

Trust in Local Food Movements in China:
Using Social Network Analysis to Understand the Local Food Market

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While a generation of 10% annual GDP growth in the People's Republic of China has greatly improved people's lifestyles, people in China still worry about the quality and safety of food. As the most fundamental economic sector, where everyone participates to some extent in the production, consumption, and exchange of food, Chinese urbanites are developing new practices to counter what is widely seen as a threat to individual health and social well-being: the need for access to safe, healthy food. Based on fieldwork conducted in China (2011-2016), this paper will contrast these two distinct local food movements using social network analysis and participant observation fieldwork in farmers' markets in Shanghai and Beijing. Preliminary analysis of the results from social network analysis reveals that the Shanghai local food movement faces structural obstacles in its *social embeddedness* – the process by which social networks generate ties or reciprocity and trust – compared with the Beijing local food movement. In the absence of state certification of organic foods at Chinese farmer's markets, Chinese consumers are searching for ways to buy safe, healthy food, while Chinese organic farmers and food activists are looking for ways to make their operations economically sustainable.

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