

**THE SOCIAL ARCHITECTURE OF LOCAL FOOD TOURISM:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT***

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ABSTRACT

Local food tourism—culinary tourism with an explicit emphasis on local food systems—is emerging as a “green” model for community economic development. However, do local food tourism networks constitute a net gain to community economies in all contexts? This article explores that question through surveys and interviews with farmers, restaurateurs, and food tourists in three Wisconsin counties. Framing our discussion using the community capitals framework, we argue that economic benefits do accrue to communities from participation in these networks, but the net gains are ambiguous. Specifically, involvement in local food tourism networks increases stocks of social and human capital, deepens marketing opportunities for participating enterprises, and confers a price premium for food marketed as local. However, there can be significant transaction costs associated with participation, certain types of natural and cultural capital must prefigure successful execution, and restaurateurs levy significant power over farmers within the local food network. These tradeoffs demonstrate that growth in particular community capitals may not always be unequivocally good for communities.

Since the 1990s, concern over the industrialization and internationalization of food production and distribution systems has facilitated significant agriculture and local food movements. Generally, writers and activists have advocated local food and alternative agriculture for their positive effects on human health and the natural environment. Increasingly, but less often, local food advocates have explored the link between local food systems and community economic development. Yet the economic vitality of many rural areas in the United States has waned since the 1970s (Longworth 2008), and evidence suggests that localizing food systems can serve rural community economic development (Feenstra 1997; Wells, Gradwell, and Yoder 1999). This article builds upon previous research and deepens the connections between local food systems and community development by exploring

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culinary tourism and the concept of local food tourism networks. We frame our analysis with the community capitals framework and argue that local food tourism can enhance stocks of human and social capital, but we caution that there are tradeoffs, which make gains from local food tourism ambiguous. In particular, higher transaction costs for restaurateurs may temper economic gains. Further, we describe barriers to establishing local food tourism networks. In particular, the cultural and natural capital necessary to establish geographical indications must prefigure local food tourism. Finally, inequitable distribution of political capital within the local food network can be a barrier to establishing local food tourism networks and/or distributing the gains equitably once established. These tradeoffs demonstrate that growth in stocks of certain community capitals in certain circumstances may not be an unambiguous boon for communities, but can, in fact, privilege certain groups over others.

RURAL TOURISM AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Tourism is the world's largest industry and has flourished in recent decades with increasing concentrations of affluence within the leisure class and increasing ease of travel for many (Honey 2008). Experiential types of tourism such as ecotourism, adventure tourism, and agricultural tourism—that typically take place in amenity-rich rural settings—offer urban visitors an opportunity to experience reassuring representations of pastoral rurality, both as culture and landscape (Bessiere 1998). Demand for experiential types of tourism has increased in recent years, presenting rural communities with a novel and promising source of additional income and job creation (Honey 2008). These economic gains, however, may represent cultural costs to host communities (Dana 1999; King and Stewart 1996). Furthermore, the institutional structures that facilitate these economic gains do not exist in the same proportions in all places, which may complicate replicability and make gains uneven across communities (Dougherty and Green 2011; Pollock et al. 2011).

Agritourism, perhaps the most common form of rural tourism in Western Europe and the United States, can represent a meaningful source of income by allowing farmers to add value without adding acreage, thereby incentivizing the preservation of traditional farmscapes (Che, Veeck, and Veeck 2005; McGehee and Kim 2004). Besides agritourism, culinary tourism with an explicit emphasis on local food systems—what we call local food tourism—is gaining popularity (Long 2007; *cf.* Smith and Xiao 2008). This is largely due to interest over the past decade in tying foods to their rural places of origin, an activity embodied in the emergence of

geographical indications or labels of origin (Barham 2003; Bowen 2010). Local food tourism potentially represents a greater contribution to rural community economic development than agritourism because it emphasizes linkages among multiple sectors of the local economy, whereas agritourism enterprises are often self-contained, private endeavors (Green and Dougherty 2008; Renting, Marsden, and Banks 2003). With these trends regarding experiential types of tourism and their community development implications in mind, this research underscores the link between local food systems and community economic development by evaluating the potential of local food tourism networks.

Defining Local Food Tourism Networks

Increasingly, culinary tourism emphasizes local food systems (Smith and Xiao 2008). However, the traditional definition—"the pursuit of unique and memorable eating and drinking experiences"—does not make this link explicit (Chase, Manning and Valliere 2012:2). Here we have developed the phrase "local food tourism network" to recollect the popular phrase "local food system," while emphasizing cooperation across economic sectors and the spatial and social dimensions of local food tourism. We define *local food tourism network* as the spatially arranged web of relationships and resources necessary to integrate food products and farm culture as a single commodity and bring this commodity to market locally for consumption by visitors. Some key actors in these networks include small farms, food processors, agricultural cooperatives, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, cooperative grocery stores, local restaurants, and specialty food shops.

We find that local food tourism networks confer multiple community development benefits—principally by increasing stocks of social and human capital and expanding markets. However, this promise is tempered by the caveats that structural and cultural barriers often prevent the establishment of local food tourism networks, and in many rural places the natural and cultural preconditions for local food tourism are insufficient. Higher transaction costs for restaurateurs—from dealing with many producers with limited distribution capacity—may offset gains from the price premium and enhanced sales that result from participation in local food tourism networks. Additionally, the uneven relations of power—the inequitable distribution of political capital—between agricultural producers and local buyers constitute a significant barrier to successful local food tourism initiatives.

THE COMMUNITY CAPITALS FRAMEWORK

The community capitals framework (CCF) provides a useful heuristic model for understanding social change at the community level (Emery and Flora 2006; Flora and Flora 2012). The CCF suggests that there are seven discrete types of community capital—social, financial, cultural, human, natural, political, and built capitals—which form the basis for community vitality. As the “stock” of one asset pool increases, it flows among stocks of the other community capitals, increasing stocks of those other capitals as well. This process can create a beneficent upward spiral enhancing community vitality in three areas—economic development, environmental quality, and public health (Emery and Flora 2006). The flipside of the upward spiral is that, as stocks in one or more of these community capitals begin to decline, negative interaction effects among the different capitals may diminish community vitality.

