinator positions where staff have to defend the merit of their work in order to stay employed and are expected to accomplish widespread policy, systems, and environment changes without engaging in any kind of advocacy activities (cautiously traversing a terrain that does not allow “lobbying,” but does not suitably define advocacy). Thus, local food system development as economic development has become the standard work plan directive. Local food demand studies are an

easier sell than a campaign to change land use policy or incentives for paying a living wage for farm labor or food service workers.

In the non-profit world, programming is diluted into social media platforms littered with “facts” about an issue. And in the world of food movements, this is usually an ask for an individual to make a behavior change instead of bond together to speak truth to power. There are not even simple call campaigns anymore to hold local officials accountable. Collective action is not a prioritized mobilization in this resource stripped environment. It is important to understand that this is the context in which NR is attempting to do community organizing work.

To understand *why* they do this work, it is important to point out the emergence of the markets as meeting a shared need. Central to the FSM model is the collective power of neighbors who bond together in solidarity with local farmers to achieve the common goal of fresh food access. Following Brennan and Israel (2008), the collective agency expressed through FSMs is an example of how local power is used to “facilitate social interaction” (p. 86). This emergence of collective agency originated as a reaction to the failure of alternative agriculture initiatives like farmers markets. Also, residents were tired of waiting for government and retail interventions to address the extremely poor quality of produce available at scantily accessible supermarkets. There was a need for a community-based prescription to change their food environment.

### **Black Geographies and Seeing Through the Eyes of the Community**

In Louisville, there is a dominant perception that the area West of 9<sup>th</sup> Street is blighted, unsafe, and abandoned. But following NR’s value of *seeing through the eyes of the community* debunks this perception in two ways. First, it opens the space for the everyday lives of people in West Louisville to be seen beyond their statistical representations in reports. Second, it

gives the people who are most affected by our dysfunctional food system the power to tell their own food story, rather than it be scripted through food desert maps. As the NR Director has argued about food insecurity reports:

These statistics have been tossed around so often that most people have become numb to what they are really telling us. But behind every number in these reports real people exist, living this reality, every day. (2013, pg.24)

Food justice workshops are a place where this value comes alive. These spaces for deliberation allow shareholders and community members to convene and share their personal experiences of food injustice and connect that individual struggle to broader issues.

Because Fresh Stop Markets follow a community organizing model, they give agency to the individuals and families who live in so-called food deserts. Instead of dooming these places and the people who live there, Black geographies (McKittrick, 2014) theory offers praxis that illuminate collective action that has happened and is continuously reorganizing against economic, social, and political violence. Thus, shareholders actively define the food security problems in their neighborhood and create their own solutions by working cooperatively on FSM leadership teams.

At the beginning of every Fresh Stop interest meeting, one of the first ways that organizers describe the project is, “This is cooperative economics. You know how to do this. We have been doing this forever to make ends meet. This goes all the way back to our roots” (field notes, Jan.5, 2016). The “we” is understood to be the African-American community since that is where FSMs emerged. Scholars like Dr. Jessica Nembhard (2014) focus on African-American cooperative economic thought and practice. Her book, *Collective Courage*, inspires us to consider ways in which cooperative food enterprises represent spaces of resistance to not just failures of the capitalist system, but are also collective actions against structural racism and multiple oppressions. By beginning the history with collective survival



techniques during slavery, she enlivens a debate about what cooperative businesses have been, what they currently are, and what they could be.

Applying the work of another Black geographies scholar, building the narrative and practice of FSM around legacies of economic practice that have been successful for African-Americans, is an example of how Fresh Stop Markets are intentionally built around a Black geographic epistemology (Ramirez, 2015). In Ramirez's case study research comparing black-led and white-led urban agriculture projects, she argues that black-led projects inspire hope among residents who are conditioned into thinking their communities are lacking. They, "produce powerful political alternatives and spatial imaginaries of a more just future," (Ramirez, 2015, p. 759). Thus, who is representing food justice leadership within an organization is important. Cooperative Extension agent and former Center for Social Inclusion Fellow, Shorlette Ammons, elaborates this point further and calls for "changing the narrative" about the food justice movement in the South (2014). In her work, *Shining a Light in Dark Places*, she argues:

These small initiatives, led by women of color, are innovative examples of collective community-based efforts that are steeped in Southern traditions, but are often invisible because of lack of resources and scale. Dating back to slavery, cooperative economics among African Americans, working together and sharing resources, was necessary for basic survival, meeting both practical and spiritual needs and often facilitated by women. (p. 40)

The leaders of FSMs are working to making their lives visible and to change the narrative about who can be involved in the local food movement and how the work can benefit farmers and limited income communities. It is an uphill struggle when local elites such as those who led the West Louisville Food Port project have a direct line to the Mayor's office. But, every season the growing FSM movement *disrupt* business as usual through their *innovative* community-based economic system.

## **Fresh Stop Markets through the Community Economy Lens**

Through an understanding of agri-food space as the processes and relationships that create places, dual authors J.K. Gibson-Graham (2006), offer a way of interpreting economic systems that focuses on the economic forms. Their diverse community economies thesis reworks dominant notions of a fixed, singular capitalist economy structure. They argue that a diverse array of economic forms exist where multiple permutations of production, exchange, surplus, ownership, and appropriation are practiced by diverse economic subjects. Therefore, FSMs are not capitalist or non-capitalist, rather they can be explained as spaces of constant exchange negotiations. Each market may practice differently depending on the cultural contexts of people who are involved, their role in the exchange system and the ways they are constantly mediating between their own economic identity and others. Therefore, the markets are not fixed models, but emergent or representative of economic “becomings.” What they are negotiating is their own exchange ethics. Applying the framework of diverse community economies, we can locate exchange interactions between farmer liaisons and farmers to analyze how specific decisions impact their livelihoods. Thus, we can develop an idea of the extent to which their interactional systems are mutually beneficial.

Agri-food scholars have applied the diverse community economies thesis to their work. For example, Little, Maye, and Ilbery’s (2010) use Gibson-Graham’s theory of diverse economies to highlight buying clubs as new economic “becomings” and advocate for future research to explore how collective action is performed, how legal structures influence sustainability and the motivations of consumers to participate. What they found in analyzing 30 buying groups in the U.S., Japan, and Europe is an emphasis on the transaction *process* and that “social and communitarian capitals are derived and generated through the process of collective action...being a vehicle for both cultivating and for maintaining a sense of

community” (Little, Maye, & Ilbery, 2010, p. 1807). Through this analysis, Fresh Stop Markets go beyond food to providing a social network and with it services to foster connections like the food justice workshops and leadership teams. Shareholders are not simply given a box of produce, they develop relationships with a community of shareholders and farmers. The process of exchange where shareholders pay based on their income and can participate in the procurement process, is what makes the economy of Fresh Stops Markets different under Little, Maye, and Ilbery’s thesis. The space is empowering and transformational, rather than just transactional.

Traguer and Passidomo (2012) also apply Gibson-Graham (2006) to CSA and organic cooperative case studies. Through the lens of post-capitalist futures, they argue that “the renegotiation of the economic basis of agriculture generates new subjectivities directed toward a more integrated, interdependent and cooperative economy of agriculture” (2012, p. 282). Their piece engages civic agriculture literature to “center the farm,” which is an attempt to reconceptualize the farmer subject to advocate for new languages of economic interdependence or “new ways of being in common” with consumers. But, who is shaping the new languages and ways of being in common? Yes, new economic relationships can change how farmers and consumers value each other. I would argue through the lens of African-American cooperative history, communities that have had to be creative through historical injustices already have social assets. There is less of a need to focus on “new ways,” but on learning from those who have made do with the languages they were given. Taking Black geographies seriously allows us to find the tools from past languages of economic interdependence that were necessary for survival.

## Conclusion

Through the lenses of feminist and Black geography, attention is drawn to the alternative economic spaces created through Fresh Stop Markets and how anti-racist, community organizing efforts which make the markets possible “brings into focus networks and relations of power, resistance, histories, and the everyday, rather than locations that are simply subjugated, perpetually ghettoized, or ungeographic” (Woods & McKittrick, 2007, p. 7). The latter asks that alternative food movement activists and scholars consider the imaginative bankruptcy or epistemic violence done by categorizing our neighborhoods as “food deserts.” Black geographies help to illuminate dominant discourses about neighborhoods that are defined as “without,” i.e., lacking or deficient through the food desert metaphor. A “without” representation perpetuates a process that does not allow one to *see* particular members of the community and/or community knowledge as valuable enough to contribute to the conversation. Conceptualizing the geographic violence of “without” gives us additional tools for intentionally bringing the legacy of the plantation bloc into focus and speaking truth to power against ahistorical analyses of food insecurity that obscure the role anti-Black violence has played in the economic underdevelopment of neighborhoods (Woods, 1998). This frame pushes us to look beyond the phenomena (*food desert*) to how the very act of defining the problem *for* communities rather than *alongside* them neglects their creativity and histories of active resistance (actively producing their own space) while also “reducing black lives to essential measurable facts” (Woods & McKittrick, 2007, p. 6).

Also, by bringing Black geography theory into conversation with feminist economic geographers, I am advocating that as we continue to investigate the possibility of alternative food economies that we also need to consider the role of difference in shaping them. In addition, there is a need to consider how historical and present racial violence has facilitated

the *necessity* for alternative food economies to be created as a form of resistance to oppressive economic systems. The desire to organize an alternative project is likely to be multifarious depending on who is organizing it, therefore the indicators of success will be different as well. A cooperative food project will look, feel, and perform very differently in West Louisville, KY; Lexington, KY; Jackson, MS, etc. than in New Hampshire or Berkeley, CA.

The following points surmise the theoretical projects of Fresh Stops Markets.

1. They value community organizing as a mobilizing tactic for leadership development and community engagement. Their everyday, political project is driven by the principle that those who are most affected by oppressive systems should be defining their own problems and leading the implementation of solutions. As New Roots Inc. staff would say of leaders, “They are creative, resourceful and whole.” Within the current conservative political-economy of development, following this strategy that emphasizes conflict and power building through human and social capital development is not valued as much as neo-classical economic development initiatives. Therefore, hegemonic capitalocentric development discourses are limited and may not recognize Fresh Stop Markets’ emergent economic languages.
2. Fresh Stop Markets build power through food justice workshops where the root causes of food insecurity are discussed and personal stories are connected to local, regional, and national food injustices. Power is also built through participation in leadership teams, where the resourcefulness of people is respected and histories of participating in resisting oppression is acknowledged and built upon.
3. Fresh Stop Markets are an emergent form of cooperative, alternative food networks that build from a legacy of African-American cooperative economic thought and practice. They are representative of diverse economies as part of a post-capitalist framework. But, as they are developing new languages of economic practice, they are also learning how to interpret from

their leaders' past experiences in resisting racial economic violence. Black geography theory has helped me to understand this by pointing to historical structures of economic oppression as a way of defining the "problem" of food *injustice*.

## **Chapter 6: Who is Involved in Fresh Stop Markets? - Farmers and Farmer Liaisons**

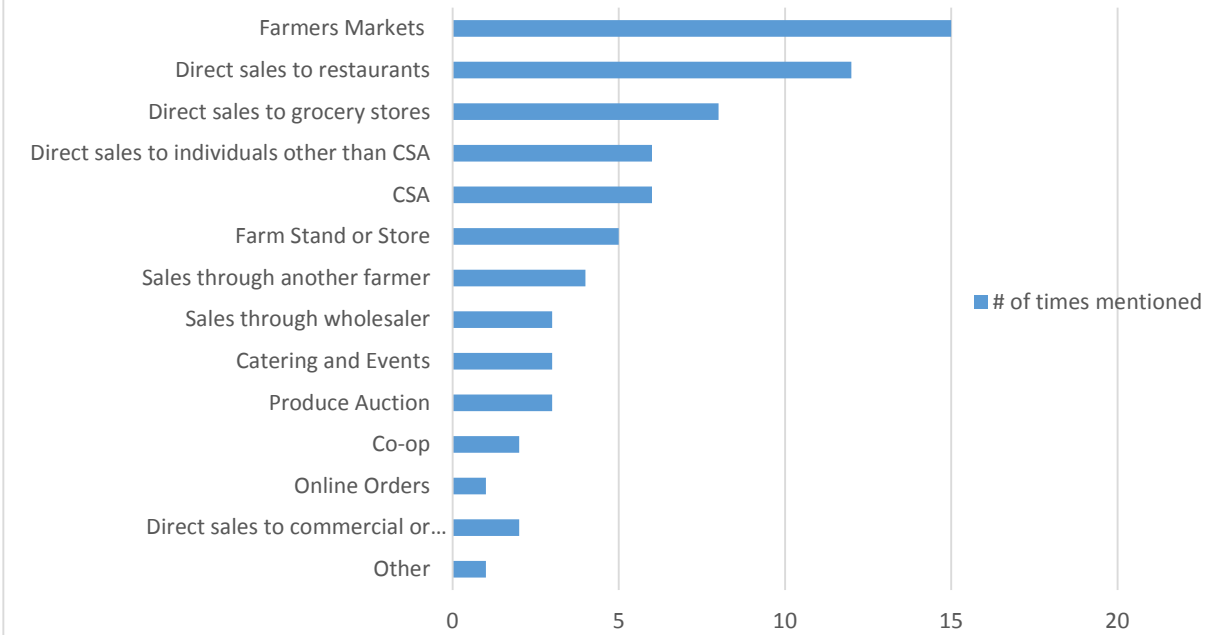
In Chapter 6, I present the findings from farmer interviews and focus groups with farmer liaisons. I provide an overview profile of FSM farmers who were interviewed and an analysis of their experience selling to and collaborating with Fresh Stop Markets. This section is supportive of New Roots Inc.'s organizational evaluation goal to develop a greater understanding of their farm partners' production practices and therefore develop deeper solidarity with them. The profile analysis includes: existing market outlets, perceptions of risk, production capacity, Fresh Stop Market produce sales percentage, and how they define challenges to their economic viability.

