



Sociology of food markets: evolving of the state of the art and recent theoretical and methodological contributions

Abel Cassol

Universidade Federal do Maranhão – São Luís – Maranhão – Brasil

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4297-9408>

Zenicléia Angelita Deggerone

Universidade Estadual do Rio Grande do Sul – Erechim – Rio Grande do Sul – Brasil

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4286-4686>

Sergio Schneider

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – Porto Alegre – Rio Grande do Sul – Brasil

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4353-6732>

Abstract

In recent years, rural sociology underwent an ‘analytical turn’ towards the sociology of markets, culminating in a growing appreciation of the spaces for commercial transactions, not simply as food markets, but also as promoters of rural development, social inclusion and environmental preservation. Notwithstanding this, the analysis of markets and their governance dynamics still requires theoretical advancement. In this sense, understanding the functioning and market structures that govern exchanges between family farmers and buyers of their products is particularly relevant. This article offers a theoretical discussion intended to enable a better understanding of the sociological and methodological dimensions of family farming markets. Drawing on an institutionalist approach to markets and a typology of marketing channels, we aim to highlight how diversifying access to marketing channels can provide greater autonomy and resilience for farmers and, at the same time, create opportunities for consumers to access healthy food.

Keywords: economic sociology; food markets; family farming; marketing channels.

Sociologia dos mercados alimentares: revisão e contribuições teóricas e metodológicas recentes

Resumo

Nos últimos anos, tem-se observado uma “virada analítica” na sociologia rural em direção à sociologia dos mercados, culminando em uma valorização crescente dos espaços de transação mercantil não apenas como fornecedores de alimentos, mas como promotores de

desenvolvimento rural, inclusão social e preservação ambiental. Em que pese esse processo, ainda é preciso avançar teoricamente na análise dos mercados e nas suas dinâmicas de governança. Neste sentido, é particularmente importante compreender o funcionamento e as estruturas de mercado que regem as trocas feitas entre agricultores familiares e compradores de seus produtos. O objetivo deste artigo é realizar uma discussão teórica que permita uma melhor compreensão das dimensões sociológicas e metodológicas dos mercados da agricultura familiar. Apoiando-se em uma abordagem institucionalista dos mercados e em uma tipologia dos canais de comercialização, pretendemos evidenciar como a diversificação do acesso aos canais de comercialização pode oportunizar maior autonomia e resiliência aos agricultores e, ao mesmo tempo, criar oportunidades de acesso a alimentos saudáveis para os consumidores.

Palavras-chave: sociologia econômica; mercados alimentares; agricultura familiar; canais de comercialização

Sociología de los mercados de alimentos: revisión y aportes teóricos y metodológicos recientes

Resumen

En los últimos años, se ha producido un "cambio analítico" en la sociología rural hacia la sociología de los mercados, que ha culminado en una creciente valoración de los espacios de transacción comercial no sólo como proveedores de alimentos, sino como promotores del desarrollo rural, la inclusión social y la preservación del medio ambiente. A pesar de estos avances, sigue siendo necesario avanzar teóricamente en el análisis de los mercados y su dinámica de gobernanza. En este sentido, es particularmente importante comprender el funcionamiento y las estructuras de mercado que rigen los intercambios realizados entre los agricultores familiares y los compradores de sus productos. El objetivo de este artículo es realizar una discusión teórica que permita una mejor comprensión de las dimensiones sociológicas y metodológicas de los mercados de la agricultura familiar. Apoyándonos en un enfoque institucionalista de los mercados y en una tipología de canales de comercialización, pretendemos destacar cómo la diversificación del acceso a los canales de comercialización puede proporcionar una mayor autonomía y resiliencia a los agricultores y, al mismo tiempo, crear oportunidades de acceso a alimentos saludables para los consumidores.