This framework builds on a wide range of earlier work, including Pierre Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital—our cultural values and the artifacts of culture that inform our values—which, he argued, is convertible to economic capital under the right conditions. Human capital refers to the value of the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of individuals (Becker 1964). It also encompasses traditional knowledge, untapped potential, acquired skills, and physical capabilities such as strength (Flora and Flora 2012). Human capital is a crucial dimension of community economic development because it is a low-cost, high-impact resource, which is easily transferable among individuals and enhances reserves of other capitals (Flora and Flora 2012). Political capital is the ability to both determine the availability of resources and influence the distribution of these resources within a locality (Flora and Flora 2012).

Many scholars have developed and debated the concept of social capital—the value of interpersonal relationships and social networks—over the past twenty-five years (e.g., Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1990; Portes 1998; Putnam 2000). The community capitals framework also draws from the asset-based approach to community development (Green and Haines 2012; Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). Finally, Anthony Bebbington’s (1999) capitals and capabilities framework for understanding rural livelihoods deployed five types of capital—natural, human, social, cultural, and produced capitals.

Most often, social capital is the point of departure, the “critical community characteristic” that initiates the upward spiral (Emery and Flora 2006). Social capital is a metaphor that describes the value, economic or otherwise, embedded in social relationships. Social capital is channeled through social networks, contacts,

trust, and reciprocity. Some theorists emphasize the economic gains that social networks can provide (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1990). Others emphasize connections between social capital and local democracy (Putnam 1993, 2000). Here, we are interested in the economic gains to groups and individuals that accrue through place-based social ties.

The community capitals framework has been used widely to evaluate social phenomena from childhood obesity, to local food systems, to natural resource management, to rural wealth creation (see Flora and Gillespie 2009; Gasteyer et al. 2008; Gutierrez-Montes et al. 2009; and Pender, Marré, and Reeder 2012, respectively). Here, we employ the community capitals framework to examine rural tourism. We find that local food tourism networks enhance stocks of social and human capital and have an ambiguous impact on financial capital. We also argue that natural and cultural capital are important concepts for understanding the preconditions for successful local food tourism, and we argue that political capital is important for understanding market relations of power. Following what emerged as salient from our data analysis, we do not incorporate an explicit discussion of built capital into this analysis, thus our analysis focuses on six of the seven community capitals.

However, we employ the community capitals framework cautiously. This article complicates the conventional understanding of the community capitals framework by demonstrating that there are circumstances where “dividends” on the growth of particular capital stocks accrue disproportionately to particular social groups, effectively privileging certain groups over others in a contest for access to community capital resources. Specifically, our data demonstrate how the uneven relations of power between farmers and restaurateurs that characterize local food markets may portend a “spiraling-in-place” effect, where increases in political capital can stymie growth in social, human, and financial capital.

Finally, we suggest that reifying these capitals and making strong, functionalistic distinctions among them can be problematic. Specifically, we discuss how successful local food tourism depends on geographic indications—the act of tying an agricultural product to its unique place of origin—a process that is simultaneously cultural and biophysical. In such a case, we argue, distinguishing natural capital from cultural capital is neither possible nor worthwhile. Does the community capitals framework’s tendency to conceptualize these phenomena as discrete cause it to miss complex moments of overlap?

The first section of this article outlines the design, methods, and justification for this research. The following five sections represent the empirical substance of the

article. Section Two discusses economic opportunities for local food tourism network participants, such as the price premium for local foods and market expansion. Section Three discusses ways in which local food tourism enhances social capital by connecting farmers and restaurateurs. Section Four discusses the growth in human capital that results from these new relationships. Section Five details certain natural and cultural preconditions of a region that favor the successful development of local food tourism networks, and Section Six discusses the economic and social barriers and tradeoffs of this development approach. Section Seven synthesizes central findings from previous sections and draws out key policy and logistical considerations for regions seeking to cultivate local food tourism networks.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This article is based on survey research conducted in 2008 and 2009 with farmers, restaurateurs, and tourists in Door, Crawford, and Vernon Counties in Wisconsin, and key informant interviews conducted with restaurateurs in Door County. Door County is the narrow peninsula protruding into Lake Michigan in the northeast corner of Wisconsin. It has been a tourist destination for decades, especially for residents from the Chicago area, who are attracted to the region for its classic farmscapes, abundant water and outdoor activities, and rich culinary traditions. Door County is known for food products such as cherries, apples, whitefish, and maple syrup. These foods are tied to cultural traditions like the fish boil (a culinary tradition in the Great Lakes states, which consists of large chunks of fish boiled with potatoes in a cast iron kettle). Crawford and Vernon Counties are located in Wisconsin's "driftless" region, characterized by rolling hills, bluffs, small farms, and the scenic upper Mississippi River basin. Manufacturing and agriculture are the principal economic engines of the area; however, the region is emerging as a tourist destination due to its endowment of natural amenities and outdoor recreational opportunities. Door County has higher per capita incomes and a more developed tourism industry than Crawford and Vernon Counties. Although these sites differ in their demographic and economic compositions, each county possesses nascent local food tourism sectors in which farmers, restaurateurs, specialty food shops, value-added food producers, breweries, wineries, and lodging and tour operators are developing collaborative food tourism initiatives. We selected these three counties because, in each case, tourism had originally developed around unique culinary attributes and later spilled over into outdoor recreation and other types of leisure opportunities. In Door County, cherry orchards, Lake Superior fish,

and various local delicacies spurred early tourism development. In Vernon and Crawford Counties, apple orchards, cheese making operations, and local breweries drove visitors in. Drawing from these particular counties helps protect our analysis from confounding by effects from other types of parallel tourism.

We identified farmers, restaurateurs, and food tourists as the three key hubs in local food tourism networks. The literature on local food systems and community development tends either to focus on direct marketing (e.g., farmers' markets and community supported agriculture) and thus omit restaurateurs or to focus on linking farmers and restaurants, thus ignoring end consumers (Dougherty and Green 2011). For example, the two most influential articles linking local food systems and community development both focus exclusively on direct marketing (see Feenstra 1997 and Hinrichs 2000). Therefore, much of the literature does not conceptualize local food systems holistically and does not capture the complexity of social relationships and community economic benefits involved. Producers, for example, use both direct and retail sales while visitors participate in on-farm tourism and food festivals and dine at area restaurants. We recognized the need to incorporate all three populations to effectively capture systemwide dynamics. To that end we conducted parallel surveys among farmers, restaurateurs, and tourists.