In the second half of the chapter I provide data from the farmer liaison focus groups in which they defined their role in organizing the markets. This section is significantly shorter than farmer descriptions because the primary goal of this study was to better understand who the farmers are that sell to Fresh Stop Markets. However, the goal of presenting this data is to further answer "who" is involved through their unique perspective as well as understanding the system of interaction between farmers and farmer liaisons.

### **Who are Fresh Stop Market Farmers?**

Farmers who participated in the study represent diverse backgrounds, methods of production, experience, and knowledge. Most are limited resource or minority farmers. New Roots Inc. defines limited resource or minority as: household income of less than \$23,000/year, small acreage producers, female farmers, ethnic-minority farmers, and farming in any of the 53 "Appalachian" counties. Fourteen of eighteen farmers self-identified in this category. Interviewees also operate at diverse scales, in two different states and with a range of experience from beginning to retiring. Their market portfolio (Figure 6.1) includes multiple sales outlets with most being direct to consumer such as farmers markets and CSAs.

**Figure 6.1: Other Markets Accessed by Farmers**



Farmers who participate in wholesale markets, which are most comparable in scale to FSMs expressed varied definitions for what constituted this type of market. Some farmers included Fresh Stop Markets in their wholesale definition and others singled it out as a unique point of sale. This points to the fact that different types of farmers define markets based on their unique background, scale and knowledge. Thus, farmer liaisons' ability to translate the diverse languages between each unique producer is important for avoiding miscommunication about market expectations.

Another question that reveals how diversely farmers define markets is when we asked what markets are the riskiest for their farm. One farmer felt unqualified to answer because of their small scale. Of the remaining farmers interviewed (n =15), farmers markets were identified as the top riskiest by 5 interviewees. One grower explained the risk in selling to farmers market as:



I think the hardest thing about it is the price from my standpoint. Sure, I want to get top dollar for everything I sell. I would rather sell more at an economy of scale, (Farmer interview 8, 2015).

Out of the 15 remaining, one farmer listed Fresh Stop Markets as the top riskiest because of miscommunication within the producer cooperative he sells through. He elaborated:

Because we just don't know. We don't know who to talk to. We want to go out and plant so much for Fresh Stops, but we don't know who to talk to receive that type of go ahead push, (Farmer interview 7, 2015).

Two established growers also listed Fresh Stop Markets, but included them within their overall wholesale category where one included restaurants and the other included grocery stores. They expressed that all wholesale markets were risky and to them Fresh Stop Markets fit within that category. The following quote is an illustration:

The wholesale stuff is not reliable at all. It's so variable whether it is to grocery stores or Fresh Stops because they may buy one week and then decide they don't want to buy for the next two weeks, (Farmer interview 10, 2015).

Other top riskiest responses include: schools and restaurants. Produce auctions were listed twice. One grower answered that they did not have any risk.

Farmers Markets do appear to stand out as the riskiest market, which is not a surprise to New Roots Inc. Through the years, their farmer partners have mentioned that selling to FSMs has helped them transition from selling to *as many* farmers markets as before their partnership with FSMs. But, just as there does not appear to be a typology of farm operations, there are also varied perceptions of risk. What is challenging for one grower may not be considered by others. This once again points to the need for liaisons to clearly communicate with each producer to understand *how* their diverse farm partners define success and risk when entering into a relationship with FSMs. Applying the community economies thesis from Gibson-Graham (2006), these conversations are part of the process of negotiating “necessity”

or meeting the needs of both farmers and shareholders within the emergent exchange system of FSMs (p. 88). The next two sections elaborate how producers define their on-farm constraints and challenges to economic viability which influences their perception of risk.

Noted earlier, New Roots Inc. is interested to learn how the organization could potentially help increase farm production capacity to meet the needs of their expanding markets. Table 6.1 below represents results from a multiple choice interview question that asked what major constraints producers face in expanding their operation. What we found is that labor is a major concern, followed by capacity to handle larger volumes of post-harvest handling, which includes packing, storage, and delivery.

It is important to note that no farmers interviewed identified low demand for their products as a barrier for their success. On the contrary, several farmers recognized the growing demand for local food and expressed anxiety about their ability to meet the demand. However, a few were hopeful and even excited about increasing production next year. Expressions of excitement appeared during interviews when farmers asked if we were planning to start new markets for the 2016 season and when I told them how many new markets had been established since 2014.

Overall, farmers interviewed were excited about FSM's growth and wanted to know more about how they could sell more next year. However, there were also five farmers who were not interested in expanding either because they were nearing retirement or they were satisfied with their current scale of operation and followed a slow growth theory of production. This is an important finding as it suggests that these farmers may be limited in how much they can commit to sell. They may only be able to provide one or two items consistently.

**Table 6.1:** Producer Constraints for Expanding Production

<b>Constraint Choices (selected all that apply)</b>	<b>Times Selected</b>
There doesn't seem to be an expanding market for my product	0
I cannot access enough suitable land	1
Transportation costs seem too high	2
I cannot get a loan (at a reasonable interest rate) to make necessary investments	2
I do not have the equipment that I would need	3
Costs of marketing (time and effort needed to find buyers and negotiate contracts) seem too high	3
I do not have adequate storage facilities	3
I am not interested in expanding production	5
Alternate markets seem to require lots of red tape (contracts, insurance, bookkeeping, etc.)	6
I am not set up for larger volumes of post-harvest handling (washing, sorting, grading packaging, cooling, etc.)	8
Other constraints or obstacles	8
I cannot find enough farm labor at a reasonable wage	9

Other constraints and obstacles described by interviewees were: not having enough product and feeling concerned about over-committing. Also, time was a major concern, especially for producers who rely primarily on off-farm income. But, time was also a challenge for beginning farmers who were learning how to balance production demands. Time constraints also relate to labor access constraints, effort needed to find buyers, and the labor required to manage the books for larger markets. Another issue was finding markets for second grade products that could not be sold through wholesale or at the farmers market. Finally, there was one grower who did not have access to enough acreage for scaling up.

We also found that the format of this question was challenging for a few of the interviewees. One of the experienced producers offered the following (Farmer interview 13, 2016):

These are all very nuanced issues. It doesn't seem like you can just check them off. Very specific concerns. [For example] we have access to working capital, but not necessarily access to purchase some of the things we need. We just have operating capital.

Future research could use these responses as a base line or launch point for deeper discussions with growers, possibly in focus groups.

Another question concerning on-farm challenges of producer partners was meant to help New Roots Inc. understand challenges in *maintaining* viability on the farm versus *expansion* of production. This question was also open-ended and functioned to allow for farmers to describe issues in their own words as opposed to the above question that was multiple choice. Table 6.2 represents common themes among all growers interviewed and those specific to New or Established farmers.

**Table 6.2:** Farmer Challenges in Maintaining Viability

New and Established Share	Committed Customers, Food Safety and Balancing labor input to sales
New	Food waste, Development vulnerability and Scale
Established	Government regulations, Accessing labor, Weather, Having enough and competitive pricing

What we found is that both New and Established farmers are concerned with making enough profit to cover the costs of inputs such as infrastructure, equipment, and most importantly, labor. Other shared concerns are *committed* customers and food safety. As mentioned above, farmers did not feel that *demand* for their products was a burden to their economic stability, however committed customers is a concern for *maintaining* stability. Therefore, farmers interviewed are less concerned with finding markets or points of entry, but are concerned that those markets may be instable. Thus, stability is not gained through a physical market location, but the security of trusting relationships with buyers who are consistent customers, which supports farmer efforts to develop and implement their whole farm business plans.

As New Roots Inc. and FSM leaders continue to work towards improving relationships with their farm partners, it will be critical to understand the FSMs as a market system for farmers rather than fixed physical locations. Organizers and staff have expressed a desire to be a *guaranteed market* for farmers, which according to how interviewees have articulated their concerns in maintaining economic viability, means that a market systems perspective will be necessary. Therefore, communicating that shareholders are committed during the planning season and also while the season is in full effect is important affirmation that farmers need from New Roots Inc. staff and FSM leaders to feel more secure about the economic viability of their operations. This conception of the market as a system rather than a fixed location is affirmed through Cadieaux Slocum's (2015) feminist geography food justice spaces thesis. Thus, implicating that maintaining trust and reciprocity within the market *system* (rather than providing guaranteed physical locations where transactions can occur), will lead to a sense of market security or guarantee, which support farmers in maintaining their economic viability.

Also, regarding food safety concerns, FSM leaders can help by taking extra caution that once food arrives it is being handled safely so that risks are mitigated. These are direct ways that New Roots Inc. can address on-farm challenges as one of their farm partners' markets.

### **Farm capacity**

As illustrated in Table 6.3, we also found that farmers are accessing a diverse array of financial resources. Within the crowd funding category was a new micro lending project called Kiva Zip loans. Three farmers had participated in Kiva Zip and one farmer had managed her/his own crowd funding campaign. Other ways of accessing funds included: Landowner philanthropy; County Agriculture Development Fund; Credit cards; and Non-profit structure.

**Table 6.3:** How Farmers Access Financial Capital

<b>Capital Resource Type</b>	<b># Mentioned</b>
Crowd Funding/Micro-lending	4
CSA	3
Bank Loans	3
Savings	3
Personal out of pocket	2
Outside jobs	2
Grant	2
Profits go back into investments	2

To quantitatively measure the financial impact of Fresh Stop Markets in 2015, we asked what percentage of their overall produce sales came from selling to Fresh Stops. All produce sales were self-reported during interviews. Two producers could not provide an approximate number. We reported a wide range. The breakdown is: less than or equal to 5% (n=5); 6-49% (n=7); and 50% and above (n=2). Since the majority of produce sales fall below 50%, it appears that FSM are not a main source of income for the farmers we interviewed. Instead, FSMs are a part of the diverse market portfolios identified in the previous section. The range could reflect the diversity of farm capacities for meeting shareholder demands at FSMs. Additionally, both farmers who fell into the 50-98% range were working as aggregators for multiple farmers and were in a reorganizing phase at the time of the interview. Therefore, it is difficult to assess whether Fresh Stop Markets can viably serve as a primary market outlet for their farmers.

The number of farmers who reported sales percentages below 15% may be because some growers only sell one or two specialty items to the markets. For example, there could be a “carrot guy” and a unique “potato grower” who has a reputation for producing a particular item at a high quality and at a price point that meets budget needs. In addition, at the time of this evaluation while Fresh Stop Markets were expanding into new neighborhoods and towns,

it appears that the FSM procurement system is *dependent on diversity*. In order to supply their twelve markets across multiple neighborhoods and regions, multiple farmers who operate at multiple scales and produce a wide array of products was needed to *test* new partnerships. Quality of produce, ease of working with, as well as price points were tested as several markets were in their first year or reorganizing. Future research should use this data as a baseline to analyze shifts in sales with each farmer over time at each market.

### **Who are farmer liaisons and what do they do?**

Farmer liaisons are farmers (n=1), former farmers (n=1), New Roots Inc. staff (n=3), non-residents of market neighborhood (n=1), and residents of neighborhood markets (n= 4). They identified a wide range of roles and varying levels of participation in the produce procurement system for their neighborhood FSM or cluster of markets. Consistently, liaisons described themselves as “coordinators” who make contact with farmers to procure their produce, but also handle the logistics of delivery. A few even described themselves as “ad hoc delivery men” who would “do whatever it takes to meet a farmer, even at a Waffle House at 6:45 in the morning.” The following quote exemplifies how they manage logistics of delivery and use their social networks (in this case a brother and restaurant owner) to ensure excellent produce quality for shareholders:

My brother would meet the apple farmer. We adopted him. He would meet them every Wednesday and get the apples. And then we would use [X Restaurant] for refrigeration. (Focus group 2, 2016)

Also, aside from serving as “logistics gurus,” liaisons help facilitate dialogues with other team members and neighbors about produce quality and farmer expectations. As one liaison stated:

Yes, it needs to be high quality but on the other hand when it’s certified organic it’s not going to look the same as the grocery store. That was a big learning curve for some people so that’s a big part of it and that’s just some education and dialogue on what real food looks like. (Focus group 2, 2016)

In addition, drawing in volunteers and providing technical assistance and/or mentorship to other liaisons were identified roles.

### **Motivations for being a farmer liaison leader.**

The two motivations most frequently mentioned by farmer liaisons in focus groups were: “Because I was asked to do it” and “I wanted to learn more about farmers.” However, several other motivations were expressed. The one leader who is also a farmer cited that her/his ability to “wear both hats” is a benefit because she/he has connections with local farmers. So, it made sense for her/him to take on that role. Additionally, she was motivated by rural community development goals such as increased food security and increased participation:

I wanted to see it happen in my community . . . I wanted our food to go to our own community . . . I wanted to be move involved in the community and this seemed like a good way to do that. (Focus group 2, 2016)

The former farmer leader also expressed that her/his background contributed to her/ his interest in participating. Speaking specifically to her/his motivation to be a farmer liaison s/he was inspired to work with farmers because: “I love them, they are my heroes.”

Two additional themes in motivation to participate were learning new skills and playing a larger role in promoting the project. The following quotes illustrate both: “I wanted to gain a skill. Learn how to do produce procurement” (Focus group 2, 2016). And one of the liaisons who is also the lead coordinator for her/his community said, “I wanted to promote participation” (Focus group 1, 2016).

What we have found in asking about the motivations for people to get involved is that having a background in agriculture is not a pre-requisite for recruitment. Alternatively, it appears that quickly filling a role for the system to function is how some liaisons have gotten to their position.



## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The farmers and farmer liaisons who activate the FSM procurement system represent diverse identities. There is no single “type” of farmer who sells to FSMs. They vary in background, scale, production practices, market portfolios, access to financial capital, perceptions of risk, and barriers to success. However, there are a few common trends. A majority are minorities or limited resource farmers and most sell primarily to direct to consumer markets. Similarly, there is no common motivation for laboring as a farmer liaison other than a desire to meet a need, whether s/he is asked or volunteers to fill the role. Also, we found that the “job” of a farmer liaison morphs to fit the unique needs of each market. A question this analysis leaves us asking is: how can this role be flexible for its unique community and responsive to multiple farmers’ needs?

Applying the language of diverse economies, we have explored the “multidimensional nature of economic existence” of farmers and farmer liaisons. Therefore, each actor is motivated to participate based on their own unique identity with the use of an ethical compass to guide decision making. For example, the hybrid identity of a farmer liaison who is also a farmer creates a unique positionality which influences how procurement decisions are made by that particular liaison. It is a tough space to occupy, making decisions that could benefit community food security and/or farm security, but one that appears to be seen as an extraordinary asset for performing the role of farmer liaison. While it may be an asset, diverse identities require multiple languages or ability to translate the needs of diverse economic subjects, which is a unique challenge for an organization that seeks to embrace its diversity. In Chapter 8, we look more at perceived assets in FSMs to further understand how each stakeholder benefits from participating and what may be needed to support a more viable cooperative system.

## **Chapter 7: How Existing Systems Enable Stakeholder Cooperation**

Chapter seven adapted concepts from Flora and Bregendahl (2012) to develop a comprehensive understanding of how farmers define the value (assets) in participating in Fresh Stop Markets. We used their “capital scale items for producers” table (2012, p. 338) to categorize value gained into human, social, cultural, financial, built, natural, and political capital systems. As you will see in Appendix 3, I modified their coding scheme. We did not find the same scale items in our interviews and newly identified items are noted with an asterisk in the appendix. I explain modifications in each section below.

### **Farmer Assets Identified**

#### **Cultural Capital.**

*Maintain a sense of shared identity with members of the community around local or organic foods or farm products.* A common thread among a majority of the interviewees was the expression that they shared the same mission or values as New Roots Inc. For example, one farmer explains:

Anything we do together we always make sure we are backing each other. Most businesses it's like eye for an eye. And it seems like since I've been with Fresh Stop it has not been that way. It was either all or none it seemed like. (Farmer Interview 3, 2015)

*Live your philosophical, spiritual, or ethical values.* One farmer describes how important it is for customers to appreciate his/her food beyond making the highest profit margins at the farmers market and that FSM shareholders may appreciate the produce more:

I mean, I love my farmers market because I'm getting the most bang for my buck, but most people are probably letting most of what I sold them rot before they cook it. People at farmers market are not as fully appreciative of it as they should be. (Farmer Interview 14, 2016)

Another farmer describes how FSMs align with her/his ethical and moral values:

I think they are doing great work and it's important to me that the food I'm growing...is getting eaten by people who live close to there. I have ethical misgivings about producing food in a low income neighborhood to people who are in affluent neighborhoods. (Farmer Interview 9, 2016)

***Hosted events, festivals, potlucks, etc.*** A few farmers also mentioned the end of the season farmer appreciation dinner that New Roots Inc. as a valuable space for meeting shareholders and connecting with other farmers. This intentional space for farmer appreciation fits within another overarching theme regarding the culture of kindness of working with New Roots Inc. and the Fresh Stop Market leaders. The following quote illustrates this point and the sense of shared missions:

Secondly, I like the attitude and the people or the staff that I've had to deal with and I don't mind helping an organization that is actually helping the community. So, I like Fresh Stops. (Farmer Interview 4, 2016)

***Help CSA members connect with the land through farm tour.*** Farm tours are another way that New Roots Inc. staff and leaders are intentional about creating spaces where shareholders and farmers can connect with each other in meaningful ways. Specifically, this is an opportunity for shareholders to physically see how difficult farming is for their producers and learn about the on-going struggles of maintaining a viable farm business, which helps connect farm and food security issues:

They have really embraced us and they have come tour the farm and they appreciate and value what it is rather than just trying to get the cheaper price. (Farmer Interview 18, 2016)

***Participate in an important social movement.*** The quote below illustrates a common sentiment from interviewees that by selling to Fresh Stop Markets they felt part of the food justice movement, which according to this producer is a reason why many producers decide to farm in the first place:

It goes way back to why most farmers that I know got into farming. Because they want to feed people who don't have access to good food...it's a call to serve a community, really. (Farmer Interview 14, 2016)

### **Social Capital.**

This section is meant as an opportunity to recognize how farmers described the value of *relationships* in selling to Fresh Stop Markets. It is the cultural capital system that may lead them to the project in the first place, then social capital is gained through shared identities.

***Strengthen relationships in the community.*** What we found from producers is that they value their relationships with the staff of New Roots Inc., the farmer liaisons and the shareholders. The following quote illustrates this:

Because of the relationships we have built with the families, volunteers and then the administrators. . . .We all had the same goal and same vision. It was something I wanted to do anyway. . . . Sometimes seeing smiles on the families' faces seeing something that they normally don't get, sometimes that takes more pride than the money. (Farmer Interview 3, 2016)

Also, there were a few farmers who valued the overall community building aspect of the project, which we coded as: *Establish a broader network of relationships in the community.* Specifically, one grower from the one rural Fresh Stop Market appreciated that this kind of community development work could happen in a rural area also. According to her/him it seemed like food security efforts mostly happened in urban areas and s/he valued that the model could work in her/his rural community also:

I really like the community aspect of it, especially for being out in the country...It was cool seeing some of the lower income people out here getting excited for fresh food. I feel like there are more opportunities in the city for things like that, but to see that being addressed out here was cool.

**Human Capital.** Farmers described FSM liaisons, staff and volunteers as a mobilizing resource for their farm, therefore a labor force. This expands human capital assets gained to include the whole the farm system, rather than just the individual farmer. Thus, labor capital

through community organizing is the mobilizing force that creates value and/or savings across the whole farming system such as: *Reduced time spent gaining access to markets; Reduced time spent managing farm business aspects like billing, managing accounts; Reduced time spent distributing farm products- less time at farmers markets.*

The following quote reflects how the system of staff, volunteers, and leaders provide outreach and marketing labor that is mobilized for helping farmers meet their goal of increasing community food security, therefore connecting cultural and human capital systems:

Like working food access into our business plan has been something we have struggled to do on our own. We have looked at doing reduced price CSA shares, but the outreach that it takes to get people to sign up for those shares is very hard...Fresh Stop helps us include that into our business model without us trying to do that on our own. We feel good about building food justice and feeding a more diverse group of people into the model. (Farmer Interview 13, 2016)

An additional example of a farmer identifying Fresh Stop Markets providing human capital support is through marketing labor:

In the Newsletter they will mention our farm and that gets my name out in the community some more which is a good thing. (Farmer Interview 6, 2016)

Farmers also valued their role in supporting community food security efforts through selling to FSMs. Similar to Bregendahl and Flora (2012), we found that farmers articulated both individual benefits for their farm, the community, and the local food system movement. Therefore, individual farm gain was not the sole value in participating. In fact, some farmers expressed how the project helped them establish a broader network of relationships in the community and participate in an important social movement. This reflects how social and cultural capital gains are interconnected and reinforce each other. As Flora and Bregendahl (2012) point out, community capitals influence each other and relationships are not static, but processes.

**Built Capital.** Our analysis strayed from Flora and Bregendahl’s findings in the built capital category because I synthesized the community capitals framework with ideas from feminist geography. Instead of built capital and financial capital parlayed together, I found that built, social, and human capital assets were a more organic fit for FSM farmers. During interviews, farmers referred to the markets as a “structure” or “mechanism.” Also, the logistical “system” was mentioned as a draw to participate. This more feminist geography framing of “built capital” revealed additional interpretations of what infrastructure could be beyond fixed, physical objects and better reflects how the farmers interviewed were defining words like “structure” as valuable to their operations. Additionally, it combines the human capital assets of FSM farmer liaisons with the operational systems they enact when procuring food and organizing shareholders. Thus, a *process* infrastructure is revealed. The following quote is illustrative of how the labor of organizers is valued as a marketing resource and how the overall structure is beneficial:

There are so many reasons...because it gets food to people who we have a hard time marketing to and they collect all those people together. It’s just a great organized structure to help us get food to people who we want to sell to.  
(Farmer Interview 1, 2016)

However, farmers described built infrastructure assets also. For example, the physical locations where markets “pop-up” every two weeks were described as easy to for deliveries.

For example, one farmer explained:

It was very nice to have large quantities going to one location. The locations were easy to deliver to. (Farmer Interview 10, 2016)

**Financial Capital.** Through the market infrastructure there are direct, financial assets identified by farmers. Drawing from Bregendahl and Flora’s coding scheme, we did find that FSM farmers also expressed that selling to the markets allowed them to *reduce or share risks associated with farming*. However, I further coded for common themes that emerged that

better described *how* the FSMs system helped to mitigate risk. The ability to sell large volumes; time savings through payment on delivery and avoiding farmers markets; and fair pricing. The following quote is representative of large volume purchases and fair pricing advantages:

There are a lot of reasons. One is quantity. Compared to similar customers like groceries or restaurants, Fresh Stop on a weekly basis is the biggest customer in that category. We have always worked out fair pricing, which I like. It is economically good to sell to Fresh Stops. (Farmer Interview 13, 2016)

One farmer appreciated the time savings compared to set up at farmers markets and the payment on delivery:

It was kind of a nice relationship. I didn't have to worry about setting up and what I was going to sell. I knew that up front. That was really nice. (Interview 8, 2016)

**Natural capital.** The ability to maximize the land by providing large quantities of produce to Fresh Stop Markets was expressed by one farmer:

And we can't move all of it through the farmers market. I'd rather maximize the production of the land and actually feed people instead of my compost pile which we did a lot last summer. (Interview 14, 2016)

**Political capital.** In the political capital sphere, I identified one farmer who explicitly referred to the political value of Fresh Stop Markets. S/he loved that the project is "community owned," which is also a cultural asset because it references a shift in who is positioned to lead community development projects. Because FSMs are organized by shareholders through a grassroots community organizing process, it shifts traditional power dynamics where a more top down approach to community engagement is utilized.

### **Farmer Assets Discussion**

The process of listing capitals through the use of the Community Capitals Framework is useful as a surface analysis, but there are limitations. Since the cooperative relationship

between farmers, liaisons, staff, and shareholders is an active system with multiple micro systems of people, ideas, values, communication techniques, farm operations, animals, vegetables, delivery logistics, etc. it was necessary to apply additional theoretical interpretations of *value* and *space* to more comprehensibly identify assets. Simply cataloging assets, which the most familiar use of the CCF that I have seen used in community development does not effectively describe connections among capital systems, nor does it allow for multiple scales of value to be analyzed. For example, when asked why farmers liked selling to FSMs, interviewees identified on-farm, shared (the mission of the farm and mission of New Roots Inc.), and community scales of impact.

However, to interpret how capital systems are interconnected Emery and Flora's "Spiraling Up" thesis (2009) was productive. One question it helped raise is: What capital system has the most influence on overall value? Similar to their findings in 2009, human and cultural capital provided a foundation, which made the other assets possible. I will discuss this more in the conclusion section at the end of the chapter.

### **Farmer Liaison Value of Participation**

Three questions prompted liaisons to reflect on the value of their relationship with farmers, on their experience as a liaison and how the organization facilitated their success. Yet, responses show the multiplicity of values that farmer liaisons perceive. To honor each value sphere, we separated the sections into: (a) personally expressed value of relationships with farmers (the relationship sphere), (b) impact on self of participation (individual sphere), (c) perceived value of Fresh Stop Markets on farmers (system sphere), (d) perceived value of Fresh Stop Markets on their neighborhood and local municipalities (system sphere), and (e) values facilitated through New Roots Inc. (organizational sphere). The community capitals



framework (Figure 1) from Flora and Emory (2009) was used to categorize assets expressed in each sphere and describe the interconnections among each capital system.

### **Relationship to farmers sphere.**

Inherently, the interaction between farmer liaisons and farmers is a social capital asset to the overall FSM system. However, there are also unique cultural and social assets that help to facilitate the social capital of that system, which we learned from asking farmer liaisons what they valued about their relationship with farmers.

First, *visibility of farmer liaison communities* was identified as a valuable component of the relationship with farmers. Liaisons expressed an appreciation that when farmers deliver to their communities, they are able to see them beyond dominant, pervasively negative representations of their neighborhoods. The following two quotes from focus group two (2016) illustrate the importance of relationship bonds in dismantling preconceived ideas about their neighborhoods:

...being able to know he or she and them coming to my community and finding out about me and about the community.

And:

Once you get over the hump of going past X street...and you are like Oh, it's cool over here. It's not like how people say it is.

