



Ambiente & Sociedade

ISSN: 1414-753X

revista@nepam.unicamp.br

Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação  
e Pesquisa em Ambiente e Sociedade  
Brasil

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Ambiente & Sociedade, vol. XX, núm. 1, enero-marzo, 2017, pp. 147-164  
Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ambiente e Sociedade  
Campinas, Brasil

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# ORGANICS CONSUMPTION FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: ANALYZING A SPECIALTY MARKET IN FLORIANÓPOLIS-SC.

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## Introduction

This paper presents a sociological investigation on the development of tastes and meanings relating to organic products, taking into account the social construction of a market specialized in this kind of product in the city of Florianopolis, SC, the *Cantinho Especial Market*. The case studied contributes to the debate on the subject insofar as it reveals a social process of appropriation of a kind of alternative food market – organic products – by the cultural and economic upper classes in the capital of Santa Catarina. The methodology used in this work consisted of six months of analysis of the market's fan page in a social network site, eight months of unsystematic observations in the market and nine narrative interviews with supply and demand agents. The results were analyzed from the perspective of the theoretical contributions of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of tastes and economic sociology.

This specific case was chosen because of the following aspect: 1) the market was created recently (open in 2013) and is specialized in organic products; 2) it has a singular combination of traits of other establishments that sell organic products, e.g., fresh products are sold by farmers directly to consumers, typical of organic street fairs, but at the same time having a vertical structure, with a central, private management, similar to supermarkets or specialty stores (e.g., Greenworld network); 3) it is visited by a great number of shoppers, around 1,000 per day (NOTÍCIAS DO DIA, 2013), which makes it a social space capable of prescribing actions by the demand agents and by producers and merchants that operate in the city.

It is assumed here that a case study always has the purpose of facilitating discussions on the field of interest, mainly when it has peculiarities that favor reviews of viewpoints that have hitherto been formulated. Accordingly, this investigation may contribute to redirecting studies on organic markets and their participant agents,

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i.e., their stakeholders. According to data from the latest report published by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM, 2013), the organic market has grown exponentially around the world since the new millennium. Concerning Brazil, the economic growth of this sector and the promising prospects for the coming years would not be possible without the institutionalization of agroecology countrywide, which to a great extent enables the proliferation of stores specialized in organic and natural products in the country (NIEDERLE and ALMEIDA, 2013), such as the *Cantinho Especial Market*.

The south of Brazil, specifically Santa Catarina, stands out not just as a farming region, but also as a center of distribution and consumption (NIEDERLE *et al.*, 2013). Although the south coast and the far west region of the state has the greatest number of production units, the metropolitan area of Florianópolis has the highest economic output among the top ten Epagri's technical management units (TMU), of approximately 4.1 million Reais in 2010, representing one third of the state's total production (ZOLDAN e MIOR, 2012).

In the present scenario of production and marketing of organic products, three major challenges to the sociological investigation can be identified: 1) organic production and conventional farming systems often coexist in a same production unit; 2) different stamps and signs for organic products are used, despite the fact that there is a standard certification process through the stamp "Brazil Organic Products" since 2013; 3) organic products are found in the most diverse marketplaces, being marketed by agents that have heteroclit values, i.e., contrary to the field of organics (NIEDERLE e ALMEIDA, 2013). These three challenges are present in the *Cantinho Especial Market* in Florianópolis and although the market largely advocates organic foods, it does not sell exclusively this kind of product but other products with different stamps as well. Shop attendants and customers not necessarily share the traditional discourse and the green values that have been mapped so far by the sociological literature in other organic markets.

The reasons and social foundations for sustainable consumption, a category in which organics consumption is included, have been a recurrent topic in debates on the contemporary transformations of consumption phenomena. In Brazil, this topic has been discussed especially from the viewpoint that the movements towards sustainable consumption contributes to the expansion of citizenship, making consumers key players in the market, to whom sustainable responsibilities are assigned (PORTILHO, 2008).

In addition to Portilho (2005, 2008 and 2009)'s works, a representative amount of studies have arisen after the turn of the millennium in an attempt to describe the profile of organics consumers, such as by Guivant (2003), Brandenburg *et al.* (2008), Lockie *et al.* (2002), Fonseca (2005), Castañeda (2012) and, more recently, Betti *et al.* (2013). In such researches, it was found that there is a predominance of highly educated people and with high purchasing power among the consumers, characterizing a demand for organic products driven by ecological ethics, food security and political consumption. The present work intends to show why the reasons for the demand and the organics market are not given a priori: they depend on the dynamics of appropriation and resignification of the products by the participant social strata.