In this article, we address three research questions: 1) What are the community economic benefits of local food tourism?; 2) What barriers exist to developing local food tourism networks?; and 3) How do participants in local food tourism networks understand their participation? These questions emerged from the recognition that the literature rarely integrates all steps in the local food value chain into holistic analyses that little previous research has looked explicitly at the community development implications of local food tourism, and that the research has not paid enough attention to power differentials in local food systems.

Colleagues at the Crawford and Door County Cooperative Extension offices and area nonprofit organization Valley Stewardship Network assembled a database of farmers and restaurateurs involved in local food markets. We sent surveys to the entire target population, rather than a random sample, because the population was small. We mailed 180 surveys to restaurateurs, receiving 71 responses (39% response rate) and 136 to farmers, receiving 74 completed responses (54% response rate). Of the 71 completed restaurateur surveys, 30 came from Door County (36% response rate) and 41 from Vernon and Crawford Counties (43.6% response rate). Of the completed 74 farmer surveys, 40 came from Door County and 34 from Vernon and Crawford Counties (64 and 51% response rates, respectively).

The farmer and restaurateur surveys sought information in six general categories, which we considered important to develop a holistic understanding of the social architecture of local food tourism: 1) the structure of sales and purchasing; 2) the social dimensions of doing business locally; 3) the social and economic barriers to developing local food systems; 4) the general and economic profile of the enterprise; 5) impressions of local markets and motivations for participation; and 6) a brief demographic profile of the respondent.

Volunteers administered the tourist survey in person to visitors at food events such as county fairs, the Driftless Area Art Festival, Applefest, and the Kickapoo Brave Ride (a bicycle ride that incorporated a local food dinner). The survey asked 20 questions regarding demographic characteristics of the respondents, motivations for travel, the importance of different aspects of travel, money spent per economic sector, and their evaluation of festivals, which we shared with event sponsors. Our target population was food tourists to these counties, generally construed, but we did not have a reliable way to sample this population randomly, as many destinations did not keep logs of visitors. Instead, we drew from a broad convenience sample of visitors whom we could survey in person at these events. While the sample was not random, it was large and diverse enough to suggest some generalizability. We administered the surveys to all patrons willing to be surveyed. The first question asked respondents where they were from. If the respondents were from the area, we skipped to the demographic information, and those responses are not included here ($n=330$).

We defined “local food” in this study as food produced or processed within a three-hour drive of its final point of sale. We aggregated findings from the three surveys to develop a sense of the architecture of local food tourism networks in broad strokes, which we detail in the following sections.

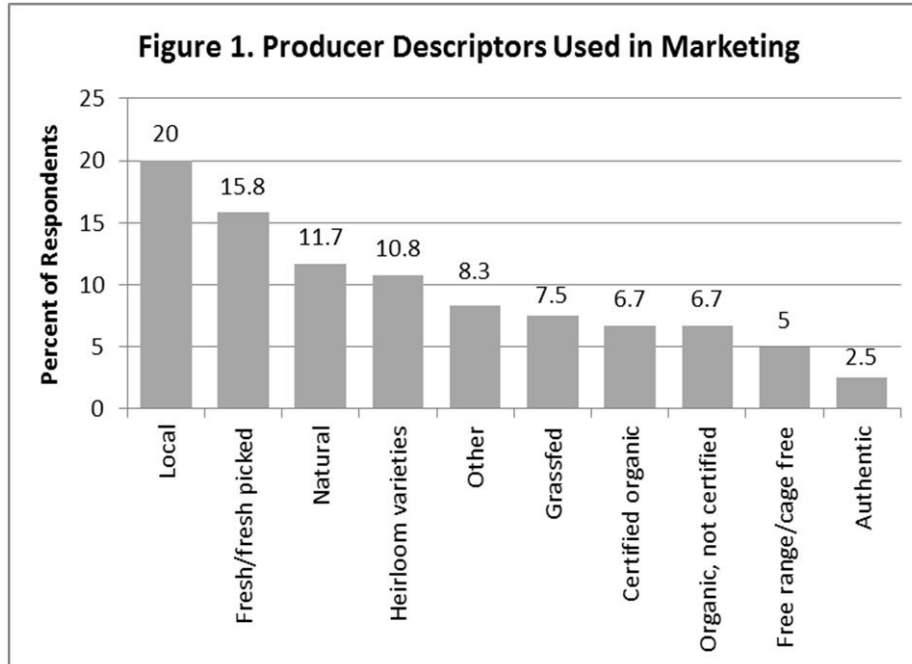
EXPANSION OF FINANCIAL CAPITAL: NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES IN LOCAL FOOD TOURISM NETWORKS

Demand for local food is growing (Martinez et al. 2010). This growth creates new economic opportunities for farmers and restaurateurs who participate in local food tourism networks. These opportunities take two forms—a price premium for local foods and market expansion through additional marketing opportunities. As one Door County restaurateur stated, “The amount of local food we buy has increased...probably pretty dramatically over the last five years.” Seventy-three percent of our sample of visitors to Crawford and Vernon Counties indicated that buying explicitly local food was either very or somewhat important as a motivation

for their visits. Not only do visitors increasingly seek local foods, but food expenditures constitute a significant percentage of tourist expenditures. In our survey, food expenditures were the most significant expenditure category by a wide margin (in part because our sample favored day-trippers over longer stayers). Tourists spent an average of \$56 per visit on food. Restaurateurs perceive this trend and seek to capitalize on this new market opportunity. In Vernon and Crawford Counties, 53 percent of restaurateurs surveyed indicated that tourist demand for local products had increased over the previous five years.

The growth in demand for local foods assigns a price premium to foods produced or processed near their point of consumption (Adams and Adams 2011). Farmers and restaurateurs involved in local food tourism networks can access this price premium, which has expanded the market for farmers and restaurateurs, improving their economic outlook as they increase participation in these networks. Sixty percent of farmers surveyed indicated that expanding production for local markets implied an increase in total sales figures. Forty-six percent of farmers indicated that their sales increased marginally, while 14 percent indicated that their sales increased significantly. Thirty-six percent of farmers, however, perceived no change and 3 percent indicated that sales worsened. Among restaurateurs, the impacts of increasing local purchases were perceptible but less significant. Thirty-one percent indicated an increase in sales, and 65 percent indicated no change. Four percent indicated that local purchasing hurt sales.