McKittrick and Woods black geographies framework further affirms the value of this shift in cultural understanding such that it, "brings into focus networks and relations of power, resistance, histories, and the everyday, rather than locations that are simply subjugated, perpetually ghettoized, or ungeographic" (2007, p. 7). Through increased interactions there is a growth in cultural understanding, which lays a foundation for solidarity to be developed. Friendships have emerged between farmers and liaisons, which reflects a transition from

bridging to bonding capital. The following quote illustrates how liaisons value those relationships:

Just getting to know them. Know who they are as people and you know chat about a few things...you know, it was great to meet different people. (Focus group 1, 2016)

For liaisons, solidarity with their farm partners is also fostered through the coproduction of knowledge about the food system. An example from focus group two reflects the interconnection of knowledge production and solidarity building:

It shrinks our world and makes it so much more real and tangible and small in beautiful ways. Because of all of those reasons. Because we really know each other and we keep getting to know each other. (2016)

The outcome of solidarity building is increased reciprocity between liaisons and farmers as captured in the following quote:

Getting a good rapport with them so like if they were gonna be late or gonna be early they could text me and talk to me about having flexibility. (Focus group 2, 2016)

### **Individual impacts on farmer liaison leaders.**

Being a farmer liaison can have profound impacts on the lives of leaders. Liaisons expressed their individual gains primarily as social and human assets. But, it is the organizational culture that instigates and maintains them.

First, through the procurement process, liaisons gain new skills such as computer literacy. The use of google spreadsheets is taught either through peer to peer mentorship, online tutorials and/or model order sheets.

Also, through the process of mediating between farmer and shareholder needs, liaisons expressed how they gained leadership development skills such as deep listening or the ability to “lead across differences” as Emory and Flora (2009) describe it. The quote below is an

example of a liaison who valued learning how to cooperate with diverse shareholders on produce quality. The liaison is also communicating learned empathy or respect for others:

...what my fellow fresh stop leaders taught me was that holding the farmers to standards was good for our neighborhood because, while I was extending grace to these farmers knowing the life they are living, *seeing it through my neighbors' eyes* they were feeling that it was communicating a lack of respect to them. (Focus group 2, 2016)

Human capital was also identified as a feeling of satisfaction for helping support farmer livelihoods, which is illustrated in the following quote:

For me, and this may come from wearing two hats, is just knowing that I'm part of contributing to someone's livelihood and my work is supporting that. (Focus group 2, 2016)

They also appreciated the increased social capital from being part of the organization of FSMs. They identified bonding, bridging, and linking capital. Bonding and bridging was discussed in the farmer relationships section. But, was also found in descriptions of friendships gained with fellow team members and staff. New Roots Inc.'s efforts to convene all market leaders across the state once or twice a year serves as a bridging resource for liaisons. Linking capital came from opportunities to work with local policy makers. One liaison articulated the value (excitement) in building relationships with diverse stakeholders through FSMs:

I think it amazingly and miraculously crosses more lines than I can ever imagine crossing when I exist in a week of Fresh Stops. It's like Wow! (Focus group 2, 2016)

### **Organizational sphere: New Roots Inc. as a resource.**

New Roots Inc. as an organization was recognized as a critical resource that facilitates the valuable experiences of farmer liaisons. Table 7.1 reflects the array of assets identified by liaisons during focus groups.

**Table 7.1:** Organizational Assets of New Roots Inc.

<b>Organizational Asset</b>	<b>Example</b>
Political	Meeting with Senators and USDA administrators at the White House
Social	<p><b>Bridging capital:</b>  <i>Feeling part of something way bigger than the small thing that my community is organizing.</i> – Focus group 2, 2016</p>
Human Resources	<p><b>Staff labor:</b>  <i>I can't tell you how many nights we sat here waiting for eggs. It was a labor of love, let me tell you.</i> – Focus group 2, 2016</p> <p><b>Staff Experience- Inspiration and emotional support from staff and peer leaders::</b>  <i>I think in some ways just having blazed the trail before- knowing that it can be done because it has been done because you all have done it. That it's not just possible, it's already happening.</i> – Focus group 2, 2016</p>
Human: Informal education opportunities	<p><b>Fresh Stop Training Institute (Online and in-person):</b>  <i>FSTI was really helpful because I got to hear your stories and how you interact with farmers all season.</i></p>
Social/Human	<p><i>I was on the phone with Kim listening to the relationships she has with farmers. And she said, now I want you to do it. It's all in how you talk to people that you can get things. It was on the job training.-</i> Focus group 1, 2016</p> <p><b>Mandy:</b> <i>Yeah, just to visit and see how they're doing and to pitch in...you know mingle and be able to meet other folks from the Fresh Stops</i></p> <p><b>Brandy:</b> <i>...that's really the only way to learn it is through those of us who have already done it before and just give them little tips. Chat them up a little bit and sharing the knowledge. We did all the hard stuff...ya know?</i></p>

**System sphere: Asset to the community**

*Human/Cultural.* In agreement with farmers, liaisons also perceive FSMs as contributing to community food security. In our focus group discussions value was placed on Fresh Stop Markets as a mechanism for obtaining fresh, affordable produce. But, equity was

also mentioned beyond *just accessing* food. One liaisons proudly talked about their joy knowing s/he is obtaining produce grown by the same farmers who sell to markets in more expensive parts of town:

Them being able to grow my food and come into my community and offer it at an affordable price so that I can enjoy the food the same as individuals in the East End. (Focus group 2, 2016)

This quote illustrates the value liaisons place on being part of shifting power in the local movement. The food is not only perceived as contributed to greater health outcomes, but the *process* and *relationships* embedded in the material produce items makes equity possible/visible. Thus, a cultural shift had occurred.

Another example of the value of this cultural shift is a leader who elaborates that the “creativity” of the markets expands the imagination of what is possible in the local food movement:

I also find value in the creativity that the Fresh Stops put out in the community. I’m saying the community loosely- like the immediate neighborhood and just the larger local food movement that it can be done differently and it can look differently. I think cooperative development is the way for us to be going in this work and I think that the Fresh Stop model illustrates that to a lot of different audiences. (Focus Group 2, 2016)

***Built Capital.*** Similar to farmer responses, liaisons defined the markets using a broader definition of infrastructure that includes “systems”. The discussion below reflects how the language of “systems” is deployed by liaisons. It is also another example of how the organization feels about its position within their local food movement. What is expressed is a feeling of being overlooked because of who is leading the work and how they do it:

**Kim:** ...even though we are community people and many of us are volunteers and we seem like a rag tag group, we are actually quite organized and professional. We know our spreadsheets. We understand this. It’s like we know how to source local food. We are experts. More than anyone probably in the city.

**Jason:** Yeah, and that kind of building out doesn't mean that we're not organized, it just means that we're building up the system.

**Kim:** That's right because the system doesn't exist! (Focus Group 2, 2016)

### **External infrastructure assets specific to the farmer liaison system.**

#### ***Built and Social Capital.***

*Farmers Markets.* While Fresh Stop Markets were created as a reaction to the failure of farmers markets in disinvested communities, they were still identified as a key external resource by liaisons because they are spaces where they can go to build relationships with local farmers. In focus group two farmers markets were described in the following way:

I should say that these farmers markets have been pretty important to us. That's how we met most of the farmers. (Focus Group 2, 2016)

*Local Churches.* Fresh Stop Markets have traditionally partnered with local churches as anchors to both recruit leaders and as the spaces where the markets "pop-up" every two weeks throughout the season. Congregation halls and fully equipped kitchens that may otherwise be dormant are transformed into what leaders describe as "the mix between a family reunion and a vegetable flash mob." The spaces are warm and inviting environments with volunteer leaders behind every vegetable table and running all other operations from signing shareholders in to cooking to collecting payments. In stark contrast to a CSA box pick-up, Fresh Stop Markets at local churches encourage conversation and friendships to emerge. Therefore, the bonding, bridging, and linking capital that is fostered through these church environments is a sizable asset, which starts in a physical space (built capital) and leads to a transformative exchange system that shifts the culture of food provisioning for the shareholders and leaders involved.

#### **Farmer Liaison Assets Discussion**

From the farmer assets discussion, we learned that liaisons are a foundational asset that mobilize or activate other capital systems to benefit farm participants. Thus, an analysis of

how liaisons are supported by New Roots Inc., and what asset systems encourage their participation is important for understanding their role in facilitating a viable cooperative procurement system. In other words, they create the environment for farmers to thrive. So, exploring the multiple asset scales they operate with is critical to identifying indicators for successful cooperation, especially New Roots Inc.'s role(s) in facilitating that success. The organizational culture of New Roots Inc. is fundamental to success. It inspires the liaisons in their weekly struggle to provide food for 50+ families.

An in depth conversation about the “magic” of FSMs affirms the New Roots Inc. culture of community organizing, which places relationships at the center of all activity:

I think that part of it is that so many people are working together on it with so many different resources. Social networks and resources and if you have a problem, you have a lot of people working on it. So, maybe that's what feels like the magic because it's not just you, it's the group. *It feels like magic and I think it is but it is also because it is a community effort that everyone is invested in making it happen.* (Focus Group 2, 2016)

Indeed, it felt magical to be in the room during this discussion. But, how does one explain “magic” in an academic venue? Esther Farmer (2015) does so by identifying the role of creativity in fostering magical moments in community development efforts. Building from her thesis, I argue that the extensive social capital accessible to farmer liaisons allows for creativity to thrive. As the liaison expresses above, when there are multiple people available to solve a problem, it just feels more possible and challenges seem to “magically” resolve themselves. But, it is really the relationships that make this possible. Also, because New Roots Inc. operates from a horizontal leadership model, the FSM environments feel more like testing grounds where any leader can innovate at any time.

As Emory affirms, “risk-taking is greatly facilitated by playful environments in which people can try new activities without concern for “getting things right....Magic involves

surprise and the unexpected. A posture of “not-knowing” can help us collectively discover those surprises” (p. 305). However, how the magic is communicated to others becomes the next challenge. If it remains within the bubble of one market or is not made transparent to farmer partners, then it runs the risk of stagnating. For Emory, magical moments can help create a culture of democracy for community development efforts, but if there is not an intentional space for it to be shared and deliberated upon then it is not democratic.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

We have found that farmers and farmer liaisons share value perceptions of the FSM system. Social, cultural, and human capital are shared and appear to be the building blocks for successful cooperation between farmers and liaisons, but also help develop the collective power of FSMs.

One value that farmer liaisons perceive about themselves that farmers also recognized is mutual support and cooperation. Liaisons recited several examples of how they stepped in to help farmers be successful, such as aggregating from two small growers to fill an order and meeting them half way for deliveries. These actions reflect the strength of their social capital bonds.

I think we were working within the means and bounds of what they could and doing the best that they knew how to do. But, we knew how to call them [farmers] to do better. And when we did, they would say, okay. (Focus group 2, 2016)

Additionally, similar to how farmers articulated the value in having access to a market like Fresh Stops, liaisons identified this as a main draw for participation. Specifically, liaisons identified themselves as providing a market that is comparable in scale to institutional spaces, like wholesale. The following quote from a discussion thread reflects how liaisons seem themselves as a labor support for helping farmers access markets:



What Fresh Stops/New Roots offer is a market for farmers first, I think. And if we continue to do what we do we will continue to make markets available for those who want to market in this way. (Focus Group 2, 2016)

What will be important is how clearly liaisons can define themselves as institutional scale buyers. This is an especially difficult challenge because of multiple translations needed to communicate with the diversity of “wholesale” definitions found in Chapter 6.

In conclusion, FSMs act as a mechanism for reaching the shared goal between farmers, shareholders and New Roots Inc. of community food security. New Roots staff and Fresh Stop Market team leaders support the system by mobilizing its assets. Farmers identified them as labor support for reaching their goals, therefore a human capital resource. Chapter 8 will look closely at the challenges of the cooperative system as described by farmers and liaisons. Common and disparate concerns will be identified and discussed.

## **Chapter 8: What Hinders the Cooperative System Between Farmers and Farmer Liaisons?**

The following chapter defines moments when conflict occurred in the cooperative procurement system between liaisons and farmers. Farmer defined conflicts are offered first, followed by uniquely identified liaison conflicts and finally, shared concerns. Farmer and liaison challenges were coded in interview and focus group transcripts when participants were prompted to provide detailed descriptions of specific instances when conflicts occurred.

### **Unique Farmer Challenges**

Miscommunication was a major theme reflecting instances when liaisons and farmers were lost in translation during the ordering process. The following quote represents the theme of frustration about miscommunication:

Sometimes we would go back and forth on pricing. Frustration wasn't the back and forth but that I knew we weren't talking about the same produce. (Farmer Interview 13, 2016)

Distribution challenges were also identified. The most frequently cited challenge was driving into town multiple days during the week to drop off for different Fresh Stop Markets. A quote from Interview 13 (2016) reflects this distribution challenge:

We would rather spend 5 hours on a couple days a week rather than going in for multiple fresh stops.

Both the scale of particular farm operations and the scale of the overall Fresh Stop farmer network were also challenges expressed by interviewees. Two new farmers were worried that they did not produce enough to sell to a single Fresh Stop market. Anxiety about meeting FSM demand is found in the following:

What I started thinking is- If I'm too small to sell to Fresh Stops then do I have to sell to restaurants? There are not enough outlets for selling to low-income neighborhoods. (Farmer Interview 9, 2016)

Another issue of scale was expressed by an established farmer who was concerned that 50 farmers serving a network of 12 markets may be overwhelming for the whole system:

Just logistically, I understand that you want to have several [farmers] so you can spread your risk out...Especially at the scale they are now. Maybe if they were up to 4,000 shareholders, then yea, 50 farms, that sounds about right.(Farmer Interview 13, 2016)

New farmers were also critical of their own operations:

I understand the [delivery time] window and I'm not beyond working with it...And if I was a full time farmer then it wouldn't be an issue. (Farmer Interview 8, 2016)

Or saw the long-term benefits of the existing system:

I think the logistics is just one of the downsides of decentralized organization. But, it does build leadership though and you can't put a price tag on that. (Farmer Interview 9, 2016)

Finally, five out of the eight new farmers interviewed, stated that there were no challenges to participation. And, one of the growers who worked with the grower cooperative acknowledged that the challenges were not with New Roots Inc. but with the cooperative's communication system.