Palabras clave: sociología económica; mercados de abastos; agricultura familiar; Canales de comercialización

1 Introduction

The discussion on markets has remained largely undertheorized among social scientists. The observation that the study of markets is a pertinent task for sociology was first raised by Fligstein (1996), and later reinforced by Lie (1997) and Swedberg (2003). As a result, the study of markets emerged and made a fundamental contribution to economic sociology, creating a consensus on the need to better understand how they are organized, what social forces govern them and, above all, how the power relations and mechanisms of domination that enable different forms of interaction in these spaces of exchange are constructed.

Research currently underway shows that markets are not just spaces for interaction between supply and demand, restricted to economics laws on wealth

creation, allocation and distribution in societies. Markets have come to be perceived and understood as spaces for social interaction, which are constructed by means of relations that are not only material and tangible, but fundamentally activated through social, cultural and cognitive interactions.

From this understanding, markets can be interpreted as mechanisms for exchanging goods and merchandise, in which at least one seller and one buyer participate and agree to make an exchange through which the right to ownership of a good or its equivalent is transferred. Thus, markets are social relations established for the purpose of making exchanges. Markets as exchange relations are, therefore, socially constructed, which implies that there are individual interests and motivations as well as collective rules and conventions governing these relations and enabling their functioning. In complex societies, with large population and high mobility, interactions intended to carry out exchanges are mediated by the use of money or another device, and the prices of products and merchandise are indicators of the value of the goods exchanged, which arouse the feelings and impulses of individuals to exchange and transact. Therefore, markets are a social fact, since they are ruled and determined by relations between individuals who are immersed in structures of rules and cultural values that create external coercion.

For markets to function properly and for social exchange relations to occur without risks and setbacks, there must be rules and norms, which are the institutions that organize and govern markets. The understanding that markets arise from the social fabric in which they are embedded allows us to affirm that there are no markets without some type of coercion or regulation, whether formal or informal. The understanding of markets as social constructions has become the focus of economic sociology, which studies how markets function and seeks to understand how economic exchanges occur while immersed in social rules that organize these interactions.

In this paper, we intend to analyze the market structures that govern exchanges between family farmers and buyers of their products and the functioning of these markets. It is worth noting that the degree and intensity of market exchanges conducted by farmers varies significantly. Nevertheless, even among farmers who could be identified as peasants there exist relations with markets. Agrarian political economy and rural sociology have long discussed the degree and intensity to which peasants' relation to markets becomes a distinctive factor in defining their identity or class status. We can dispense with recurrently revisiting this discussion, but it is worth noting that, insofar as farmers' social reproduction relies on their integration into markets, a kind of family farmer emerges whose work and production are at least partly destined for sale and exchange, although keeping production for family's own consumption.

Family farmers integration into markets plays an important role in food supply to cities in many parts of the world, contributing significantly to food security and nutritional diversity for urban people (BLONDEAU, KORZENSZKY, 2022; FAO, 2019). The marketing of fresh and healthy food plays a fundamental role in the food system. In recent years, there has been a growing appreciation of these marketing mechanisms in spaces that go beyond food supply, also promoting job and income opportunities (MARSDEN, LAMINE, SCHNEIDER, 2020), furthering social inclusion

(PLOEG, YE, SCHNEIDER, 2022), and contributing to environmental protection (SCHNEIDER, CASSOL, 2023).

In this context, gaining a better understanding of marketing mechanisms and the diversity of channels used becomes critical. Food markets are not limited to traditional spaces of exchange, such as open-air markets and cooperatives, but are also expanding into the digital environment, taking advantage of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (NIEDERLE, SCHNEIDER, CASSOL, 2021; PREISS et al., 2021). Therefore, family farming markets are plural and diverse, what makes them central to the development of sustainable and resilient food systems.