## Theoretical framework

This study case is based on the assumption that, as a market, it is socially constructed (DURKHEIM, 1983; WEBER, 2004) as part of the economic field, constituted by and constituting the State (BOURDIEU, 2003), where social agents, distinguished by different dispositions, tastes, capital levels and social positions, are bound to each other by similarity but also fight among themselves (BOURDIEU, 2008a). This approach strongly collides with the economic approach, which tends to see the markets off their social, political and cultural contexts (STEINER, 2009). It also clashes with any approach that places culture as a core variable for all social analysis, such as that by McCracken (2010): “[...] consumption is a thoroughly cultural phenomenon” (MCCRACKEN, 2010, p.11).

The sociological discipline, even when it struggles more incisively for a space in economic phenomena studies, has relegated consumption to a secondary position regarding production (ZELIZER, 2005; BARBOSA, 2006). Therefore, the present research is an attempt to minimize the lack of sociological works on the organic products market, aiming at a relational analysis between the fields of supply and demand.

The rationale of this work was based on the following premises: the demand for organic products considered healthy and ecologically friendly, besides promoting new products, may also build a market of distinctions. This assumption is primarily based on Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology of tastes (2008a), from which we understand that legitimate taste, which defines the upper classes in terms of economic and cultural capital, is characterized by discretion, elegance, spaces not suited to the popular taste, with rare products, full of symbolic values and high prices, unaffordable for those economically and culturally deprived, as already mentioned.

Taste is not just a simple dimension among others; rather, it is the main expression of the position occupied in the social space (BOURDIEU, 2008a). According to Coulangeon and Duval (2013), a strong thesis in Bourdieu’s sociology is that tastes are indissociable from the distastes of others, which makes that the judgement of taste is an implicit class judgement. In fact, Pinto (2013) recommends that an explanation of the Bourdieusian approach of tastes should begin with the first opposition that cultural objects imply, which we assume here as consumption objects, like organic foods: the distinction between those who like and those who dislike them, or still those that might like and those who might dislike them. Added to this dichotomy, Pinto (2013) suggests another firsthand distinction in terms of cultural capital: the intellectuals, learned people who acquired the necessary cultural codes for a legitimate appraisal of things through academic means, and the mundane, unschooled persons, who obtained such codes from the family.

A key aspect to be considered about the Bourdieusian sociology is its Eliasian background. This is particularly interesting to this work because, from the most holistic approach to the most individualistic one, going through attempts of synthesis, almost no sociological theory conferred the role of object of sociology to the arrangement of things and the architecture of environments. This gap cannot be applied to Norbert Elias. In his analysis of housing structures, Elias (2001) states that the hotels at the time of the French court were built for special clients and the architects always sought to make the guests’

social position immediately visible. Likewise, it is necessary to understand the elements that led the *Cantinho Especial Market* to be constructed in that particular manner in order that we can then understand the tastes that make up this social space.

Perhaps the core element of Bourdieu's theory of tastes is the idea of construction of legitimate tastes, corresponding to the upper classes in terms of cultural and economic capital. In the movement of consolidation of legitimate taste, everything that becomes commonplace is abandoned (BOURDIEU, 2008a). It turns to lesser-known objects, such as the organics, which would preferably reveal cultural and economic hindrances to the majorities. In this regard, Bourdieu (2008a) cites the example of the French upper class' thought that it was "impossible" for the noblesse to visit seaside town Saint-Tropez, a kind of leisure that was less distinctive than the nobles would like. It is a sense of distinction, which keeps the most fortunate distant from everything that is common, earthly and popular (BOURDIEU, 2008a).

The social distinction legitimation process operated by the upper classes generally occurs as a denial of the function, an abstraction of the objects, distancing from what is ordinarily consumed and creating a legitimate, disinterested way of consumption (BOURDIEU, 2008a). Such tendency places at one side those who have little cultural and social capital (focused on the function of things) and, at the other side, the upper classes (focused on the stylization, sublimation of pleasures and the aesthetics of things). It is through these mechanisms that ruling classes structure the consumption models, defining the legitimate tastes and what should be consumed (BOURDIEU, 2008a).

By applying this approach to the field of organic foods consumption, one can imagine which specific cultural codes would be necessary for consumers to be able to decode the subjacent and distinctive values of this class of foods. To understand how organic foods are aligned with a sustainable, although abstract, world vision, it is necessary cultural capital. Probably it is necessary that the agents be exposed to this cognitive scheme of consumption sustainability, which enables consumers to visualize the production chain to which the chosen product belongs.