### **Unique Challenges of Farmer Liaisons**

Two unique challenges emerged from our liaison focus groups. First is what they perceive as a lack of accountability from the farm partner. In the scenario described below, the farmer did not give the liaisons enough time to replace an item that the farmer had forgotten was on an order. Liaisons did recognize that weather and pests can happen sporadically. But, what causes conflict is when farmers do not communicate in a timely fashion. A quote from focus group one (2016) illustrates time conflicts:

Communication is key to make a fresh stop successful. Maybe they told you four hours ahead—I feel like I can salvage that. I could replace it. But, they call you an hour before and you're scrambling.

Other than miscommunication, liaisons also identified logistical challenges such as storage, aggregating produce from multiple growers to accommodate diverse farm scales and mismatched delivery schedules. Often, liaisons would have to commit their time to reconciling these issues by acting as ad hoc distributors and/or aggregators. This activity reveals how resourceful liaisons are and the importance of their social networks, which is described by Emory and Flora (2009) as “entrepreneurial social capital” or “willingness to consider alternative ways of reaching goals” (p. 21).

Another challenge specific to the liaison team development process. Lacking time to focus on leadership development was a concern for new leaders. This particular challenge draws attention to human capital need. Instead of one person sharing the whole responsibility of the farmer liaison job, it is intended to be a team effort. One liaison’s feedback from focus group two (2016) illustrates this challenge:

So, when I think of improvements that I want to make for the next year, I think about the people who expressed interest in helping with the farmer liaison team and I didn’t do a good job of cultivating them. In the beginning of the year, it was for different reasons and throughout the season it was because we were in the weeds and just trying to get it done.

### **Shared Challenges**

One shared challenge is incompatible communication during the ordering process. The issues primarily circled around timing. For liaisons, there was frustration with farmers who could not respond quickly enough to an order question. While liaisons expressed this concern, they also recognized that there may have also been a mismatch in communication style. For example, they may have received a faster response if they had communicated by phone or text message, rather than email:

And sometimes not hearing back in enough time. So, to be able to contact somebody else. And do I wait on you? And then I don’t like conflict so it’s

hard to tell someone, Well, I'm sorry you didn't call me back so I had to go ahead. I don't like that feeling. (Focus Group 1, 2016)

Farmers were also frustrated by communication timing. A few farmers were concerned that they were treated like back-ups and therefore did not receive orders until the night before they were expected to deliver.

A couple times last year they didn't call me until later in the evening the day before to tell me what they wanted and I already had the truck loaded.

Another farmer who worked had trouble responding to questions after normal business hours:

The communication would be outside of work hours for a normal business. They were used to dealing with growers and with this organization it was hard. (Farmer Interview 10, 2016)

### **Forecasting Challenges**

What we have found is that there are conflicts other than weather and pests that create break downs in the pre-season planning system. Farmers expressed frustration about the risk involved in the process. The risk was attributed to a lack of a formal contract and a feeling that there "is no guarantee" due to favored farmer relationships.

There's not a contract and you can't say there is a guarantee if she talks to another farmer before me.

The quote above reflects overlapping issues of miscommunication and a lack of contracts from a new farmer partner (Farmer Interview 6 2016). An established grower shared a similar concern (interview 10, 2016):

...we have done projections for the past four years. But, they typically don't hold. Like they say we want to buy greens but if X farm has them then there is no guarantee...they favor the relationship with X farm.

The above expression reflects a few farmers' concern that they are not valued as much as other growers. To them, the lack of a guarantee is because there may have been established

guarantees with others. Another grower (Interview 13, 2016) also expressed this frustration, but suggested that conflict could be avoided if liaisons are transparent that some growers are back-ups:

Well, what we said is that the only way it worked for us is because we had excess and as a business, we are trying to figure out how to eliminate excess.

For liaisons, it is difficult to schedule pre-planning meetings based on the diverse schedules of shareholders, staff and volunteers. Due to the time and capacity needed to organize a market, the produce forecasting process may start late (after seeds have been ordered by growers) and/or it is challenging to create procurement schedules with multiple growers. But, they were also concerned about relying too much on a few growers.

## **Conclusion**

These findings suggest that transparency through clear communication of expectations and challenges is critical as the markets continue to grow throughout the state. New farmers, shareholders and leaders will need to be trained in how to effectively communicate during the entire process to avoid conflicts. In Chapter 9, I analyze farmer and farmer liaison recommendations for improving the procurement system and managing conflict.

## **Chapter 9: Recommendations for Change**

In this chapter, I offer the direct recommendations offered by farmers and farmer liaisons when asked three questions: Is there anything that New Roots can do to improve or make working with us better (farmers); Do you have any suggestions for how to improve the farmer liaison system (farmer liaisons); And, are there any ways that you think the fresh stop network could address farmer challenges (farmer liaisons)? The final question elicited recommendations to do with addressing challenges in selling to FSMs and also broader everyday challenges in being a farmer.

### **Farmer Recommendations**

Farmer recommendations align well with challenges defined in chapter eight. For example, most new producers who did not identify challenges also did not have advice for improvement. However, there were new growers who did not think New Roots needed to improve, but offered other recommendations for improving the local food system as the following quote illustrates:

I don't think it's on them. I think we need a pooling mechanism for small growers. (Farmer Interview 9, 2016)

Additionally, a couple of new farmers did have recommendations based on their understanding of local food system challenges and past experience working with cooperatives.

They were:

1. Provide refrigerated storage to extend the life and quality of produce.
2. Provide a price sheet (Farmer Interview 8 2016):

...I think that you would have a much broader span if you gave everyone a sheet with prices... Well, this takes the guess work out for you all. And it takes the guess work out for me...that way we know what the margin is. We have to have a margin to go by.

Established growers who had been selling to FSMs for three years or more offered more detailed recommendations, just as they were more capable of articulating their challenges. Most suggestions for improvement were about addressing break downs in communication. These farmers, primarily focused their attention towards needs for improvement in the farmer forecasting process. They advocated for more transparent communication and suggested new process systems. Farmers from interview 13 (2016) brought advocated for both with the following ideas for improvement:

...Tell us that we are going to try to get as much as we can from these farmers and we need you to be on standby or these are the crops that they do not grow.

And;

To me, I feel it would be way better if we could treat them like a CSA. Like take on 100-150 members a week.

Another structural communication recommendation was for New Roots Inc. to re-organize the farmer liaison engagement system so that only one liaison placed orders for multiple markets. For farmers, communicating with just one liaison would help avoid order mistakes and ensured that expectations are clear. Because of the diversity of liaison backgrounds, they also communicate diverse expectations. Therefore, speaking with only one liaison ensured less confusion.

Finally, one farmer who had sold to FSMs for over five years, felt that New Roots Inc. could go a step further to not just make adjustments to the system of communication between liaisons and farmers, but to actually hire a Farmer Organizer. This person could help manage farmer relationships, better identify on-farm issues and ensure that the forecasting process is clearly communicated and beneficial for diverse growers.



## **Suggestions for How to Improve the Farmer Liaison System**

As one of the most critical resources for Fresh Stop Markets to succeed, farmer liaisons who experience the system from the ground every day are the most knowledgeable about what innovations are needed to improve the process. The ideas below reflect their expertise. They are categorized by: Team building; Forecasting and Farmer Participation.

### **Building the team:**

1. Recruit more volunteers from the pool of shareholders
2. Spend more time building leaders- identify people's strengths (focus group 2, 2016):  

Maybe try to identify people's strengths and acknowledge those. Sit down with them and say, what do you think you would be good at?
3. Peer to peer mentoring by visiting other markets and more spreadsheet training
4. Change the procurement system so that one person is making final orders in Louisville.

### **Forecasting:**

1. Organize meetings earlier before the season starts
2. Change the system so that farmer liaisons take the lead on facilitating meetings
3. Organize producer-only meetings to encourage cooperation and learn individual farmer schedules.

### **Increase farmer participation:**

1. Communicate financial benefits of participation
2. Provide more opportunities to listen to farmers' concerns and ideas for innovation

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings above, there are three different levels of recommendations offered by farmers and farmer liaisons. At the base is human resource development of farmer liaisons through individual skill building and team development. The second level includes

relationship strengthening and trust building between liaisons and farmers. Finally, there were also visions for structural change that included changes to the forecasting system and possible new hires. One focus group participant (group 2, 2016) even offered their dream for New Roots to invest beyond purchasing food from their farm partners to advocacy and policy development:

I envision New Roots some time way in the future having a policy arm that people in urban and is rural settings can organize together for policy change and advocacy work together. I see that as a benefit to the farmers in the future.

Applying interactional theory to the recommendations offered above, it would seem that if New Roots Inc. would like to improve at all three levels, there should be more intentional spaces for liaisons to interact with each other; farmers to network and share resources; and farmer and liaisons to discuss challenges and co-develop solutions. This was evident in both focus groups as participants expressed how helpful it had been for them to connect across markets by sharing ideas, challenges, and visions. The sense of belonging to a collective group who shared similar struggles and successes was powerful to witness as a researcher.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion

Since 2009, New Roots Inc. has built a regional, cooperative network for families to access fresh, local produce at an affordable price, and an alternative market for farmers. What may be one of the most encouraging findings is that farmers do value their role in contributing to community food security by selling to Fresh Stop Markets. They *want* to sell their food to limited income communities. In fact, what the findings suggest is that the cultural capital embedded in the farmers as hybrid economic subjects motivates them to participate. In other words, participating helps them realize their philosophical and/or moral values or as one farmer expressed, their “calling” is to grow food for people who need it. Yet, without FSMs human, social and cultural assets they do not have the time or labor to participate. And once they are connected to the organizational structure of FSMs, the assets multiply. Time savings through payment on delivery, fair prices, large volume purchases, flexibility and guaranteed markets are all valuable financial resources that contribute to whole farm success.

We have also found that farmer liaisons are becoming new economic subjects through their integral role(s) as food procurement gurus. They are learning new skills (technical and leadership development), building extensive resource networks and social capital, increasing their food systems literacy and realizing their own personal goals of supporting community food security.

The findings verify that both groups are working towards shared goals through the cooperative system of interaction. The NR community organizing strategy is reliant on human and social capital development, which supports those in the collective to achieve mutual goals. The solidarity and multiple values produced by participating in the cooperative can be further defined as the “collective power” of Fresh Stop Markets. A farmer liaison describes how

mobilizing the assets of the collective is critical to sustaining bonds with farmers (Focus Group 2, 2016).

We're able to hold all of them together and pour out the social capital, financial capital and spiritual capital in to all of them to say if you fall under our umbrella then we belong to you and you belong. We are connected. We are supporting all of you. We are willing to drive to the gas station to meet you.

### **Improving Cooperation**

New Roots Inc. acts as a bridge to facilitate the “spiraling up” of farmer and FSM capital systems through their community organizing infrastructure. Thus, what enables multi-stakeholder cooperation broadly is the organizing system. But, what supports it during everyday interactions is clear and transparent communication between farmers, farmer liaisons and NR staff. Trust, reciprocity and constant affirmation are the glue that hold these delicate social bonds together. Also, facilitated spaces for interaction are critical. The forecasting process is a requisite and based on recommendations from farmers and liaisons, there should be more investment in it. Both farmers and liaisons outline more specific recommendations for improving the forecasting systems in the previous chapter.

Maintenance of relationships within the cooperative system also require an investment in conflict management infrastructure. It is inherent that through the process of translating between such diverse groups of people that conflict will arise. We have found that miscommunication is the number one challenge. This can happen at any time during the timeline of interaction from initial contact, planning, to delivery. Since liaisons already act as translators/mediators between stakeholders and farmers, they should be trained in conflict management and taught the diverse languages of their farm partners.

Finally, for cooperation to be sustained, there needs to be an intentional focus on democratic processes. Currently, de-centralized leadership allows farmer liaisons and staff to

innovate “on the fly,” which creates a transformational atmosphere for community leaders to creatively solve problems without jumping through time consuming approval processes. This is part of the magic of FSMs. It is also representative of a grassroots organizing philosophy that people are creative, resourceful and whole. But, as the NR grows, it becomes increasingly difficult to facilitate and manage this type of structure. In my personal experience, the day to day struggle of procuring food for 50 families each week during the FSM season is all consuming and does not allow much time or space for leadership development. Nor does it allow space and time for an organizational identity crisis. However, the findings of this thesis do recommend more investment in spaces for team building and planning with farmers. Without taking a major leap towards becoming a more formal cooperative business, perhaps a first step could be an annual meeting.

This annual meeting space could also help move the food justice work of NR from food provisioning and justice literacy to advocacy. From the capital systems analysis, there is a gap in political capital. In order for NR’s community organizing model to have long-term impacts towards food justice, policy and advocacy work needs to be a prioritized. I know from working with NR for over four years that they ARE involved in changing policy and systems. Their leaders are also movement leaders. But, that work is not as publically acknowledged, nor was it within the scope of this thesis to catalogue it. The seeds are all there waiting to be cultivated.

### **Investing in Food Justice**

The findings from this thesis confirm the positive impact of investing in cultural, social and human capital resources for the local food system. With a budget of less than \$250,000 a year with only 3 full-time staff, NR has created a culture of food justice for 1,000 families, 50 farmers and 100s of volunteers. And, they were able to buy \$100,000 worth of produce from

local farmers in 2015. To put this in perspective, the Fayette county school system (41,686 students) only spent \$25,000 on local food for the entire year in 2014. Clearly, an investment in community organizing infrastructure brings high returns.

The West Louisville Food Port project was slated to cost over \$35 million for major built infrastructure, but imagine what community organizers could do with a fraction of that investment. It would be an investment in the foundation for long-term systems change. It means shifting traditional power dynamics, recognizing the role that liberal elites have played in the systemic oppression of whole communities which has led to so-called “food deserts.” It means shifting from a fixation on fixing what is framed as a logistical and physical access problem to investing in people who already doing the work. It would mean investing in people over profits and justice over buildings.