Besides the price premium, local food tourism expands marketing opportunities for participant enterprises. As demand for local food increased, so did the use of local sourcing as a marketing strategy for both farmers and restaurateurs. Farmers and restaurateurs employed many descriptors to market their products. “Local” was the most significant descriptor farmers used to market their products to area buyers; however, farmers used related descriptors, such as “fresh,” “natural,” “heirloom,” and others as well (Figure 1). Similarly, restaurateurs would indicate the use of local food items on their menus. One restaurateur commented that he was “able to use the connection [between his restaurant and local farms] to drive in more customers.” Another similarly commented, “Competition is pretty great up here—especially the type of business we are in. So being more fresh, local, organic...those things are all real like...the up-and-coming thing that you know—those buzzwords on the menu—people love to see that kind of thing.” Some restaurateurs deployed descriptors on their menus like “fresh” and “local” and used the names of their local suppliers in their advertising.

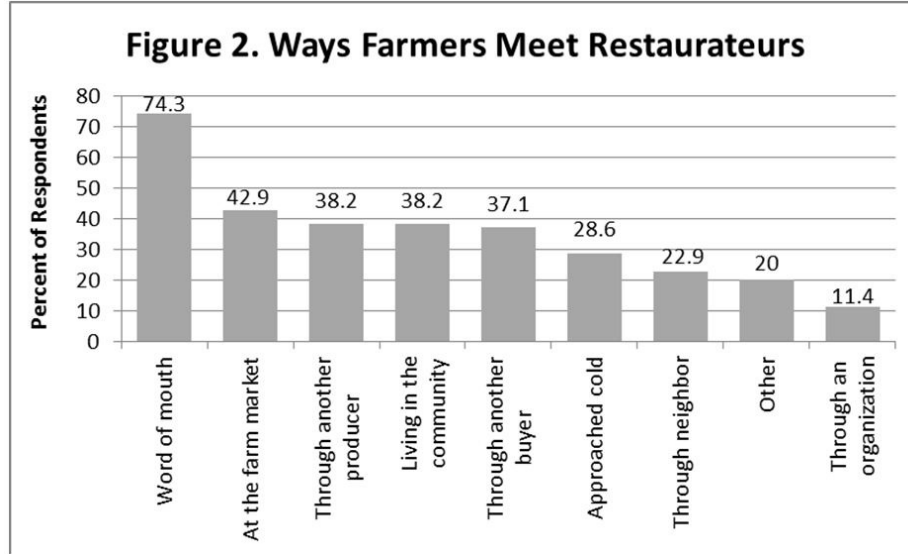


Farmers capitalize on the benefits of using "local" as a descriptor in marketing to a greater extent than restaurateurs. Some restaurateurs are therefore missing an opportunity to add value and profitability. While 53 percent of producers indicated an increase in advertising and promotional opportunities, only 30 percent of retailers reported such an increase. Further, only 23 percent of restaurateurs employed signs or labels to designate local food in their establishments.

EXPANSION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL: LINKING FARMERS AND RESTAURATEURS

Social capital is both a cause and an effect of local food tourism networks. Local food tourism enhances stocks of social capital because it requires the development of social and socioeconomic linkages between producers and buyers. These relationships are established through word of mouth, interaction at public venues such as farmers' markets, and other social ties (Figure 2). Often, indirect social ties link producers and buyers through word of mouth. For example, one farmer will introduce a fellow farmer to a known local buyer. Frequently, business relationships for local food tourism are established through pre-existing social ties, which, in turn, enhance social capital.

Local food tourists also structure their visits and make purchasing decisions based on social ties. The presence of social and familial ties in the area is a strong



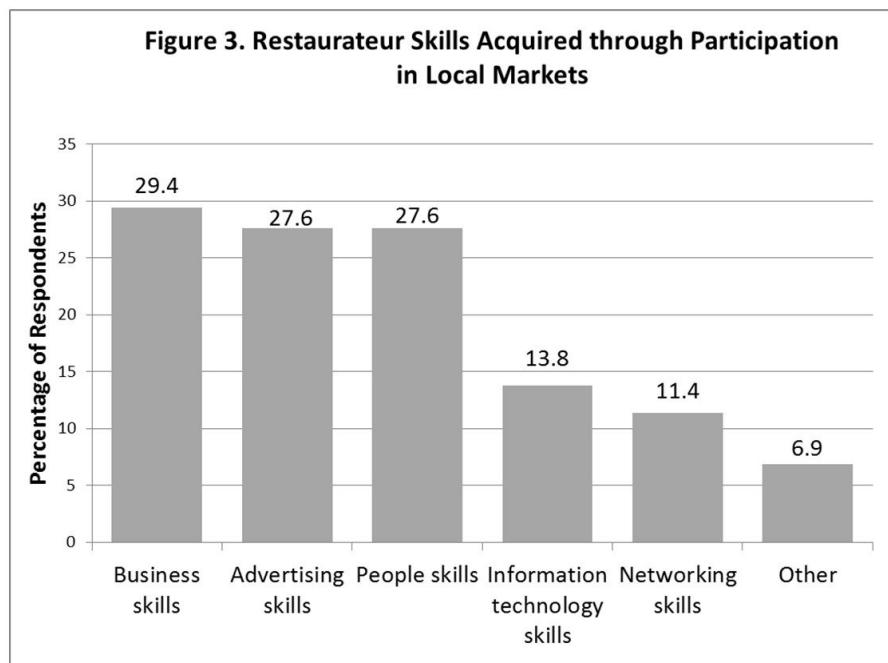
motivator for local food tourism. Of those tourists in our sample who intended to stay overnight, 40 percent intended to stay with friends or relatives. This suggests that the lodging sector within a local food tourism network may not reap the same benefits as restaurants and farmers because nascent food tourism industries are often regional phenomena and attract the bulk of their patrons from within the region. Eighty-one percent of tourists surveyed indicated that food festivals were their primary reasons for visiting, and 63 percent were day-trippers with no plans to stay overnight. Fifty-nine percent of tourists surveyed learned about tourism opportunities through word of mouth or previous attendance, both sources of information that hinge on social capital and informal experiential networks. More formal sources of information, such as print advertisements and radio, were less influential among tourists, serving as important sources of information for 26 and 11 percent of respondents, respectively. In sum, local food tourism is regional in character and largely driven by social ties.