Food categories are only apparently neutral. Why organic products in the markets are often near "healthy" foods? Within the category itself, there are varied tastes that reveal different social classes and their respective ways of appropriating the foods (BOURDIEU, 2008a). In the case of rice, for example, Bourdieu (2008a) comments about the whole grain kind and the emergence of a corresponding lifestyle, which can be easily associated with the case of organics consumption. Thus, the emergence of lifestyles on the tastes system, which, in turn, are oriented by class dispositions.

## Methodology

Taking into account the characteristics of the *Cantinho Especial Market* and the objectives of this work, we used a combination of methods, as follows: a) sources (primary and secondary data); b) data collection techniques (unsystematic observation, survey at the institutional fan page and semi-structured interviews); c) techniques of analysis (symbolic and qualitative analyses). The decision to combine diverse methods gains

support from the reasons given, for example, by Combessie (2004), in favor of methods diversification.

The first phase of data collection consisted of a virtual investigation in the institutional page of the *Cantinho Especial Market*, which, in this case, consists of a fan page in Facebook. Dalgaard (2008) suggests two trends that have arisen from websites proliferation: the first is that of people showing off themselves and their relationships in the Internet; the second is that of politicians mobilizing voters through social network sites. Similarly, firms mobilize and get more clients through social networks.<sup>1</sup> With respect to the *Cantinho Especial Market*, its fan page is a key social space for the business' managers, consumers, associated producers and other supporters, or stakeholders, to interact by means of different topics of interest. The investigation of the fan page was basically made using the Content Analysis (CA) technique, because it is a hybrid analytic tool, i.e., it is both quantitative and qualitative (BAUER, 2012; ROSE, 2012; KRIPPENDORF, 2013). This stage of the research enabled a firsthand understanding of the dynamics of the social adjustment processes between supply and demand, tastes affinity, added to a lifestyle prescription to the fan page followers. All these aspects are crucial to understand how the construction of this market occurs and the meanings attributed to organic products.

Based on the assumed hybridity (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) of the content analysis (BAUER, 2012; ROSE, 2012; KRIPPENDORF, 2013), the results were analyzed following the explanatory sequential strategy (CRESWELL, 2007), which consists of analyzing first quantitatively and then qualitatively, to achieve a more in-depth analysis. The investigation of the fan page of the *Cantinho Especial Market* was based on 170 posts made between 3 October 2013 and 21 April 2014. At the beginning of data collection, eight months after the market has been created in February 2013, the fan page had 3,911 followers and, at the end of April 2014, this number had increased to nearly 7,000 people. Altogether, 175 photos were collected and analyzed. The analyzed publications had on average 27 likes, 2 comments and 1 share. The analysis was less focused on comparisons with other fan pages and more focused on everything that is useful to the case under study. This means, for example, that 170 posts in the fan page is a number that represents six months of activities, but this same number in another page might represent the activity of only a few days or more than a year.

After analysis of the fan page, the unsystematic observation carried out since early 2013 was broadened, once the researcher was an assiduous consumer of the market. This stage consisted of unsystematic observations aiming to understand the following aspects, as proposed by Creswell (2007): a) setting (places of trade exchanges); b) agents (merchants and consumers); c) events (what the agents do while observation takes place); process (evolution and historical nature of the events experienced by the agents in the setting). After a period of observations, sufficient to understand the diversity of situations in the market, some social agents were invited to participate in the interviews, the third stage of data collection.

## Results and discussion

The results from this research – the analysis of the fan page of the *Cantinho Especial Market*, unsystematic observations and interviews – enabled us to map some aspects of how the invention and reinvention of tastes for organic products occur in this specialized space. We will see, from the business conception to the objects and practices most valued by the agents, how the agents' social distinction is operated by means of the formation of legitimate tastes only achievable by those who have high volumes of economic and cultural capitals. The social exchanges of distinctive elements is the engine of the social construction of this specialized market and occur primarily from the following aspects: 1) building a space based on the architectural lines of legitimate European culture, using professional architects concerned not only with the architecture itself but with the aesthetics of the action as well, i.e., the place "scenography"; 2) tastes conformity, especially regarding the "good use" of foods and dislike for said conventional products; 3) a praise to exoticism, by valuing rare products and the use of unusual linguistic modes; 4) valorization of cosmopolitanism by valuing foreign things and people. Each of these aspects will be detailed below.