I am not naïve in asking for our policymakers, funders, philanthropists and local food advocates to consider shifting its priorities. I have been at the meetings where developers ask, “How is *that* work *sustainable*?” What they mean is how will it be profitable so that it does not need to rely on grant funding to continue. This reflects an egregiously limited understanding of the insurmountable systems we truly need to transform. Is the goal of the work NOT: to sustain our small farmers, alleviate a diet-related public health crisis, save our farmland and alleviate further damage to our waterways, land and air? Is this work not a public service? My question in response is: What are we trying to sustain? The continued disinvestment of critical public services? Our arcane farm bill infrastructure that leaves peanuts for farmers and major profits agriculture corporations? How are we supposed to transform this dysfunctional agriculture system that was built from slavery and massive land grabbing without investments in human, social and cultural capital? This requires a shift in thinking from seeing grants as the end goal to a small stepping stone towards systemic change.

Following this line of thinking, we need considerable and constant public funding-not one off mini-grants. But, also through this lens we can see where local profit-driven developers may feel compelled to ask how a project like FSM can be sustained. After all, if the lead developers of the West Louisville Food Port truly wanted to “develop” the local food system to benefit the largest population then they would have invested that money into the school system where thousands of children are hungry for answers.

Anderson et al. (2014) support my passionate response to questions of the financial sustainability of FSMs (emphasis added):

We might reconsider the tendency of commentators to uncritically lament the dependency of the social economy on the state. These nonprofit and cooperative initiatives *may both require and warrant* ongoing support because they *offer a public good by supporting the development of healthy, environmentally friendly food systems or contributing to social inclusion and cohesion* — a much longer-term project of social change that may never be accomplished within the limits of the current market logic. (p. 6)

In short, community organizing infrastructure that supports small farmers, supports food security and builds a culture of food justice is a public good. As the foundational capital system for systemic change, it deserves major investment.

### **Final Thoughts**

In conclusion, the material components of the FSM “vortex” consisting of community leaders, a handful of staff and predominantly small, minority farmers weave together incredible human, social and cultural capital resources in Kentucky’s local food movement. The intentional investment in community organizing over built infrastructure transforms the questions asked about how to change the local food system from scale to food justice. From an idea of fixed objects (food and table) to processes and relationships, acknowledging the politics of getting food from farms to tables. In short, this work is carving out a unique space

for food justice in the local food movement by relying on community organizing principles to bring the “movement” to *life*.

### **Future Research**

Several themes emerged throughout the development of this masters thesis that were not able to be comprehensively addressed. Additionally, new questions have emerged that could significantly contribute to critical agri-food scholarship and practice. First, I will focus on further research to benefit New Roots Inc.’s on-going evaluation goals, followed by an outline of academic questions that should be considered by future scholars and practitioners.

For NR, questions about their farm partner’s economic viability were difficult for most participants to answer. I would suggest focus groups to gain a better understanding of common themes. Also, future research with farm partners should explore how their relationship with FSMs evolves each season. Because the organizational operations shift frequently, it would help to identify specific contextual arrangements that may influence farmer experiences. Also, this research could identify trends in produce sales by each farmer which helps explain the strength of the cooperative relationship. Finally, if the organization is interested in adopting more formal cooperative structures, there should be an analysis that weighs the costs and benefits of this process and possible outcomes.

The informality of FSMs cooperative structure was an interesting topic that I was only able to marginally explore. Future research on food cooperatives should look at how race and culture impact how these “businesses” or organizations are structured and/or practiced. For example, how does culture and group identities shape the goals of food cooperatives, how members interact with each other and how decision-making processes are structured? Also, how has whiteness influenced food cooperative “best practices” and what does this mean for minorities who wish to organize a cooperative?



Also, my thesis argues that community organizing is a crucial infrastructure for creating more just food systems. However, policymakers and funders may be interested in a comparison of return on investments for built infrastructure projects (food hubs) versus projects that primarily focus on human, cultural and social development. An analysis of the benefits and challenges for each investment would also be significant for understanding the value of community organizing for reach food justice goals. Finally, a meta-analysis of existing community organizing techniques used by food justice organizations would be helpful for identifying “best practices” for practitioners.

## Chapter 11: Research Reflections

Upon writing, considerable changes to Fresh Stop Markets' cooperation system have been made. One change came from the community research team's focus group experience. During our data collection process, focus group meetings were the first time that farmer liaison leaders from several different fresh stops came together to discuss challenges and successes. Because this convening was so beneficial for team building and knowledge sharing, NR and the new Lexington Fresh Stop Markets' fiscal sponsor, Tweens Nutrition and Fitness Coalition, are planning to develop more team building workshops and cross-state knowledge sharing opportunities.

Throughout this project, I saw New Roots Inc. staff and Fresh Stop Market leaders as friends and comrades. Many of our debriefing sessions were had over drinks, which is where some of the rawest reflections were captured. The visceral and every day struggles of food justice organizing were articulated through animated stories of traumatic misunderstandings, beautiful produce, 'Fresh Stop Magic', the 'Vortex', loss, hope, logistical wizardry and improvising. As co-conspirators we dreamed of strategies to disrupt existing conversations and practices of the Kentucky local food movement and developed 'on the fly' responses to every day challenges through meeting evaluations and regular check-in calls and text messages. As a friend, evaluator and newly developing academic, there were several moments during this project when I reflect on my research positionality.

What I realize now is that I started this project with very little self confidence in any of the aforementioned identities. I was lost. I was afraid to be a devout friend, activist and/or a researcher. But, I always found self-esteem in a sort of middle space. I was comfortable as a

translator between the two worlds of theory and practice. This is where I felt helpful and needed. But, it was definitely not the role that was always needed.

As I was reflecting on the tension of feeling more like an activist than a researcher, I found solace in Sarah Wakefield's reflection on critical praxis: "This is not dry academic stuff, but rather what hope is made of...critical praxis at its best serves to bridge the distance between academics and others, so that the oppressed are *no longer* distant or strangers but rather colleagues and companions and occasionally co-conspirators" (Wakefield, 2007:349).

"PAR is a process of self-naming, self-defining, and self-creation and recreation. It is action on the world while reflection continues – in other words, praxis" – Smith et al., 2010:419

I close this reflection chapter with the above quote because it affirms a central tension I felt throughout this project, attempting to navigate my own identity as an academic and community advocate. My academic personality is not patient and is critical in a way that is primarily focused on macro issues of the political economy. I found myself in a rut several times in my data analysis process with an imagination of how the entire non-profit industry should be transformed. I often wanted New Roots Inc. to be something different or to strive towards radical changes beyond their day to day tasks. But, honestly they do not have time for massive existential crises (which is what feeds academic research questions) while they are laser focused on putting out day to day fires. Yet, this is not to let non-profits like New Roots off the hook. Not at all. But, is to argue for better ways of listening to their needs and responding to them. I was not the best listener in the beginning. I wanted to create my own ideal world and place the work of Fresh Stop Markets as part of it. But, that approach absolved me of the responsibility of explaining that imagined food justice world to the people I was closest to on the project.

I was insecure about my vision in the beginning. But, the more I told the story of the data to the farmers, to the farmer liaisons, to New Roots staff, to my colleagues with Fresh Stop Markets in Lexington and to my thesis committee, the more confident I became. And the more specific, comprehensive and clear it became. Thus, as it was better defined and redefined through multiple stages of metamorphosis, so did it seem more tangible. Finally, through the multiple trials of telling the stories of this research project, I was able to better define who I want to and have the capacity to be as a researcher and community advocate.

## **Appendix 1: Farmer Interview Guide**

- 1. Do you consider yourself a limited resource and/or minority farmer?** Define limited resource farmers: household income of less than \$23,000/year, small acreage producers, female farmers, minority farmers, and the 53 “Appalachian” counties.
- 2. What does leadership look like for you? What do you feel is your role in leadership or making limited resource and/or minority farmers more successful in general?**
  
- 3. Walk us through a normal week preparing to sell to Fresh Stops? How do you collaborate with Farmer Liaison team members?**
  
- 4. How many Fresh Stops do you currently use to sell your products?**
  
- 5. What percentage of your produce sales come from Fresh Stop? (If unknown, ask for total sales. We can calculate percentage.) Need a dollar figure.**
  
- 6. What percentage of your income comes from Fresh Stop? (If unknown, ask for total income. We can calculate percentage.)**
  
- 7. What items do you think you might be willing to produce for Fresh Stops that you are not already producing?**
  
- 8. Besides Fresh Stop, which of the following market channels do you currently use? Check all that apply**

_____	Farmers market(s) in Kentucky
_____	Farmers market(s) in Indiana
_____	Farmers market(s) in Tennessee
_____	Other farmers market(s) (please specify) _____
_____	Farm stand or store
_____	CSA- Next year
_____	Direct sales to individuals other than a CSA
_____	Direct sales to restaurant(s)
_____	Direct sales to grocery store(s) –
_____	Direct sales to commercial or institutional kitchens (hospitals, schools, jails )
_____	Sales through wholesaler
_____	Sales through another farmer
_____	Fresh Stops (How many?)
_____	Other (please specify): _____

**9. From the list above, rank your top 3 market channels in terms of sales for 2014. I.E. Where did you make the most money LAST year?**

**10 From the list above, rank your top 3 market channels in terms of sales for 2015. I.E. Where are you making the most money THIS year?**

**11. How risky are these market channels for your business? What are the top riskiest channels?**

**12. Do you use Interns? Why or why not? How do you find them? Have you heard of this resource for finding interns? <https://attra.ncat.org/>**

**13. How do you access financial capital? (Kiva Zip, family, New Roots, etc)?**

**14. What post-harvest handling do you currently do at your farm?**

_____	Washing
_____	Grading
_____	Packaging
_____	Processing

**15. Which of the following storage options do you currently use at your farm?**

_____	Freezer space
_____	Refrigerated space
_____	Dry goods storage space (fresh and packaged products)
_____	Storage for root crops to be sold during winter
_____	Certified organic storage space

**16. How do you deal with excess products?**

_____	I participate in the Farms to Food bank Program.
_____	I give leftover products to the local food bank or community kitchen.
_____	I process it or store it for personal use.
_____	I process it for value added products that I sell.
_____	I compost or feed my livestock with it.

_____	Other
-------	-------

**17. Are you interested in developing a value-added product (e.g. salsa) made from what you grow?**

**18. What are the main constraints or obstacles that keep you from expanding production? Check all that apply**

_____	There doesn't seem to be an expanding market for my product.
_____	Costs of marketing (time and effort needed to find buyers and negotiate contracts) seem too high.
_____	Transportation costs seem too high.
_____	I am not set up for larger volumes of post-harvest handling (washing, sorting, grading packaging, cooling, etc).
_____	I do not have adequate storage facilities.
_____	I cannot find enough farm labor at a reasonable wage.
_____	I cannot access enough suitable land.
_____	I do not have the equipment that I would need.
_____	Alternate markets seem to require lots of red tape (contracts, insurance, bookkeeping, etc.).
_____	I cannot get a loan (at a reasonable interest rate) to make necessary investments.
_____	Other constraints or obstacles? (please specify) _
_____	I am not interested in expanding production. (please specify)



**19. What factors concern you the most in regards to maintaining your economic stability?**

**20. Why do you like selling to Fresh Stops? Are there examples of New Roots Inc. supporting your farm besides buying your products?**

**21. What are challenges in selling to Fresh Stops?**

**22. Is there anything that New Roots can do to improve or make working with us better?**

**Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!**

**Thank you!**

## **Appendix 2: Focus Group Guide**

### **1. Facilitator Introduction**

Why do you think I am here? What are your expectations  
Discuss group care during discussions.

### **2. Group introductions:**

a. Name. What Fresh Stop are you from? What is your role on the farmer liaison team?  
How long have you been a member? How did you learn how to be a farmer liaison team  
member? Did you attend the FSTI training?

### **3. Tell us why you joined the farmer liaison team. Did you attend the FSTI training? How**

### **4. What do you think makes a good farmer liaison team member?**

### **5. How has New Roots Inc. supported you? Staff? Board? Organization?**

### **6. Tell us about a normal week preparing for the Fresh Stop. What does team work look like?**

### **7. What do you think makes the cooperative system between the team and farmers work? Tell us about a stop when things went really well.**

### **8. What do you think interrupts the system? Tell us about a time when you were scrambling to make a stop successful.**

### **9. What do you value about your relationship to local farmers?**

### **10. In your conversations with farmers and experience working on the farmer liaison team, what do you think are major challenges that farmers face?**

### **11. Are there any ways that you think the fresh stop network could address farmer challenges?**

### Appendix 3: Coding Scheme

<b>Farmer Community Capital Framework Coding Scheme (adapted from Flora and Bregendahl, 2012)</b>	
<b>Financial Capital</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce or share risks associated with farming</li> <li>• Diversify farm income</li> <li>• Fair Prices*</li> <li>• Large Volume Purchasing*</li> <li>• Time Savings*</li> </ul>
<b>Built Capital</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy delivery at locations*</li> <li>• Mechanism/social structure/organization*</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Capital</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain a sense of shared identity with members of the community around local or organic foods or farm products</li> <li>• Live your philosophical, spiritual, or ethical values</li> <li>• Hosted events, festivals, potlucks, etc.</li> <li>• Help CSA members connect with the land through farm tours</li> <li>• Participate in an important social movement</li> </ul>
<b>Human Capital</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce time spent gaining access to markets- Outreach</li> <li>• Reduce time spent managing farm business aspects like billing, managing accounts</li> <li>• Reduce time spent distributing farm products- less time at farmers markets</li> <li>• Be a part of educating a community about local food systems</li> <li>• Offer residents access to healthy, nutritious foods</li> </ul>
<b>Social Capital</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make professional connections with other producers</li> <li>• Establish a broader network of relationships in the community</li> <li>• Strengthen relationships in the community</li> </ul>
<b>Political Capital</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Ownership*</li> <li>• Develop relationships with state or federal government</li> </ul>
<b>Natural Capital</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximize use of land*</li> </ul>

**Appendix 4: New Roots Playbook**



**our recipe for success**



Hello and welcome!