Participation in local food tourism networks also facilitates more numerous business relationships between farmers and restaurateurs, which further increases stocks of social capital. Across the three-county sample, 58 percent of farmers experienced an increase in the number of local buyers with whom they did business as they increased their participation in local food tourism networks. Farmers participating in local food tourism networks reported doing business with an average of seven local buyers and 1.2 non-local buyers. Similarly, 40 percent of restaurateurs indicated an increase in networking opportunities, 50 percent described having more business relationships, and 36 percent reported an increase

in the number of local farmers with whom they did business. The expansion of the number of business relationships not only builds social capital, but it requires the development of additional skills, which in turn expands stocks of human capital.

EXPANSION OF HUMAN CAPITAL: NEW AND ENHANCED SKILL SETS

Participation in local food tourism networks in Door, Crawford, and Vernon Counties increased stocks of human capital for farmers and restaurateurs, although this effect was greater for restaurants. Nearly 30 percent of restaurateurs acquired new business skills, advertising and promotional knowledge, and new or enhanced communication abilities accompanying their participation in local food tourism networks. Fewer enterprises indicated increased skill levels related to information technology and networking (Figure 3).



These additional and enhanced skill sets largely result from growth in business relationships that restaurateurs and farmers acquire in the transition to local food markets—a prime example of the way in growth in social capital leads to growth in human capital. Eighty-three percent of restaurateurs reported that their involvement in local food tourism increased the number of suppliers with which they do business. Enterprises must acquire new skills to successfully manage these additional relationships with buyers, suppliers, and other enterprises along the

value chain (such as marketing firms, sanitation inspectors, and end consumers). Restaurateurs must learn to market to and communicate effectively with new end consumers, and they must also learn to communicate effectively with small farmers. Further, they must become capable of efficiently coordinating the additional business relationships that come with increased local sourcing. For these reasons, restaurateurs acquire new communications, business, and promotional skills with the advent of local food tourism.

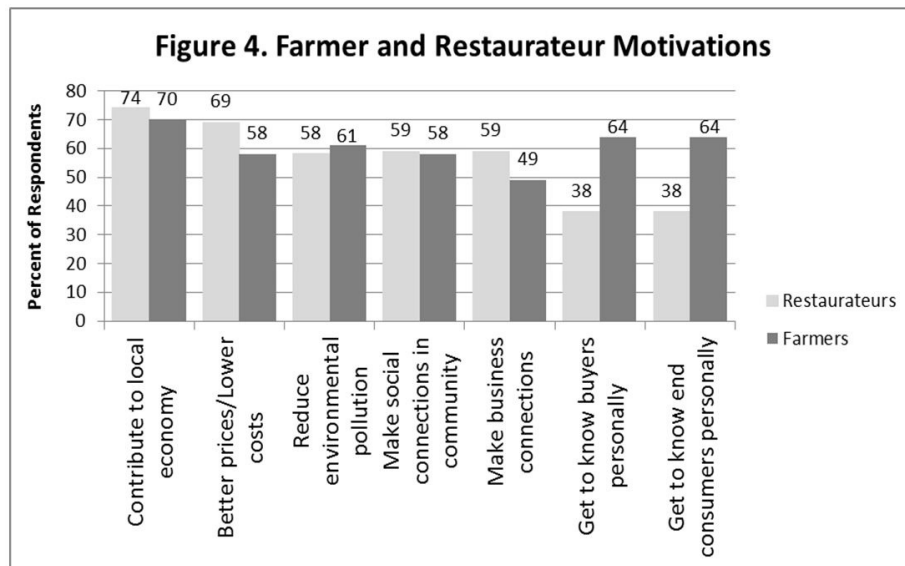
Like restaurateurs, farmers in this study interacted with more buyers because of their participation in local food tourism networks. This led to new skills, which enhanced their human capital. Across the three counties, when farmers began to produce predominantly for local markets, the number of buyers with whom they worked increased on average from 1.8 to four, deepening the logistical processes of communication and delivery. Local food tourism encourages producers to establish business connections in the community rather than marketing to large distributors, deepening the flow-across effect between social and human capital. Forty percent of producers listed “making business connections in the community” as a principle outcome of participating in local food networks.

In sum, many non-economic benefits to restaurateurs and farmers from participation in local food tourism networks emerge from positive interaction effects between social and human capital. Network ties allow for the diffusion of new skill sets as well as the expansion of communication skills, administrative skills, and others, in turn, facilitating the deepening of social network ties among farmers, restaurateurs, and local food tourists.

SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PRECONDITIONS OF LOCAL FOOD TOURISM NETWORKS: ENGINEERING CULTURAL AND NATURAL CAPITALS?

Although local food tourism can be a meaningful engine for community economic development, this strategy may not be equally effective in all rural places. Many preconditions occur “naturally” in a community that influence its capacity to successfully organize local food tourism networks. These include strong social ties and a sense of shared responsibility, pre-existing economic relationships between farmers and restaurateurs, the natural and cultural capital necessary to develop geographical indications, and certain landscape attributes such as the predominance of smaller farms and geographic proximity to urban areas. Sometimes these conditions solidify organically over time, while in other instances they can be effectively fabricated with outside assistance.

Word of mouth is, by a wide margin, the most significant way in which producers meet buyers. Because word of mouth referrals are typically transmitted between people linked by both strong and weak social ties, communities with stronger social networks are more likely to create the kinds of buyer/producer relationships necessary to develop sustained local food tourism networks (Dougherty and Green 2011). Further, most of the other mechanisms through which farmers and restaurateurs in our study connected were products of informal local social ties. Additionally, a shared sense of responsibility—what one might call a moral economy effect—serves to lubricate local food tourism networks. Farmers pursued involvement in local food tourism networks primarily for moral reasons and secondarily for economic reasons. In contrast, restaurateurs cited the contributions to the local economy as the primary reason for their involvement in local food tourism networks (Figure 4).