In this sense, this article offers a theoretical discussion intended to enable a better understanding of the sociological and methodological dimensions of family farming markets. Drawing on an institutionalist approach to markets and a typology of marketing channels, we aim to demonstrate that access to diversified marketing channels can provide greater autonomy and resilience for farmers, while generating opportunities for consumers to access healthy food.¹

The text is structured into seven sections, in addition to this introduction. Section two discusses the main approaches and challenges within economic sociology to analyzing markets, with emphasis on the institutionalist approach. In section three we relate the debate in economic sociology to processes of family farming commoditization. In section four we analyze the methodological aspects of the territorial market approach and some results of recent research. Section five presents an analysis of the emergence of digital sales channels for food supply by family farmers. Section six presents brief notes on typologies in social sciences. The last section is dedicated to final remarks.

2 Meetings between economic sociology and the sociology of markets

Although sociological discussion on markets is not a new topic, its theorization is recent. Initially, sociological classics addressed the dimensions of the economy through a macro-sociological perspective, concerned with the cultural and social transformations resulting from the development of modern capitalist society. A central dimension of these processes was the generalization of markets in reproduction of social life, which received attention in the genesis of sociology (WEBER, 1991; DURKHEIM, 2010; MATTEDI, 2005; STEINER, 2000).

Despite its promising beginnings, the analysis of economic phenomena – and markets – lost strength in sociology during the interregnum between the two world wars. This sociological disregard for the economy was mainly a result of the influence exerted by Parsons (1956) and his disciplinary division between economics and sociology. For him, sociology would be destined for analyzing the values that guide social action, and therefore the motivations and social representations that lead agents to act. Economics, on the other hand, would be responsible for investigating the choices between means and ends, that is, for analyzing the rationality and

¹ This article is part of the results of research activities planned in the project “Digital food markets in Brazil: dynamics, innovations and challenges of commercialization in family farming” funded by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovations (MCTI), through Call 40/2022 (Process No. 409231/2022-3).

calculation involved in the processes of exchange and transaction of goods, products and services (PARSONS, 1956).

Such demarcation of the scientific objects of sociology and economics removed the analysis of “central economic institutions” from the sociological field. According to Swedberg (2003), classical sociology, despite its general interest in economics, did not intentionally focus on eminently economic themes such as market, money and firms. Although markets have been present in sociology since its origins, theorizing about them is a relatively recent phenomenon.

It was in the 1980s that sociology resumed the analysis of phenomena held dear to economics, mainly influenced by intellectuals such as White (1981) and Granovetter (2007). This resumption renewed sociological investigations in this field, which, by imprinting a scientific intentionality on the sociological aspects of economic institutions, triggered a set of diversified studies and analytical approaches to explain and claim the economy as a tributary of social and cultural mechanisms.²

Thus, the sociology of markets arises (KRIPPNER, 2001; FOURCADE, 2007). Although emerging from research carried out within economic sociology, the sociology of markets aims to be distinct and more specific (SWEDBERG, 2005). While economic sociology can be defined as the study of the general characteristics and conditions of economic life (which includes various processes related to the relations of production and reproduction of social life), the sociology of markets refers, more strictly, to the investigation of a type of social exchange and the processes that constitute, transform and characterize it, and which is consolidated with the advancement of capitalism (SMELSER; SWEDBERG, 2005). In this sense, the sociology of markets aims to investigate the origins, dynamics, characteristics and social and sociological operations constituted *within* markets (FLIGSTEIN; DAUTER, 2012).

There is a consensus among market sociologists on two premises. The first concerns the definition that markets are social structures shaped and constructed by the relationships established between “firms, workers, suppliers, customers and governments” (FLIGSTEIN; DAUTER, 2012, p. 481). The second refers to the three main sociological mechanisms of constitution, orientation and characterization of this specific type of social exchange: social networks (BURT, 1992; GRANOVETTER, 2007; WHITE, 1981); institutions (POLANYI, 2012; DOBBIN, 1994; FLIGSTEIN, 1996) and culture/ performativity (CALLON, 1998; MACKENZIE, 2005; ZELIZER, 2009).

Theoretical approaches that highlight social networks as the main sociological mechanisms for investigating markets focus on the traditional ties established between actors as the cornerstone of exchange structures. Social interactions establish the material basis that allows the stabilization of exchanges of goods between agents. Power relations, co-optation, access to information and trust are elements analyzed to understand markets, with emphasis on the relational and networked social position of actors within the economic field (WHITE, 1981).