### *The market organization: an "exclamation architecture"*

The *Cantinho Especial Market* was built in a high middle class neighborhood and opened in 2013 from the initiative of an entrepreneur whose family has other members who are entrepreneurs in the food business in Florianópolis. The owner also has a well-known restaurant in the center of the city, whose clientele is made up mostly of members of the upper class of the capital of Santa Catarina. The market has three sectors: one designed to the sale of fresh fruits and vegetables<sup>ii</sup>, controlled by a box with a weighing scale; another sector with stands of nonperishable products, like jam products, produced and sold by local partners. This sector also sells nonorganic products. The last sector consists of a cafe and restaurant controlled by independent cashiers. The market is open every day, except Sundays, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Communication of the establishment with consumers and partners is primarily made by the fan page in Facebook, with cooking tips, new dishes and new foods at sale, added to musical and artistic events.

When entering the market, walking through the fruits and vegetables (FV) sector, and leaving, after paying the cashier, consumers inevitably pass through the stores of the *Cantinho Especial Market's* established partners. In this second kind of environment, there is a large variety of products and services that complement the FV sector: a) a toy store specialized in options designed to stimulate children's intelligence; b) a travel agency focused on nonconventional routes and gastronomy tourism particularly in Europe; c) an artisanal bakery whose main specialty are German breads and sweets; d) an organic cosmetics store; e) a clothing booth display, called "atelier", which, by means of the clothes, values "socio-environmental responsibility". There are other stands through which the consumers of the FV sector pass after paying cashier: a) a home decor furniture store; b) a stand specialized in functional, easy-to-make, frozen foods; c) a store of packaged



natural products, such as seeds, nuts, oils and vinegars; d) a bookstore specialized in gastronomy; e) a piano available for customers.

When walking along the *Cantinho Especial Market*, entering the FV store, paying the cashier and leaving afterwards, consumers are exposed not only to the organic FVs, but are also invited to adopt a certain lifestyle, which is the only factor that allows the business to aggregate so many and diverse products and services. It is also worth noting that the FV sector of the *Cantinho Especial Market* does not account for even half of the revenues of the establishment, according to employee 3. Most of the revenues come from rents charged to the partners that sell their products in the market, similar to the fees and charges billed to tenants of a shopping mall, and sales from the cafe-restaurant sector.

About the conception of the *Cantinho Especial Market*, the owner says that it consisted of a shed and that the first partners-producers contributed to building the market in it. They always used second-hand furniture, as is the case of the wooden chairs in the piano area: they were acquired when a renowned pizzeria in the center of the city closed. The owner explains the architecture of the place: “all reused”. According to her, “old windows are the façade ‘skeleton’”. She says that the work was to create a scenery, an atmosphere, a doorway to everything that is inside.

The architect responsible for the design raises a doubt about the character of his work: “We may even discuss if this is a work of architecture or scenography, because so far we worked only on this ‘skin’ coating, which was to bring a face to the building.” (TV COM, 2013). His objective was to indicate to the people passing in front of the shed what was going on inside, which until then nobody knew, he said. It is exactly in this sense that comes the notion of “spontaneous architecture” employed by the agents who designed the *Cantinho Especial Market*.

The architect responsible for the place also said that he was inspired particularly by two European buildings: a) the *Les Thermes*, by architect Jean Nouvel, a thermal spa hotel located in the south of France – “the front is entirely made up of wooden shutter blinds and the base is wide open with windows and awnings. It was an image that came strongly to my mind immediately and guided the entire project” (TV COM, 2013); b) the *Mercat Santa Caterina*, by architect Enric Miralles, which is located in Barcelona and has a concept similar to the *Cantinho Especial Market*, also built from a shed. It can be seen that the architectural aspects of the *Cantinho Especial Market*, even in its initial stage of design, required a considerable amount of cultural capital, especially of codes of what is beautiful in architecture and decoration, and of economic capital, once an investment in such architectural work is significantly higher than that simply restricted to a shed or a producers’ fair.

It can be seen, from the place architecture, a homology of tastes between the subfield of supply and of demand. Besides praising the “beautiful” shed and identifying European influences, the customers know how to value the architectural aspects of the building: “I like the whole arrangement. It is a very simple structure. My husband is an architect and appreciates very much this design, because it is simple and you feel at home in here. It is an integrated space” (Consumer 2). Consumer 4 considers that “it is cool to integrate in a same space, as in most of the European and North-American biological markets, the groceries and the restaurant.”