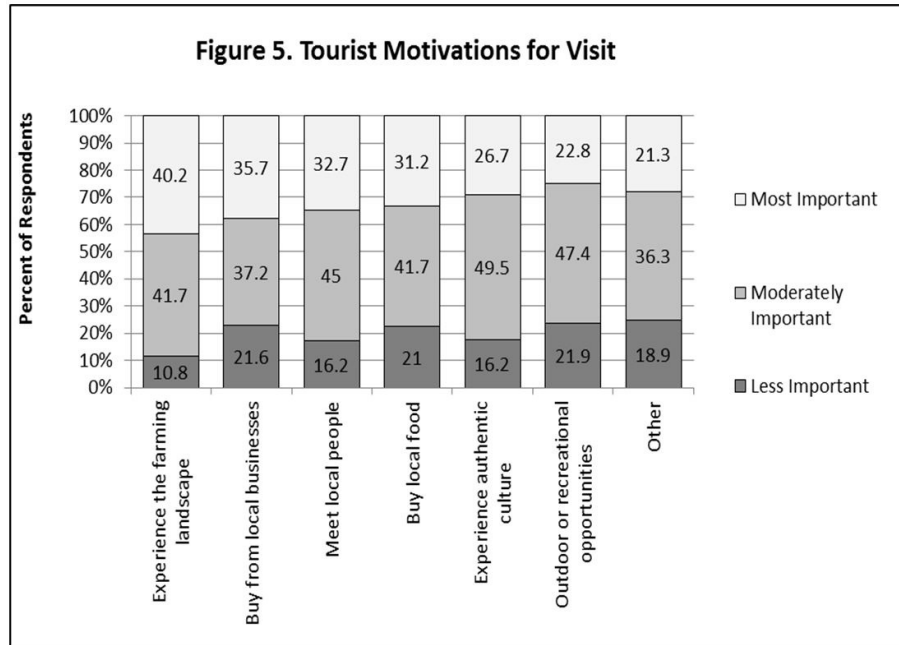
Beyond pre-existing social relationships, pre-existing economic relationships facilitated local food tourism. In our three counties, 80 percent of restaurateurs were already sourcing some food inputs locally. Thirty percent of fresh vegetables and 27 percent of cheese sold in area restaurants was being purchased locally before the explicit advent of local food tourism. On average, restaurateurs spent \$174,332 on fresh foods annually, 27 percent of which was sourced locally. Seventy-one percent of farmers in these areas reported producing for local markets. Average gross sales to intermediaries totaled \$108,731.54, while sales in local markets totaled

\$29,019.47. Most of the local farm sales were made through direct marketing and secondarily through sales to area restaurants. The fact that these economic relationships already existed meant that it was easier to convince restaurateurs of the advantages of involvement. Additionally, the pre-existing channels meant fewer transaction costs associated with establishing new purchasing relationships.

Besides pre-existing social and economic ties, regions with particular configurations of natural and cultural capital that allow for the development of geographical indications possess a competitive advantage in the development of local food tourism. This is because one key motivation for tourism is the opportunity to experience novel cultures and places, and both food and agriculture are dimensions of culture that are easily packaged and sold (Kim, Eves, and Scarles 2009; Long 2001). This link between cuisine and place often assumes the form of geographical indications (Bowen 2010). Door, Crawford, and Vernon Counties are known for their artisanal and specialty cheeses, their breweries and wineries, and their fruit production. This constitutes a primary draw for visitors to these areas. One restaurant manager characterized it this way: “When you go to Door County...they want to try what the area is known for obviously...because of the freshness. People love when they come to Door County...they want things from Door, you know? They want native Door County things.”

Because these regions already had some infrastructure in place for brewing and cheesemaking, the growing emphasis on local food tourism did not require a significant investment in the infrastructure of food processing or delivery. For regions that do not already possess unique culinary attributes and the accompanying infrastructure, it may prove difficult to develop local food tourism and take advantage of its economic benefits.

Regions with certain pre-existing natural and demographic assets are also at a competitive advantage in developing local food tourism networks. One such asset is the predominance of smaller farms. This demographic arrangement facilitates a more effective fit between supply and demand than regions predominantly populated by commodity farmers. Additionally, small and mid-level farms contribute to a rural landscape in keeping with tourists’ expectations of rurality (Lane 1994). Eighty-three percent of visitors surveyed indicated an interest in experiencing the farming landscape as a primary motivation for their visits (Figure 5). In our three counties, most farms are not industrial scale commodity producers. Of the farms represented in our survey, 44 percent were hobby farms, and 67 percent reported less than \$100,000 in annual sales. Sixty-nine percent of farm households depended upon some amount of off-farm income to remain solvent. In



fact, 77 percent of the average household income was derived from non-farm activities.

Proximity to urban areas is also important in developing local food tourism. As noted, most of our food tourists were day-trippers, and local food tourism is largely a regional phenomenon; therefore, areas with easy access to the urban areas that are the principal sources for many food tourists have a competitive advantage over other areas (Marcouiller, Deller, and Green 2005). In our sample, 14 percent of visitors were from out of state; of the in-state visitors, 40 percent came from communities with populations of 100,000 or more. Both the Door Peninsula and southwestern Wisconsin draw from the Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, and Minneapolis/St. Paul markets. Other, more remote regions may experience further challenges in developing a market for their networks even when the necessary unique culinary attributes are present.

Finally, communities will find that where there is some pre-existing tourism infrastructure, local food tourism is easier and more cost-effective to develop. In Door, Crawford, and Vernon Counties, there was already some tourism before formally integrating local food. Among restaurateurs, more than 40 percent of customers during the summer months were visitors. Thirty-six percent of farmers were already involved in either direct marketing or agricultural tourism.

In sum, the success of certain rural areas in leveraging local food tourism networks for community economic development does not translate universally. Our

study areas possessed several attributes that allowed the successful development of these programs. Successful local food tourism networks are, in part, a function of existing social and economic infrastructure as well as the right mix of cultural and natural capital in the forms of culinary traditions and bucolic farmscapes. While these preconditions are largely endemic and “natural,” they can also be manufactured through concerted efforts by broad civic coalitions with substantial investment from local government (Flora and Flora 2012; Rahn 2006). Although, because often the gains to local food tourism networks are marginal, as the following section depicts, in places where extensive investment is required, the costs may outweigh the gains.

BARRIERS TO LOCAL FOOD TOURISM NETWORKS: UNEVEN POLITICAL CAPITAL

There are many economic and social barriers to the successful development of local food tourism networks. Generally, these barriers arise within the restaurateur segment of the value chain. Restaurateurs face higher transaction costs from sourcing locally, which can serve as a deterrent. These transaction costs stem mostly from inconsistency in delivery, quality, and appearance of produce. Also, the price premium that accrues to farmers is passed on to buyers as extra costs. Finally, the social organization of the farmer/restaurateur relationship is such that restaurants are price makers and, as such, levy market power over farmers. This uneven distribution of political capital may stymie local food tourism networks or make the gains uneven.