Institutionalist approaches focus on contextualizing cognition and interactions within specific and shared social rules, norms and values. Markets are defined as governance mechanisms or devices based on formal or informal rules and practices, which guide economic action (POLANYI, 1976). In this case, the imperative

² This historical moment will give rise to the so-called New Economic Sociology (GRANOVETTER; SWEDBERG, 1992).

for the existence of markets as a stable and intelligible order lies in the social rules and norms contextually shared among economic actors.

According to Polanyi (2014, p.41), a market economy is one organized through markets, that is, based on the supply and demand mechanism for price formation. However, its existence is only possible if purchases of goods in one market are the result of income from the sale of other goods in other markets. The market, therefore, is a central organ for the functioning of the economy's circulation system. In market economies, the main mechanism of this circulation is the free formation of prices.

In this sense, the economy can be defined as an aggregate of economic elements embedded in institutions, and these institutions are predominantly economic only when such elements are concentrated (POLANYI, 2014a). However, and here is Polanyi seminal contribution, economic institutions are not made up only of economic elements, nor are economic elements found only in economic institutions. Markets are, therefore, aggregates of diverse institutions that guide both the economy and the exchanges.

Finally, cultural or performative approaches³ define markets as resulting from shared meanings, identities, normative understandings and “calculative processes involving specific technologies and artifacts that actors employ” (FLIGSTEIN; DAUTER, 2012, p. 482). Markets are spaces where a set of cultural beliefs and meanings act to guide interactions and assign value and meaning to objects (ZELIZER, 2009). It is the cultural dimension that solidifies the social order underlying exchanges, insofar as it is culture that establishes what objects are interchangeable, what practices are legitimate and how exchange should occur (CALLON, 1998).

The analysis of these three approaches allows us to notice that all of them conceptualize markets as arenas or social orders within which different actors (consumers, customers, workers, producers, entrepreneurs, etc.) and organizations (companies, cooperatives, government, social movements, etc.) interact and compete to exchange and interchange goods and services. Furthermore, they all work with the assumption that markets are *social constructions*, that is, they are constituted as a set of exchanges and transactions that are *embedded* in social and cultural relations.

However, these approaches differ regarding the sociological imperatives that generate order and market stabilization: interpersonal networks, institutional rules and norms or the cultural meanings and artifacts mobilized.

These differences have been currently challenged. Beckert (2010) argues that economic sociology must construct comprehensive analyses of the three sociological mechanisms that define markets. According to him, social networks, institutions and culture should be analyzed in an interconnected manner, since all three dimensions are present in any exchange of goods and services.

³ There is no consensus regarding definitions of the cultural/performative approach. Beckert (2010), for example, considers cultural approaches without referring to those that mobilize performativity. Fligstein and Dauter (2012), on the other hand, state that culture is present in all three sets of approaches, highlighting the performative approach as distinct from the cultural one. Finally, authors such as Levin (2008) perceive a dualism in the mobilization of the cultural dimension in the sociology of markets, which sometimes leans towards the view that culture constitutes markets, and sometimes towards the fact that it is a dimension that influences markets.

Similarly, Fligstein and Dauter (2012) argue that the authors of these three approaches overemphasize their distinctions as specific theoretical groups, what ends up concealing possible interfaces and/or complementarities between them. Furthermore, the exaggerated focus on networks, institutions and culture disregards other key theoretical perspectives in the sociological debate on economics, especially political economy and population ecology.