My name is Karyn and I'm the founder and one of the many *fresh-food obsessed* leaders here at New Roots, Inc. On behalf of all the community leaders, board of directors and staff, I'd like to thank you for joining us in this food justice movement.

The inspiration for New Roots goes all the way back to 2007...

My friends and I were growing increasingly frustrated with the failure of farmers' markets in Louisville's "food swamp" neighborhoods and felt that something had to change. As a response, I invested my unemployment check, adopted a community organizing approach that leverages cooperative economics (more on that later) and formed New Roots. This organization was founded on the belief that ***fresh food is a basic human right.***

We've spent many joyful years listening to the community and farmers that we work with and have learned a lot along the way. Now we're ready to scale our sustainable system for accessing the farm fresh food across the nation. We want to help as many people as we can to be their happiest and healthiest.

You can expect to join a team of people from the community who love and think about farm-fresh food more than you could ever have imagined....and we get sh\*t done!

My hope for New Roots is that our shared passion and purpose establish us as the go to group for expertise in food justice and community-organizing and that we help everyone who approaches us with the same level of curiosity, compassion and commitment. You'll learn more about all of this in the pages ahead.

The final thing to note is that this playbook is a living document, and will be updated as we continue to grow and learn....

So grab your kohlrabi and carrot tops and get ready to go on a most exciting food journey!



Karyn Moskowitz, Founder, New Roots, Inc.

*WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN HERE...*

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## WHO WE ARE: OUR PURPOSE

Why we exist

NEW ROOTS works with *fresh food insecure communities* to create sustainable systems for accessing the farm-fresh food we all need to be healthy and happy.

*In a nutshell, we are...*

**UNITING COMMUNITIES  
TO SPREAD  
FOOD JUSTICE**

*This is not just a mission – it's a movement!*



# WHO WE ARE: WHAT WE BELIEVE

What fuels our purpose

- We believe fresh food is a human right
- We believe we cannot do this without local farmers
- We believe we can have an impact beyond the dinner table
- We believe food justice training can positively transform individuals and entire communities
- We believe access to farm-fresh food can save lives
- We believe FOOD IS LOVE
- We believe in food justice for ALL

## WHO WE ARE: OUR AMBITION

What we want to achieve and by when

We want to set *audacious, inspiring and measurable* goals at New Roots and are now at a stage in our growth where we can...

SCALE THE NEW ROOTS MODEL ACROSS THE U.S.

*(with the immediate goal of doubling the number of Fresh Stop Markets by 2017)*

We will know we're getting there by tracking outputs, outcomes and success stories.

# WHO WE ARE: OUR SUCCESS FORMULA

How we will fulfill our purpose and achieve our ambition

## Community-organizing approach

developing leaders and partnering with them to *create and sustain* Fresh Stops

+

## Local farm-fresh food that's affordable

shareholder model where families *pool resources* to buy food from small farms

+

## Allies

people and institutions with resources to help progress the movement

+

## Knowledge & Tools

sharing ideas, best practices and new tech/tools to help drive change

+

## Telling success stories

tracking and broadcasting progress to drive greater demand and interest

+

## **Grants/Funding**

raising funds for New Roots operations and FSM seed money

=

**UNITING COMMUNITIES  
AGAINST FOOD INJUSTICE**

# WHO WE ARE: OUR VALUES

What guides our actions each and every day

At **NEW ROOTS** our mantra is **MAKE IT HAPPEN!**

No matter how big the obstacles are or how many times we're told it can't be done, we find a way to deliver on our promise of food justice for all. Our values are the 'secret ingredients' to our success.

We are at our best when we:

- 1. see the world through the EYES OF THE COMMUNITY**
- 2. combine PASSION WITH PURPOSE**
- 3. are FRESH-FOOD OBSESSED**

4. **NEVER ACCEPT NO** as the answer

5. **DISRUPT, IMPROVISE, INNOVATE**

6. are **IN IT TOGETHER**

# WHO WE ARE: OUR VALUES

What guides our actions each and every day

## **1. EYES OF THE COMMUNITY**

We strive to see the world through the eyes of the communities that we partner with each and every day. *It's about empathy, not sympathy.*

We actively listen to the community and learn as much from them as we hope they can learn from us. This ensures the development of human-centered, sustainable solutions.

We keep an eye out for those who are struggling to feed themselves and their families and make sure that no matter what, they get the healthy food they want and deserve.

We develop community volunteers into skilled leaders so that we can advocate for change together.

We work with each community to build upon our existing knowledge and tools and co-create the best system for their specific needs and culture.

***Why else is SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF THE COMMUNITIES WE***

***SERVE important for the work we do?***

**A VALUES STORY:** When the first Fresh Stop was organized in 2009, we failed to make it truly community driven. It was not until 2011, when we were invited into the Shawnee Neighborhood in West Louisville, that we focused on leadership development and the exchange of knowledge between New Roots and community members. Together we shared our stories. Out of those conversations we realized each other's strengths and interests. Instead of New Roots projecting how we thought Fresh Stops should be structured, community members organized themselves into six leadership teams that have now become the most important components of all Fresh Stops that followed.



# WHO WE ARE: OUR VALUES

What guides our actions each and every day

## **2. PASSION WITH PURPOSE**

We are deeply committed to providing training, leadership development and access to farm-fresh food to those who want it most and this singular focus guides our work.

We are persistent in the fight to end food justice and look to our Purpose and Ambition as the compass to guide our efforts so that we can be as effective as possible.

We are self-starters that go above and beyond and are willing to experiment and learn as we go.

We know that our actions will further our cause more than our words.

Our passion is contagious and can inspire others to join us in uniting communities against food injustice.

*How else can having **PASSION WITH PURPOSE** help us achieve our goals?*

**A VALUES STORY:** We are a community of doers! We don't just talk about food justice – we act on it. Food justice is a verb to us. Last year a farmer stood up the Russell Fresh Stop Market. He promised cherry tomatoes two days before, but the morning of, was nowhere to be found. Shareholders had already pre-paid for their fresh produce. New Roots team member, Ms. Mary, got in her car and drove an hour round trip from the Fresh Stop in West Louisville to pick up Amish slicer tomatoes from southern Indiana to replace the cherry tomatoes. She got back just in time to put them out at the Fresh Stop. There was no way our shareholders were going to go without tomatoes in the middle of tomato season in Kentucky!

## **WHO WE ARE: OUR VALUES**

What guides our actions each and every day

### **3. FRESH FOOD OBSESSED**

We practice what we preach. We love abundant, beautiful farm-fresh fruit, veggies, eggs and meat! Even more than that – we love sharing it with others.

*(and we know that 'beautiful' can sometimes mean the funny-shaped fruits and veggies that most grocery stores would never accept!)*

We encourage others to eat farm-fresh food. We reinvent family recipes and create new ones together with healthy, fresh ingredients to feed the hearts, minds *and* bodies of those we love.

We learn as much as we can about fresh foods (cleaning, storing, cooking, variety, organic, etc.) and share that knowledge with as many people as possible.

We know that along with our love of fresh food comes the hard work of making it available to all and spearheading policy campaigns to improve the food currently available to ***fresh food insecure*** communities.

***Tell us about your FRESH FOOD OBSESSION!***

**A VALUES STORY:** Forecasting the season ahead with our farmers is a very exciting experience. This is the community's opportunity to tell the farmers exactly what they would like them to grow for the Fresh Stop. We often meet with Fresh Stop leaders who are forecasting for the first time to coach them through the process. One season as we began to go down the list of available produce, each community member had a story to go along with a favorite fruit or

vegetable. A woman in her 60's told us about how she would eat winter squash as a child and hadn't had it since. Another woman professed her love for broccoli and when we reached veggies that were less familiar, one of our more seasoned Fresh Stop leaders, Ms. Mary, shared how she prepares them at home. Others began to speak up, "I want okra!" "Will there be watermelon?!" What was planned as an hour meeting, turned into a three-hour storytelling event revolving around our shared *obsession* with beautiful produce. We all left with our mouths watering in anticipation for the coming season.

## WHO WE ARE: OUR VALUES

What guides our actions each and every day

### 4. NEVER ACCEPT NO

We promise to *never turn anyone away* from the opportunity to experience healthy, farm-fresh food.

In order to keep this promise we sometimes have to push beyond the 'no' that we receive. Whether it's from a farmer, a member of the community or even someone at New Roots – we work hard to push past 'no' and *co-create* the best solutions.

We relish a good challenge and believe that most obstacles can be overcome.

We've learned that by digging deeper to understand the 'no' we are able to develop new ways forward that work for us all.

***What experiences have you had in positively influencing someone that started with a 'NO'?***

**A VALUES STORY:** One year we met a new farmer in the middle of the growing season that had lost some of his wholesale customers (restaurants) and as a result had "tons of food...literally endless rows of food." We placed a \$650 order for seven of the eleven items he offered us on a Thursday so we'd have it in time for a Saturday Fresh Stop. On Friday night the farmer called to tell us he'd changed his mind and was going to plant garlic that night instead of harvesting our food. Meanwhile, we had 42 food insecure families waiting on that food; families who had already paid for their share and families we knew would go hungry if they didn't get this produce.

We called the farmer and explained that these 42 families were depending on his food and asked if he could possibly plant his garlic later. He brought up other reasons why he couldn't come (no transportation, no time, etc.), and we countered with ways around each of his barriers. Finally, the farmer settled on delivering the produce the night before and all 42 families got their farm-fresh food.

## **WHO WE ARE: OUR VALUES**

What guides our actions each and every day

### **5. DISRUPT, IMPROVISE, INNOVATE**

We *positively disrupt* the food systems and beliefs of today so that people can lead healthier, happier lives.

We're excited and inspired by our audacious ambition to scale the New Roots model across America and know that innovation is essential to our success.

We work according to a shared set of standards and values while not letting process block progress. It's reaching the end goal that matters most. This gives us the freedom to approach each new problem in the most creative way possible.

We constructively question the rules when it feels like the right thing to do.

We embrace the fear that comes with trying new things that have never been done before and then celebrate the successes and learn from the failures.

***Tell us about a time you've disrupted something to drive positive change?***

**A VALUES STORY:** When the Fresh Stops were first created, we were told by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture that we could not accept WIC (Women, Infants and Children) subsidies because farmers' markets in Jefferson County were outside the scope of the program. They explained that Jefferson County had so many moms on WIC that we would 'break the bank', i.e., there were not enough funds to go around the entire state so they declassified the largest county (this seemed very counter-intuitive to us; it never occurred to them to go back to the federal government to ask for more money, as other states have done). We brought carloads of leaders from West Louisville to fight for this but the agency would not budge.

Then, the day of our first Strawberry Jamm Festival (May, 2012), a triple shooting occurred about 15 blocks from our location. We quickly found out that one of the young adults that lost her life was a granddaughter of one of our friends and shareholders, Ed White, director of the River City Drum Corps. Although our

leaders were in shock, we decided to move ahead with the festival. We were torn between mourning and celebration. It was hard.

A few weeks later our Founder, Karyn, was still thinking about Ed White's granddaughter, Makeba Lee. It turned out she was a mom on WIC and the subsidies helped her feed her then 2-year-old son. Karyn worked with her family to set up a fund to help pay for matching funds for any mom on WIC to purchase a share for \$6. Since then, we have raised thousands of dollars for the Makeba Lee Fund and many moms and their kids are able to enjoy fresh, local food for the first time in their lives.



# WHO WE ARE: OUR VALUES

What guides our actions each and every day

## 6. IN IT TOGETHER

We know that “we” is greater than “me”.

We operate under the assumption that no matter where a New Roots program is created, we are all part of one whole. We are united by and accountable to a shared purpose and set of values. We strive to do what’s best for the greater whole.

We are transparent and open so that everyone has equal access to information and ideas.

We know that collaboration is essential to our success and get excited when we have people with diverse perspectives all contributing towards a common goal.

We want everyone to shine and are always on the lookout for fresh talent and new opportunities for our leaders and volunteers.

***What’s your definition of being a team player – ‘in it together’?***

**A VALUES STORY:** We partnered with a West Louisville community to create the Shawnee Neighborhood Fresh Stop Market in 2011. It happened after two false starts. We had launched a previous West Louisville Market but the leadership was not committed and we really didn't know what we were doing. After a full year (and some encouragement from a persistent church member) we were able to co-create the right model for the community.

For most communities, the partnership would have ended there; but not for Shawnee and New Roots. Almost every year Shawnee Fresh Stop leaders have mentored leaders from neighboring communities, Lexington and even Indiana. They pass on all of their rich knowledge on what it takes to create and sustain the model, so other communities can have their own Fresh Stop Markets. And it never seems to stop. Those new leaders return the love to Shawnee and go on to mentor and support other communities. That is how we have grown from a small investment of an unemployment check and three founders, to hundreds of leaders and ten community-driven Fresh Stop Markets. We are indeed in it together.