Economic Barriers to Local Food Tourism Networks

Even in places with the appropriate preconditions to effectively exploit local food tourism networks, additional transaction costs for restaurateurs of sourcing locally may make the economic gains to this segment of the value chain uncertain. Restaurateurs interact with more and smaller businesses as they increasingly transition to local sourcing. Although this enhances their stocks of both social and human capital as discussed above, it also represents greater expenditures of time and effort to coordinate additional relationships. These added transaction costs may mitigate the economic gains to restaurateurs of involvement in local food tourism.

Conventionally, restaurants source most of their produce and inputs from large foodservice distribution companies. In such cases, restaurants receive all or most of their food inputs simultaneously and benefit from the relative discount that these firms can offer through their economies of scale. This arrangement simplifies and

streamlines purchasing. In contrast, local sourcing requires that restaurants absorb the additional costs that come from the unpredictable delivery schedules; the caprices of seasonality, pests, and other vagaries of small batch, artisanal production; and the logistical burden of interacting with multiple sellers rather than one consolidated representative. According to the restaurateurs that we surveyed, the delivery and logistics of local food constitute the most significant barrier to the successful establishment of local food tourism. As one restaurant manager commented:

The delivery thing—up here I think is more of a cultural thing. Everybody is pretty laid back up here. Not many of the local farms have a consistent drive-through-town-each-day-and-drop-this-off policy. It's like, you call on Wednesday and they might say, "I have reason to be in Egg Harbor on Friday, so that's when I'll come and drop it off." And I get it. You know, they are not going to drive 20 miles to drop off some greens and spend five dollars in gas.

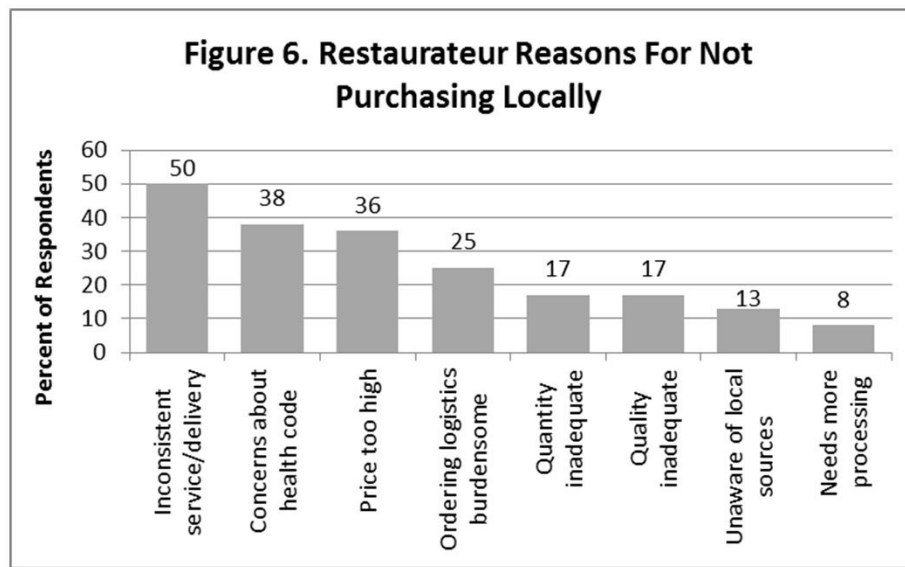
Eighty-four percent of restaurateurs in our sample indicated that local producers were less reliable than large foodservice distributors. Therefore, restaurants use local produce for daily specials, for which there is greater flexibility, rather than for permanent menu items. A head chef remarked,

In some cases, you are still buying your stuff from a purveyor and subsidizing what you are buying locally, because you need to make sure you have enough, and in some cases it just slips through the cracks, you know, some guy does have it locally, but your people in the kitchen were buying it every week and they just bought a bunch of it. And now a local farmer walks in the back door and you say, "I'm sorry I can't take any right now I just got a case of it."

A restaurant manager offered a similar critique.

It's quantity. It really is. They just do not produce enough. I mean, we go through a lot of food, you know? I mean, we do 300 people a night during the busy season. That is the hardest thing about buying locally so we use [local products] a lot in the specials where you have things that you can run out of.

Restaurants invoke the relative inconsistency of delivery and service (50%), concerns about health code restrictions (38%), and burdensome ordering logistics (25%) as major reasons for failing to increase their local sourcing of food inputs (Figure 6).



Besides delivery consistency problems, both restaurateurs and farmers identify the price signals of local food as a major barrier. For small farmers—many of whom are accustomed to receiving a price premium for their product at farmers’ markets and through direct, on-farm sales to visitors—restaurants pay too little for such relationships to be economical. Sixty-five percent of farmers in our survey indicated that buyers pay too little. Despite this, 36 percent of restaurateurs, accustomed to the low prices of industrial produce, complain that the price for local produce is too high.

Beyond delivery and price barriers, restaurateurs perceive local produce as less consistent than non-local produce in terms of appearance and quality. Forty percent of restaurateurs consider local produce to have a less consistent shape than non-local produce, and 31 percent consider the shelf life to be inferior.

Uneven Market Relations of Power

Unlike the other community capitals, growth of political capital disproportionately benefits local elites and can therefore interrupt the spiraling-up

effect unless political institutions and civic activity distribute influence evenly among residents. Often, uneven distribution of political capital can create community conflict (Dougherty and Peralta 2010; Harvey 2013; Walker and Hurley 2004).