The fact is that the consolidation of economic and market sociology, achieved over the last 35 years, has highlighted the non-economic (sociological) dimensions of markets, with important repercussions and spillovers into different areas of scientific knowledge. This recognition entails the need to refine analyses in this field, with the integration of different approaches being the main challenge of contemporary research.⁴

One of these areas that has established interfaces with the sociology of markets is rural sociology, especially in discussions related to family farming (WILKINSON, 2008; NIEDERLE; WESZ JR, 2018; SCHNEIDER; CASSOL, 2021). Drawing on the broader debate on the need to transform food systems, authors have emphasized the centrality of food markets in ensuring people's access to healthy, fair, and quality food. Thus, markets began to be seen as inducers of innovations and novelties, as mechanisms for productive inclusion, as generators of income, and as connections between rural (agricultural production) and urban (food consumption) (SCHNEIDER; CASSOL, 2023).

This convergence between economic sociology and rural sociology has led to "reinterpretations" of the role of markets and commoditization processes affecting family farming and rural development.

3 Rural sociology meets economic sociology: family farming, commoditization and the social construction of markets

The analysis of markets is a topic even more recent in rural sociology (SCHNEIDER, 2016). This debate dates back to investigations into processes of commoditization consummated with the advance of capitalism in agriculture at the beginning of the 20th century. From Marx's (1982) interpretations of the advance of commoditization as a social process that generates the need for a society based on production of goods to reproduce itself, different researchers have focused on the impacts of this process on rural areas and agriculture.

Scholars sought, mostly, to understand to what extent increase in mercantile relations based on exchange values would impact traditional (peasant) social ordering in agriculture, mainly characterized by the lack of distinction between ownership of the means of production and workers (peasants). In agriculture, social relations of production were organized and managed on a family basis, implying inexistence of social relations of expropriation of labor between owners of the means of production and suppliers of labor. According to the Marxist definition, therefore, peasant agriculture was a non-capitalist space, since the entire production

⁴ It is not the purpose of this article to delve into this discussion. Although it is important and necessary, hence its mention, its discussion is intended to be held in a future work.

process was managed by the family. Such dynamics starts to be influenced by increasing commoditization.

The major sociological question of that period lay on investigating whether access to markets would change the character of peasants or whether they would subordinate themselves to such relations, becoming dependent on markets (SCHNEIDER, 2016). Markets per se were not the object of analysis for rural sociologists then. Scholars' concerns were aimed at investigating the role that peasants could play in the processes of agrarian transition resulting from capitalist advancement.

The analysis of this issue has led to different interpretations. At the beginning of the 20th century, Lenin (1988) interpreted the increase in interaction with markets as a negative process, which would generate increasing social differentiation, eroding peasant forms of production. Chayanov (1966), on the other hand, observed that the peasantry's family and demographic base conferred an advantage upon peasants: relative autonomy in their relationship with markets.

In the middle of the same century, Mendras (1978) advocated the "end of peasant societies", warning that the advance of capitalism had extinguished the social conditions for existence of rural communities. Shanin (1973) reached a similar conclusion through different analytical means: even though they did not cease to exist as such, the social process of commoditization would increase the subordination of peasants to markets, altering their social condition.

Since the 1990s, however, investigations into the relationships between family farming and markets have converged on a central point for the debate on the role of food markets: the evidence that, depending on the social process generated by commercialization, the increase in farmers' interactions with markets can be positive for rural development processes (MARSDEN, LAMINE, SCHNEIDER, 2020).

This interpretation draws on: the multifunctional characteristics of agriculture, the relative autonomy and the agency capacity of farmers to establish "room for maneuver" in disputes for their social and economic reproduction (PLOEG, 2008; PLOEG; YE; SCHNEIDER, 2022); on the productive inclusion derived from access to markets, especially for young people and rural women (FAO, 2014); on the centrality of markets for the consolidation of sustainable and healthy food systems by bringing urban and rural areas closer together (SCHNEIDER; CASSOL, 2023).

Similarly, contemporary analyses of food markets have been associated with debates on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As highlighted by several studies, the restructuring of markets, especially those linked to family farming, can affect several SDGs, decisively impacting sustainable development processes. Among the main contributions of food markets are the eradication of hunger, achievement of food and nutritional security, development of farming styles that guarantee sustainable production and consumption patterns for the future, eradication of poverty, promotion of health and well-being, economic growth on new production bases, and even reduction of the effects of climate change (MCKENZIE; WILLIAMS, 2015; FEITOSA *et al.*, 2022; MARSDEN, LAMINE, SCHNEIDER, 2020).