Such phenomenon is highlighted by Bourdieu (2003, 2008a) to explain the emergence of markets, terming it as an objective orchestration of two relatively independent logics, that of the field of supply, or production (where products are made) and that of the field of demand, or consumption (where tastes are built). This implies the understanding that the production agents, involved in competitive disputes in the production field, even without having to seek customers, meet the desired consumers, who also struggle between and within classes to ensure a legitimate position in the construction of tastes. This is how this objective orchestration allows that the diverse tastes be materialized into concrete products.

Another important element to understand such homology effect is that the interviewed agents reveal life trajectories marked by displacements and migration. Many of these agents are not originally from Florianópolis. The place of birth of the interviewees corresponds to the major migratory flows to the state capital in recent years: two from Rio Grande do Sul, two from São Paulo, two from Rio de Janeiro and one from Paraná. Besides the venture character of great part of the market agents, the life path of the interviewees is not a single-travel immigration, as of those who are born in a given locality and move to another.

What the interviewees' life narratives show is that these agents traveled many places worldwide, and Europe is the place in common of four out of nine respondents: the owner always go to the European continent in search of what she calls "new inspirations"; one consumer attended a two-year course on anthroposophical farming in England; another one studied medieval music for seven years in Vienna; another one lived in Germany; and there is one who defines herself as "direct descendant of Europeans". Thus, supply and demand agents show themselves alike regarding their likes for cosmopolitanism and for what is European. Even more interesting is to see that the level of investment – in terms of economic and cultural capital – which is required to start a business like the *Cantinho Especial Market* is far higher than the investments that are necessary to mount a fair of organics producers, a small specialized corner store or even a supermarket section, kinds of businesses that so far have been described by specialized literature.

*Conforming tastes: "What is the difference? Organic egg or conventional egg?"*

The *Cantinho Especial Market* is an important learning environment about how to consume their products. In the place's language, "Workshop!"<sup>iii</sup> Regularly, the *Cantinho Especial Market* becomes an explicit space for food education and tastes conformity through their diverse workshops on healthy recipes. It is worth considering that the appreciation for the nutrition theme is also present in the history of agro-ecological movements, as highlighted by Brandenburg (2002). What differentiates the *Cantinho Especial Market* is not exactly the presence or absence of the theme but essentially the way it is meant by the market agents. Often added to food exoticism, workshops or tasting events are usually attended by local celebrities and food experts, such as renowned local chef Alysso Müller<sup>iv</sup>. The constant and legitimizing presence of this kind of celebrity differs greatly from the social spaces where alternative farming products have been marketed over the years.

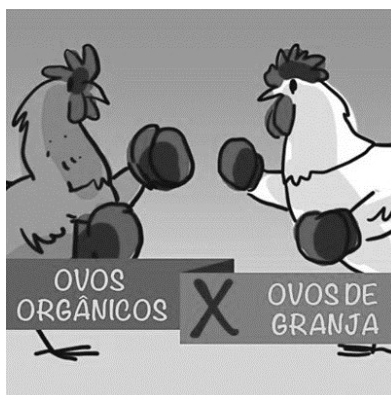
Regarding the *Cantinho Especial Market's* employees actions, they do not stay rooted to their specific workplaces; rather, they move around, always making themselves available

for the customers. Such availability is important to clear any doubts that arise from the consumers' subjective inability of making good use of the products: What can I do with these mushrooms? Can I make an omelet with this one? The customer that makes these questions is not alone: there are many others with a strong cultural willingness, in the sense used by Bourdieu (2008a) to describe the inclination of the intermediate social strata in terms of cultural and economic capital. It is a willingness to learn, although belatedly, the legitimate and necessary cultural codes to use things properly. In this case, special mushrooms.

In fact, as a publication on mushrooms in the fan page says: "Forget those canned, yellowish mushrooms tasting vinegar and read the article in the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper about fresh mushrooms!"<sup>v</sup> If any taste carries a distaste for another's one taste, then fresh mushroom is a kind of object opponent to canned mushroom. However, such rivalry between objects, or products, in fact does not exist between them, but between the social groups that appreciate them. While *in natura* mushrooms are accessible to few Brazilian consumers, the industrial ones can be found even in small grocery stores in the neighborhood.

Bourdieu (2008b) teaches us how tastes are built from distastes. As the socialization process proceeds, we learn what we like and, at the same time, what we dislike. In the *Cantinho Especial Market*, the educational process includes the products they do not sell, which are the target of criticism and attacks from the diverse stakeholders, for example, processed mushrooms, largely sold in supermarkets.