Restaurateurs levy market power over farmers and often reflect a reluctance to invest meaningfully in local sourcing. This influences the distribution of rewards from local food tourism in their favor, and, therefore, stymies efforts to promote equitable community development. Fifty-nine percent of restaurateurs in our survey indicated that there were locally available items that they chose not to purchase. Therefore, the onus for overcoming the economic and social barriers to local food tourism rests largely with the restaurateurs. Restaurateurs possess greater market power than farmers for two reasons. First, local food markets are generally slightly oligopsonistic; that is, there are fewer restaurants buying than farmers selling. This empowers restaurateurs as price makers. Second, farmers perceive greater relative benefits to participation than do restaurateurs because restaurateurs must absorb the additional transaction costs. The stakes are higher for farmers, which makes local food a buyer's market. Additionally, farmers articulate more moral motivations for their participation, while restaurateurs are principally concerned with economizing. For example, 64 percent of farmers, as opposed to 38 percent of restaurateurs, were motivated to participate in local food tourism by getting to know consumers/producers personally (Figure 4). For these reasons, local food tourism is characterized by an imbalance of political capital, wherein restaurateurs set the standards with which farmers must comply. This buyer's market drives down the prices for farmers. These market characteristics can disincentivize restaurateurs and frustrate farmers, which can limit the extent to which local food tourism takes root in a community. Because restaurateurs are price makers, their disinclination to become involved in local sourcing must be overcome through education. Claire Hinrichs (2000) described power differentials between farmers and end consumers in local food systems as a function of differences in educational level and class status. Less attention has been paid to relations between farmers and restaurateurs, and while educational level and class status play a role in the uneven power relations at work, the oligopsonistic structure of the local food market is a crucial but overlooked factor.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In sum, local food tourism networks represent a potential source of community economic development for rural areas with the right set of preconditions. Both

farmers and restaurateurs that participate in these systems perceive economic benefits. Farmers benefit because involvement provides new markets for their products in which they receive a price premium based on the consumers' perception of artisanal quality and environmental stewardship. Similarly, sales for restaurateurs also increase because restaurants can capitalize on the price premium, enter new niche markets, and attract additional patrons. In spite of these benefits, there are constraints and imbalances built into the structure of local food tourism that limit the impact of this model.

Restaurateurs possess greater market power than farmers in these systems, which leads to a mismatch between the expectations of farmers and restaurateurs and the material realities of local agricultural production. This mismatch constrains local food tourism. Restaurateurs expect highly formal and efficient ordering and delivery systems that small farmers lack the capacity to meet. Also, restaurateurs and farmers have different expectations regarding price, which can lead to resentment. The key to resolving this constraint and improving the fit between farmers' and restaurateurs' expectations lies in educating restaurateurs and improving communication between farms and restaurants. Restaurateurs must break with the comfort of convention and understand that, to capitalize on the price premium and market expansion opportunities from involvement in local food tourism networks, there are additional initial costs. Further, farmers and restaurateurs must reconcile their differing expectations regarding price. On the one hand, restaurateurs must come to understand the additional costs and diseconomies of small scale, artisanal production and modify their price expectations accordingly. On the other hand, farmers must recognize that restaurants are purchasing inputs, not finished commodities like farmers' market patrons and direct sales customers, and adjust their price expectations as well.

Although education and communication address the lack of fit between expectations and capacity, they do not improve farmer capacity regarding ordering, delivery, and quantity. One way to build farmer capacity in this area is to develop a small-scale foodservice distribution cooperative, organized by area farmers, to formalize delivery processes and ensure that supply meets demand. The Cooperative Extension Service, area nonprofit organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, or local government could provide start-up financing and technical assistance to get such a venture off the ground. Projects like this (i.e., self-organizing, small-scale/niche food distribution networks) are gaining momentum in the northeastern United States (Goetz 2012). One such example is the White Dog Cafe in Philadelphia, PA, which coordinates delivery to restaurants across

multiple small farms, bringing local foods efficiently and cost-effectively to market (see Community Food Enterprise, N.d.).

Beyond imbalances of power within local food tourism, the second major constraint that many communities face is a lack of pre-existing stocks of natural and cultural capital sufficient to develop and capitalize on geographical indications. The absence of these preconfigurations can further inhibit local food tourism. These barriers are significant but surmountable. With effort and patience, these characteristics can be manufactured (Rahn 2006). The key to developing local food tourism networks in places that do not lend themselves "naturally" to such arrangements is defining and cultivating substantive geographical indications for unique food items from a specific region. Unique food items that possess a cultural and historical tie to the region and/or that can be uniquely produced in a region owing to specific attributes of climate or topography can be developed and marketed as the centerpiece of emergent local food tourism networks (see Barham 2009).

Finally, communities can hedge economic outcomes in their favor by emphasizing the network dimension of local food tourism. This unified approach establishes linkages among a variety of economic sectors in the community, including: food producers; food retailers; recreation, entertainment, and art venues; lodging establishments; and specialty retail shops. The networks model, therefore, not only distributes the gains from such efforts more widely within the community, but it also improves regional marketability as a tourism destination.

The community capitals model provides a helpful framework for sorting and analyzing the tradeoffs to community economic development of local food tourism. It gives us the conceptual language to link discussions of market growth, business relations, learning spillovers, nature, culture, and market power. For a social phenomenon, like local food tourism, that integrates economic and social sectors with the biophysical and geographic environments, the holistic formulation of the community capitals framework allows us to envision systemwide dynamics. It also provides a lens through which to view flows across stocks, as is evident here in the way that increased social relationships augment social capital but also produce learning spillovers enhancing human capital. Local food tourism networks therefore, can generate some spiraling up.

However, this study also illuminates some conceptual shortcomings of the model. Different capital stocks seem variously resistant to efforts to "build up" and "flow across." We have argued that some community capitals, such as cultural and natural capital, are highly resistant to efforts to engineer growth in their stocks. Others, such as social capital, are moderately resistant, and some, such as human

capital, can be readily manufactured (*cf.* Durston 1999). This complicates the spiraling-up thesis, which presumes that growth in one stock uniformly flows across into pools of other community assets. Additionally, there are circumstances in which certain community capitals may become inequitably concentrated, as is the case of political capital in the “buyer’s market” of local food tourism, which can interfere with the spiraling-up effect. Finally, the overly functionalistic boundaries drawn between these seven capitals may fail to properly capture moments of ontological overlap between them, such as the ways in which biophysical properties of soil quality and climate shape cultural attributes of a region such as food traditions. Geographical indications—an important feature in local food tourism networks—is emblematic of this phenomenon.

Although local food tourism networks can be effective for community economic development, the net gains in terms of environmental sustainability are less clear. There is a certain irony in the phenomenon of tourists drawn across long geographic distances by the environmental allure of food produced in the same place as it is consumed, and this irony may negate some of the fossil fuel savings of the model. Nevertheless, as a development strategy, local food tourism represents an important arrow in the community economic development quiver. While this article has discussed the challenges and tradeoffs of this model, over time, the gains in terms of market expansion and social and human capital may potentially outweigh the costs.

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