This "analytical turn" in research on food markets gained relevance by appropriating the previously discussed theoretical interpretations proposed by economic and market sociology, which induced the understanding that these spaces

are environments of exchange resulting from political, historical, social and cultural dimensions and that they are paramount to development processes.

The sociological discussion on markets has effectively become incorporated into rural studies, “shifting” the focus of analysis from the general processes of capitalist transformation in agriculture and their impacts on family forms of production, to the investigation of food markets themselves and how family farmers build and manage them. As highlighted by Schneider (2016, p. 105)

The current discussion is different [from that held until the mid-20th century], as it focuses on the *analysis of peasants or farmers’ integration into markets*, seeking to understand how these relationships occur, how such interaction is constructed, what are the factors that favor or restrict relations with markets, among other sociological questions (our emphasis).

In other words, food markets have been “sociologized” by incorporating premises of economic sociology, notably that markets are socially constructed, considering their cultural, reticular and institutional dimensions (SCHNEIDER; CASSOL, 2021). Thus, a profusion of studies emerge that will use the empirical dimensions of food markets to problematize these sociological aspects.

The well-known approach of alternative agri-food networks draws on the reticular dimension to argue that interpersonal and organizational relationships are locally structured, giving rise to new markets whose imperative lies in “food quality” (MARSDEN; RENTING, 2017).

Likewise, the analyses of Silva and Souza (2022) and Cassol and Colpari (2021) vindicate the cultural dimension of food markets, mobilizing Zelizer 's (2009) cultural perspective for examining how cultural mechanisms that qualify foods that come from short circuits establish new trade circuits.

Finally, a significant body of research has mobilized the sociological dimension of institutions to analyze food markets. Following on a debate that emerged in the late 1990s, this research pointed to the need to go beyond spatial dimensions and food qualification devices and focus on the mechanisms of governance, control and power that surround exchange relations between farmers, traders and consumers.

This movement gave rise to discussions about *territorial markets (nested markets)*.⁵ In connection with previous studies, the territorial markets approach postulates that, more than shorter spatial distances (social networks) or the food’s particular quality proper (culture), it is the way actors act contextually in the construction of social institutions (formal and informal norms and rules), which enable them to compete and dispute with conventional markets, that is the most important dimension for their development.

⁵ What we call here territorial markets has been differently named in other studies, as ‘nested markets’ (PLOEG, 2015; SCHNEIDER, SALVATE, CASSOL, 2016), “peasant markets” (PLOEG, YE, SCHNEIDER, 2022), among others.

4 Territorial markets: the recent new frontier

The territorial markets approach has been developed from a fruitful contemporary research agenda, concerned with sociologically theorizing the social construction of these spaces (HEBINK; PLOEG; SCHNEIDER, 2014; PLOEG, 2015; LOCONTO, 2018; PLOEG; YE; SCHNEIDER, 2022; CASSOL; SCHNEIDER, 2022; DEGGERONE, 2021).

The topic gained special relevance in 2015 when the FAO entered the discussion on territorial markets. The document entitled *Connecting Smallholders to Markets*, prepared by the *Committee on World Food Security*, presented a series of important evidence-based issues for improving farmers' access to food markets (CFS, 2016). Following the guidance provided in the CFS document, a series of *workshops* was held, with FAO support, in several countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa, and subsequently a methodology for identifying and mapping territorial markets accessed by smallholder farming was developed and published under the title *Mapping of Territorial Markets* (FAO, 2021). Results indicated the potential of territorial markets to encourage sustainable agricultural practices through local food systems, as most food is marketed in the districts where it was produced.