Another clear example of such opposition between taste and distaste is how the marketing of organic (pastured, uncaged) eggs is made in opposition to conventional (farmed, caged) eggs. The degree of distaste for conventional eggs, and here we would include several products resulting from processes that require the use of chemical additives and genetic improvement, should not be overlooked: the image that accompanies the post shows two chickens in a boxing contest. The fight also involves different levels of economic capital, once the price of a dozen organic eggs is at least twice as much of conventional eggs. There is a feeling in the studied market of fighting the conventional modes of production and consumption.



Legend: Organic eggs x conventional eggs

Figure 1 – Image of organic eggs inserted into the post<sup>vi</sup>

### *The organics market as a praise to exoticism*

It is not necessary to observe the *Cantinho Especial Market's* actions for a long time to understand that its peculiarities as a social space begin just in its most common aspects. There, *in natura* products are considered celebrities: they are photographed professionally, displayed on a scenography setting that is typical of the establishment; the most exotic vegetables are chosen to be shown.

This is precisely what occurs in the case of the publication on purple cauliflower: "Purple cauliflower. Beautiful this cauliflower!!! Have you ever seen with this color???"<sup>1</sup> We have here a vegetable relatively common in the country's farming and retail but it is shown in its most uncommon form, both in color and in the manner that is displayed. Comments from fans appreciate the product and the picture, acclaiming the beauty of the eccentric cauliflower, which is closely related to the photograph technique and the scenography arrangement of the sisal baskets.

These aspects are directly associated with the artisanal, non-massive, rare features of products only found in this market, features that are quite different from those found in supermarkets or street fairs, where cauliflowers are displayed on shelves or standard wooden boxes, besides, of course, showing its most common color, off-white.

The taste for exotic foods and the valorization of the aesthetic aspects of food are categories pointed out by Bourdieu (2008a and 2008b) to refer to the legitimate taste that characterizes those with high volumes of cultural and economic capitals: disinterested, selfless taste, which keeps the function of things in the background and highlights abstract aspects, such as the beauty of the purple cauliflower and the exoticism of mushrooms. We discussed so far how fresh products are re-signified into larger abstraction by putting emphasis on aesthetics. However, the case of the vegetables is still insufficient to talk about language in the *Cantinho Especial Market*.

The fan page of the *Cantinho Especial Market* presents a characteristic that immediately catches the eyes of the researcher because of the character that defines the communication adopted by the page managers. The very language used practically reveals the inexistence of ordinary forms of talking about food products. Messages such as the "*menu du jour*", "*vitalité salad*" and "kale nest with orange perfume" are posted in the fan page. Such linguistic trait is key to understand the most important analytical category, which, because of its appreciating character, probably works as a guide to the market's stakeholders: *food exoticism*.

The restaurant-café sector is an important socialization space for all market's stakeholders, whether they are agents from the subfield of supply or demand. This is a key differentiator of the *Cantinho Especial Market* when compared to other organics markets. If we take, for example, natural products stores, some of them very close to the *Cantinho Especial*, agro-ecological fairs and supermarkets, we will see that in these spaces there is no restaurant-café sector. This is a key indication that this architectural structural aspect, this kind of places that serve meals, with its arrangement of tables, chairs and comfortable sofas, and service staff to attend customers, materialize the conception of the market as a space that entices some kind of socialization. The fan page is an invitation to this space,



Legend: Entrée – fruited shot – vitalité salad – Main course – mushroom cream with vegetables – rice with toasted ginger – kale nest with orange perfume – pumpkin with salty müsli - \*We have vegan option

**Figure 2 – Photo of the “menu du jour”.**

to the experience of the “*menu du jour*”, which is only satisfactory if the customer has the necessary cultural codes. After all, before any purchase intention or likelihood, it is necessary to understand and apprehend the worth of these foods.

The requirement for the *Cantinho Especial Market*’ specific cultural codes, which are not part of the ordinary background of most of Florianópolis inhabitants, occurs in three different ways. The first is related to the specific linguistic mode used, and already mentioned herein, which is characterized by the use of French words (e.g., “*menu*” and “*vitalité*”), a form of communication that discourages those who do not share the specific cultural codes, at the same time it attracts those who already have them. The second lies on the aesthetic valorization, which requires a considerable level of abstraction by the customers (e.g., “kale nest”), and the third demands the ability to understand foods combination (e.g., “rice with toasted ginger”), once such combinations are not conventional but correspond to certain beliefs constructed and shared by the agents that make up this market. These factors are not casual, arbitrary; instead, they are indicative of the sense of distinction that is present in the *Cantinho Especial Market*.