# **WHO WE ARE: OUR BEHAVIORS**

How we live our values each and every day in more detail

These ways of being ***create positive impact***:

- We welcome everyone with a smile – and more often than not, a big hug!
- We know when to take the back seat so that our volunteer leaders can speak for themselves
- We are constantly innovating and improving our processes so they can be easily understood and implemented
- We offer feedback that is constructive, growth-oriented and given with positive intent
- We build on other's ideas rather than rejecting them too quickly
- We share food, recipes, and hopes and dreams for the future!

These ways of being can ***hinder us*** from achieving our goals and

being our best:

- We are NOT close-minded or negative when faced with new or challenging situations
- We do NOT let process get in the way of progress
- We are NOT about following the rules just because they exist
- We are NOT anti-social nor do we exclude others
- We are NOT reliant on others to tell us what to do or how to do it
- We do NOT create things in a New Roots bubble without engaging others and gaining their valuable input

***When in doubt, always go back to our PURPOSE, OUR BELIEFS and OUR VALUES to guide your work at NEW ROOTS.***

# **...SPEAKING OF “ROOTS”**

*We thought we might share a bit about our team*

*members!*

## **Karyn Moskowitz, Founder & Executive Director**

Frustrated by the imbalance of quality and variety of real foods in her West Louisville neighborhood, Karyn decided to do something about it. Harnessing her passion and experience with community organizing, policy change and the local food movement, she started New Roots in 2009.

Prior to the official launch of this 501c3 non-profit, Karyn had tried several other models for fighting food injustice in Louisville’s urban food deserts. For instance, an effort in 2007 to start a farmers’ market in West Louisville failed due to farmers not being willing to consistently set-up and sell their food in the neighborhood. It felt like a high-risk effort for them given the lack of resources and high crime-rate in the community - and it was.

Undeterred by these failed attempts, Karyn immersed herself in the community to continue to learn all that she could in the hopes of discovering another possible

solution. In talking to neighborhood leaders and borrowing inspiration from the cooperative economics model employed by City Fresh (out of Cleveland, Ohio) she unlocked several principles for a new approach:

- 1) Tap into local churches where a “food community” already exists and where local outreach work is already happening
- 2) Make sure the food is affordable so that the community can consistently buy it and the risk to farmers is reduced
- 3) Use a community-driven model where people that need help most can help themselves

After approaching 60+ pastors ***without a single “yes”*** - Karyn finally found one pastor willing to take a chance on opening up the church to become the first Fresh Stop organizing and distribution point. Soon thereafter, another interested church became Louisville’s second Fresh Stop. There are now ten Fresh Stop Markets in Louisville with approximately 1200 shareholders and 50 farmers, which generate \$90k in revenue to local farms. The New Roots team has also mentored a successful Fresh Stop Market in Washington, D.C and one in Indiana.

A key element of New Roots' innovative model came from a shift in focus from produce distribution to leadership development. By recruiting volunteers in the local neighborhoods and taking them through the FSTI (Fresh Stop Training Institute) curriculum, leaders are developed that can partner with New Roots to drive and sustain the Fresh Stop Markets. This enables New Roots to focus on activities such as knowledge-sharing, fundraising and the development of new technologies to support the Fresh Stop Markets. It also enables the communities most in need of access to fresh food to help themselves.

*“Our leaders have become mavens in their particular area of leadership, from pricing to sourcing and distribution of produce to media relations to finance. But seeing community members take a bite of a season’s first ripe tomato, cucumber, or peach, and watch the smiles emerge on their face--well, that’s what it’s really all about.” – Karyn*

## **‘Ms. Mary’ Montgomery, Uber Farmer Liaison**

Mary Montgomery is a native of Louisville, Kentucky. She received a flyer in her mailbox five years ago, announcing a meeting for "Food Justice Leaders" at her former church a block away from her home. She showed up and has kept showing up ever since, first as a founder of one of the Louisville Fresh Stop Markets and

now as the New Roots staff member who helps other Fresh Stop Markets understand how to recruit and build relationships with farmers, negotiate prices and create the logistics necessary to get farm-fresh food to everyone. Mary knows more about local food logistics than anyone in the region and is a recognized food justice leader.

*“Knowing that somebody cared about getting individuals in my neighborhood access to fresh foods was what brought me to New Roots. I’ve made it a personal ministry for myself to be able to help in any way that I can.” – Ms. Mary*



THAT'S WHO WE ARE.

**NOW, HERE'S WHAT**

**WE DO AND HOW WE**

**DO IT.**

# WHAT WE DO: IN A NUTSHELL

New Roots works with *fresh food insecure* communities to create sustainable systems for access to fresh food by:

- Recruiting, developing and supporting leaders/volunteers to drive and sustain the Fresh Stop Markets
- Sharing education with families on how to cook, store and get the most out of their fresh foods
- Connecting neighborhood leaders with local farmers and distributors so that participating communities are able to develop successful long-term relationships
- Obtaining funding for initial Fresh Stop set-up and programs such as the Makeba Lee Fund
- Advocating for policy change
- Bringing FS leaders together across neighborhoods for knowledge-sharing, mentoring and making it all happen
- Uniting families of different race, religion, income and zip codes to create greater understanding and community
- Advising aspiring young farmers in growing their wholesale markets
- Recruiting chefs and 'cooking enthusiasts' to share their knowledge and inspire the community with creative and delicious ways of preparing their fresh food
- Consulting physicians on food justice and *fresh food insecurity* issues and providing them new solutions to offer their patients
- Creating awareness and spreading the idea that communities have inner potential to drive change

Our 501c3 non-profit status enables us to provide Fresh Stop Markets with many essential resources.

***We do all of this so that families in these communities can lead healthier, happier lifestyles.***

# WHAT WE DO: NEW ROOTS GLOSSARY

*Before we get into more specifics on the work, let's establish some **common language**. The terms below are important to know and understand in order to deliver on New Roots' purpose and achieve our ambition. This is a 'living' glossary that we will update as new terms and language are introduced as part of the food justice conversation.*

## FOOD JUSTICE

Communities exercising their right to grow, sell and eat healthy food. Healthy food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate and grown locally with care for the well being of the land, workers and animals. People practicing food justice leads to a strong local food system, self-reliant communities and a healthy environment. (Just Food, NYC 2012)

## FOOD SYSTEM

All activities involved in the production, processing, distribution, selling and eating of food, as well as waste management practices.

## FOOD DESERTS AND FOOD SWAMPS

Defined (by the USDA) as urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to **fresh**, healthy, and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and

grocery stores, these communities experience "**food swamps**," where unhealthy foods (dense in calories, high in sodium, and high in sugar) **are more readily available** than healthy foods.

Census tracts qualify as food deserts if they meet low-income and low-access thresholds based on having: a) a poverty rate of 20 percent or greater, OR b) a median family income at or below 80 percent of the area median family income; AND are based on the determination that at least 500 persons and/or at least 33% of the census tract's population live more than one mile from a supermarket or large grocery store (10 miles, in the case of non-metropolitan census tracts).

New Roots recognizes that there may be communities with grocery stores that might not meet the USDA definition but residents are nonetheless experiencing what we call ***fresh food insecurity***. This is because more often than not, markets in food deserts offer subpar quality produce at prices families with limited resources cannot afford. Research shows that food deserts are more abundant in minority neighborhoods. A majority of New Roots leadership and shareholders are African American.

*One final thing to note - the same neighborhood can be both a food desert AND a food swamp.*

## **FOOD INSECURE**

Food insecurity exists when people lack sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food for a healthy and productive life.

## **FARM-FRESH FOOD**

At New Roots this refers to food grown on farms located as close to shareholders as possible. This includes mostly fruit and veggies and sometimes eggs and meat depending on the season and the location. We strive to provide organically grown foods when and where we can.

## **FRESH FOOD INSECURE**

We focus specifically on those living in *food deserts/swamps* with limited resources and without adequate *access to farm-fresh food*. There may be gas stations, mini-marts, fast food restaurants and even grocery stores but there is still limited access to affordable, nutritious foods in these communities. This is why we prefer to say '*fresh food insecure*' instead of just 'food insecure'.

## **'THE VORTEX'**

We've been told many times that once you've been around "the people from New Roots" enough times – you can't help but get sucked in. Some might call that infectious enthusiasm!

# **WHAT WE DO:** FRESH STOP MARKETS

A new approach for fighting food injustice in America

**FRESH STOP MARKETS** are “pop up” farm-fresh food markets set up at local churches and community centers in *fresh food insecure* neighborhoods. The food has been paid for in advance so that farmers don’t face the same degree of risk as they do with a standard farmers’ market.

People in the community describe Fresh Stop Markets as welcoming and happy – like a family reunion where all five senses are engaged and there is lots of laughter, food and fun!

**When it comes to creating the perfect Fresh Stop Market experience there are three key ingredients – people, produce and place. *Let’s start with what matters most...***

## ***THE PEOPLE!***

Many different people come together to make a Fresh Stop Market happen:

### **SHAREHOLDERS**

People from a *fresh food insecure* community that pay based on a sliding scale with higher income residents (from in or out of the community) helping to subsidize families with limited resources. We've found that the 'sweet spot' for a Fresh Stop Market is 75% of shareholders paying \$12/share and 25% shareholders paying \$25/share. We are also able to offer families on WIC \$6 shares (through the Makeba Lee Fund). New Roots accepts cash, debit/credit and SNAP Benefits.

Based on our experience so far, 40 is the lowest amount of shareholders a Fresh Stop Market should sustain and beyond 90 becomes too much. Somewhere between 65-75 is optimal. Each "share" feeds two to four people depending on the Fresh Stop Market location.

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

Volunteers from the community that mostly give their time the day of a Fresh Stop Market (setting up, tearing down, welcoming, etc.) but can also serve on Fresh Stop Market teams.



## **LEADERS**

Team Members/volunteers from *fresh food insecure* communities that go through New Roots leadership development programs (FSTI) so that they can help create and sustain Fresh Stop Markets. *We look to our leaders to embody and role model New Roots' six values.*

## **FRESH STOP MARKET TEAMS**

*New Roots consults and serves as a resource for teams from all of the Fresh Stop Markets. The teams are made of up mostly LEADERS with TEAM MEMBERS also helping in some cases.*

- 1. Farmer Liaison Team**
- 2. Outreach Team**
- 3. Finance Team**
- 4. Newsletter Team**
- 5. Chef and Partner Liaison Team**
- 6. Fresh Stop Market Organizing (DAY OF)**

## **ALLIES & PARTNERS**

Farmers, chefs, Pastors/churches, community centers, neighborhood institutions, other non-profits and individuals from both inside and outside of the community can all contribute to making a Fresh Stop Market the best possible experience.

## **WHAT WE DO: FRESH STOP MARKETS**

A new approach for fighting food injustice in America

**The next special ingredient for making a Fresh Stop Market a**

**success is THE PRODUCE.**

Although we know ahead of time what food and how much each shareholder will get, we never bag the food ahead of time.

Instead, we beautifully display all of the food in the most inviting and informative way with signs sharing where the food came from and how much to take. This way shareholders can come and “shop” for their food. It’s a lot more fun and engaging this way for everyone!

The photos here show how we display our beautiful, abundant, farm-fresh food...

# **WHAT WE DO:** FRESH STOP MARKETS

A new approach for fighting food injustice in America

**The final ingredient for making a Fresh Stop Market a success**

is **THE PLACE.**

In our experience, churches are ideal for setting up a Fresh Stop Market given the community outreach work that they do and their role as a ‘food community’ where people gather together and break bread. Community Centers are also another good option.

For the Summer/Fall season, Fresh Stop Markets are **outside in green space** with plenty of room for displaying the vegetables, hosting cooking demonstrations, eating and socializing. In the winter months most locations will need to move indoors.

Here are some photos to bring to life the attributes of just the right place...

***So there you have it – when it comes to creating the best possible Fresh Stop Market the three special ingredients are PEOPLE, PRODUCE & PLACE.***

**WHAT WE DO:** *NEW ROOTS U (placeholder)*  
Unlocking the potential in all of us

Leadership development, skills-building and food education are all a big part of creating food systems that not only work – but are also durable. This is why New Roots provides *Food Justice* classes and leads the *Fresh Stop Training Institute (FSTI)* where our leaders learn all

they need to create and sustain their own Fresh Stop Markets. We hope to add even more to the New Roots U curriculum soon!

### **Food Justice Classes**

Learn the importance and benefits of eating locally grown, farm-fresh food; understand how the local food system works and how to drive transformational change.

### **FSTI – Fresh Stop Training Institute**

A pay-it-forward coaching program focused on developing neighborhood leaders who create, implement, and sustain their own solutions for increasing *fresh food security* in their communities. Sessions cover topics such as price negotiation, ordering, forecasting, community organizing, Microsoft Office/Google Drive, and food stamp certification.

## **WHAT WE DO:** MAKEBA LEE FUND

The creation of the Makeba Lee Fund is a story of our values in action!

Legal restrictions prevent mothers from using their WIC funds to purchase New Roots produce; however, thanks to the Makeba Lee Fund, anyone dependent on WIC is eligible to purchase their shares for only six dollars apiece.

This fund was inspired by tragedy and is fueled by generosity.

Makeba Lee was a 24-year-old mother of one who lost her life in a West Louisville shooting on May 17, 2012. Her grandfather, Ed White, *is also one of our shareholders* and with help from him and Lee's mother, Ms. Aja Nkrumah, New Roots created a fund in her honor to support mothers served by the [Special](#)

[Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#). With a generous grant from [Women 4 Women](#), the Makeba Lee Fund was born. Thanks to the fund, for just six dollars, a mother on WIC can purchase farm-fresh, healthy food from New Roots for an *entire growing season*.

***Fresh food IS a human right and food IS love.***



THANK YOU FOR  
JOINING US IN

**UNITING**

**COMMUNITIES**

**AGAINST FOOD**

**INJUSTICE!**

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