### *Touring around the world through the market*

Someone who studies the agroecology movement might now wonder: How cosmopolitanism is related with the fact of being a market specialized in organics, when historically the spaces that buy and sells such products always valued local, regional products? It is precisely because of this category, cosmopolitanism, that we can understand that organic foods have a legitimating function in the *Cantinho Especial Market*. However, before discussing the cosmopolitan character of the social exchanges that take place in the *Cantinho Especial Market*, it is important to say that the results of this study question the dichotomy between what is local and what is global, allowing us to abstract and get rid of the idea that the case under study is only related to the city where it is located<sup>vii</sup>.

One of the key elements to understand the cosmopolitanism of the *Cantinho Especial Market* is the taste for the French things, francophilia. It is present in several things in the market, in the “*menu du jour*”, in the “*vitalité* salad”, in the French cheese from the *Queijo com Sotaque* (Cheese with Accent) partner, in the tasting of French crepes and even in the music played by pianist customers. Francophilia is not restricted to the refined way of defining dishes offered by the restaurant. It goes beyond this: it is present in the tastes of the agents that visit the market, whether producers, chefs in charge of tastings and in consumers’ musical preferences. It is a key element of a lifestyle, which has in the appreciation for the French things one of its most characterizing elements.

Francophilia in the *Cantinho Especial Market* is more legitimate than it seems from a superficial observation. The person in charge of the French crepes preparation is an official of the foreign service of France: a consul, friend of the owner, who says that he does it for pleasure. The crepe is not prepared by anyone who belatedly learned the French culture, but by someone who learned early this legitimate culture. Nor it is made by a French gastronomist who has a graduate degree in gastronomy, in a technique, but a Frenchman who represents the French State and makes crepe because he grew up eating it and observing how to make it. Furthermore, he does it in a way apparently disinterested, as a hobby, as leisure.



**Figure 3 – Photo of crepes tasting with the French consul<sup>viii</sup>**

The above mentioned post is the most appreciated and the one that had the greatest number of followers: 140 likes, 23 comments and 14 shares, far more than the overall average of 27 likes, 2 comments and 1.8 shares per publication. In the comments by the page followers’, it is even clearer: a) compliments for the dish (e.g., “a wonderful crepe batter !!!”); b) recommendations to others (e.g., “R.G., go there”); c) appreciation for the French language (e.g., “J’adore !” and “See, J. C. and F. G, you already have a place to go and practice your French...”); d) legitimacy of who prepares (e.g., “I met the guy. Really nice. A real consul.”). Among those who posted comments are agents whose economic and cultural capitals above the average population are shown by their occupations (e.g., university professors, civil servants, and businessmen) or by their university level education.

## Final considerations

During most of the twentieth century, consumption was relegated to a secondary position with respect to the production of sociological literature. While the approach between the sociology of tastes and culture is recurrent in social sciences literature, studies addressing tastes as resulting processes from market buildings are rare. We learned from the Bourdieusian approach that every taste is developed in relation to a distaste, and this takes place in the social space constitution dynamics. This was observed in the *Cantinho Especial Market*, involving both supply and demand agents.

Some meanings given by consumers to organic products can only be understood by considering the market characteristics where they are bought and sold. Such defining elements begin precisely in one of the most neglected dimensions of sociology: the arrangement of physical aspects. It was possible to observe how some practices by the *Cantinho Especial Market*' stakeholders are dependent upon the architectural and organizational design of things, which, by homology, mirror the tastes of the subfield of demand's agents.

We note here some aspects of an appropriation and resignification of organic products by social strata that have not given before great importance to these products in terms of tastes and practices. The *Cantinho Especial Market*'s organic products are not exactly those marketed in street fairs or supermarkets. The way that it is presented, the place where they are displayed, the agents who sell them and those interested in buying these products, their prices, quality standard, the communication modes used and other products that are associated with them make that the experience of consuming them be unique. These are the differences that can participate in the stakeholders' social distinction. Organic products are then part of this setting, fitting to the shop windows, to the market front sign: they are not the protagonists, but glamorous decoys for a market of exchanges of distinctive elements.

Although the results from the study cannot be generalized for all agents of the organics industry in Brazil, this research has some clues for a more in-depth analysis aiming to address a developing lifestyle. The case studied privileged some aspects that have not been addressed yet by the sociological literature, which primarily involves an appreciation for organics and products considered healthy, which are imbued with exoticism, cosmopolitanism and aesthetic experience. It is a market of distinctions, a space of symbolic exchanges. This can be seen from the propagation of a distinct way of viewing fresh products, of valuing the pictures posted in the fan page and the overall scenography of the setting. These aspects are directly associated with artisanal, non-massive, rare features, qualities that are practically exclusive of this market.

## Notes

i Someone's fan page in the Facebook (and we would suggest a business one) is always presented in a relational manner: a profile without links to other contacts would not make sense, once the nodal point of the website is the social network that has been created. In addition, interaction in the Facebook is leveraged and facilitated by minor exchanges of information, tips and photos (DALGAARD, 2008), as we will see in the case study.



- ii The most common are lettuce, arugula, orange, bergamot, pumpkin and broccoli, usually certified by Ecocert Brasil and by the Rede Ecovida de Agroecologia, with this information printed on the products label.
- iii fan page of the Cantinho Especial Market, 11 and 15 Oct 2013; 04 and 05 Nov 2013.
- iv fan page of the Cantinho Especial Market, 25 Oct 2013 and 09 Nov 2013
- v fan page of the Cantinho Especial Market, 07 Mar 2014
- vi fan page of the Cantinho Especial Market, 28 Nov 2013.
- vii Sassen (2010)'s research, in this regard, aims to detect the presence of the globalizing dynamics in dense social environments that mix national and global elements. The author then points to the need of a detailed study on national processes and their recodification as global processes.
- viii fan page of the Cantinho Especial Market, 28 Mar 201

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Submitted on: 01/06/2015

Accepted on: 28/03/2016

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422ASOC20150077R2V2012017>

# ORGANICS CONSUMPTION FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE: ANALYZING A SPECIALTY MARKET IN FLORIANÓPOLIS-SC.

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**Abstract:** In order to contribute to the comprehension of the current situation of organic markets, this research investigates a prominent case at Florianópolis: Cantinho Especial Market. The methodology employed in this study involved six months of analysis of the market's institutional website (*fan page*) in a social network, eight months of unsystematic observations at the market and nine interviews with agents both from supply and demand. We argue here that recurrent categories used in sociological research on organic markets, such as political consumerism and ecological ethics, are sparser among this market participant agents. Instead of these recurrent categories, we realize that organics are in the display window acting as decoys to a distinctive symbolic exchanges market. These symbolic trades when combined together reflect a lifestyle marked by the praise of the exoticism and the cosmopolitanism.

**Keywords:** Market, Organics, Sociology of tastes.

**Resumo:** Buscando contribuir para a compreensão do atual momento do mercado de orgânicos, o presente trabalho investiga um caso proeminente de Florianópolis: o Cantinho Especial Market. A metodologia empregada nesse trabalho envolveu seis meses de análise da página institucional (*fan page*) do mercado em uma rede social, oito meses de observações assistemáticas no interior do mercado e nove entrevistas com agentes da oferta e da demanda. Argumenta-se aqui que categorias de análise recorrentes em pesquisas sociológicas sobre espaços de compra e venda de orgânicos, tais como o consumo político e a ética ecológica, são rarefeitas entre os agentes sociais do principal mercado especializado da capital catarinense. Em seu lugar, percebe-se que os orgânicos estão na vitrine, atuando como chamarizes, de um mercado de trocas simbólicas distintivas mais amplas. Estas, quando reunidas em conjunto, podem ser identificadas como um estilo de vida marcado pelo elogio ao exotismo e ao cosmopolitismo.

**Palavras-chave:** Mercado, orgânicos, Sociologia dos gostos.

**Resumen:** Tratando de contribuir a la comprensión de la situación actual del mercado de alimentos orgánicos, este trabajo investiga un caso destacado en Florianópolis: Cantinho Especial Market. La metodología incluyó seis meses del análisis de la página de fans en una red social, ocho meses de observaciones no sistemáticas y nueve entrevistas con agentes de la oferta y de la demanda. Argumentamos que categorías frecuentes en las investigaciones sociológicas sobre compra y venta de productos orgánicos, tales como el consumo político y la ética ecológica son escasas entre los agentes sociales del principal mercado especializado de la provincia de Santa Catarina. Los orgánicos están en el escaparate, actuando como señuelos para un mercado más amplio de intercambios simbólicos distintivos. Estos, cuando se combinan juntos, pueden ser identificados como un estilo de vida caracterizado por la alabanza del exotismo y del cosmopolitismo.

**Palabras clave:** Mercado, Orgánicos, sociología de los gustos.

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