The term territorial market seems to have definitively entered the international lexicon, gaining great prominence since the recent publication of IPES-FOOD (2024), which presents an overview and an operational definition of territorial markets. Recognizing the diversity of definitions, the document clearly defines territorial markets as all those in which exchanges involving food are carried out on a regional/local basis, and which entail culturally close relationships between suppliers and consumers, show predominance of small farmers or traders, are multifunctional and based on either formal or informal supply networks. Territorial markets, therefore, comprise a spectrum of forms and types of marketing channels and economic relations that are embedded on a smaller scale and located outside corporate food supply networks (IPES-FOOD, 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, we may say that the concept of territorial markets interprets economic and commercial transactions involving family farmers by considering the socially constructed processes based on creation of social institutions (formal and informal rules) that are responsible for ordering transactions between participant actors. The institutions created to govern these exchanges can be understood as power devices that allow governance in markets. Actors who have the prerogative to define and influence the rules also hold the power to govern them. These governance processes occur on a physical basis, a given and used space as referred to by geographer Milton Santos. It is in this space, therefore, that relationships and disputes of/for power take place, what makes the physical space a territory. Therefore, territorial markets are spaces where actors are immersed in and act to build transaction and commoditization mechanisms such as open-air markets, cooperatives or other family farming commercialization networks.

The concept of territorial markets has three theoretical sources. The first is connected to the tradition of political sociology of peasantry (SHANIN, 1973) – taken up by Ploeg (2015) – and its debate with agrarian political economy (BERNSTEIN, 1986) and food regimes approaches (FRIEDMAN; McMICHEL, 1989). Despite some

divergences, all of these recognize the significant effects of commodification on the productive base and the social differentiation among farmers.

The second refers to economic sociology, mainly the theoretical framework consolidated around the work of Karl Polanyi (1976; 2012) and his concept of *embeddedness*. This author innovated by revealing how markets can only function to the extent that they are socially and culturally embedded in norms, rules and values responsible for institutionalizing economic practices and services over time.

The third theoretical framework is based on Ostrom's (1999; 2010) research and his notion of *common pool resources*. Ostrom demonstrated that in situations of scarcity and restrictions (access to water, pastures, conservation of landscapes, etc.), social actors cooperate in building collective governance mechanisms intended to preserve or maintain common goods, avoiding conflict, anomie and opportunism. Such collective governance ascribes the status of common resources to certain assets, which, due to their size or characteristics, are very costly for private appropriation. In the case of territorial markets, common pool resources refer to the rules and norms (institutions) created by the actors themselves for the commercialization of their products (PLOEG, 2015).

Territorial food markets can be defined as *concrete, socially constructed spaces that emerge in the interstices of conventional markets and are based on social interaction between actors and a set of shared norms, rules and values that guide economic behavior and enable the generation of common benefits for the involved actors* (PLOEG, 2015).

According to Schneider, Almeida and Brasil (2022), territorial markets can be understood as resources sustained by either formal (laws, contracts, standards) or informal/tacit (values, habits, customs) rules and practices and that are spatially based. Territorial markets operate by means of reference institutions that guide and direct or even exert pressure and coercion on the exchanges of goods and services between suppliers and buyers. These markets are not isolated or disconnected from global markets; on the contrary, they exist and reproduce themselves in relation to them, using strategies of resistance, reaction and even coupling to maintain their relative autonomy (SALVATE; SCHNEIDER, 2023).

Territorial markets, therefore, result from social institutions collectively built and managed within a social/territorial space that is connected to and interacts with global markets. This construction relies on interconnections established between agents seeking to solve common problems through valorization of territorial resources, what can generate new dynamics of work, management and commercialization (CAZELLA et al., 2024).

According to Pecqueur (2005) there can be either given or constructed territories. The first ones have no added or produced value, but entail well defined geographical limits of range, making this classification more appropriate to deal with actions that involve public policies or development projects. Constructed territories, in turn, have rather dynamic limits of scope, as they depend on actors' coordination in mobilizing the available resources for creating goods or services that carry some type of value. Territorial markets, in this sense, belong to this second type of territory. These markets are mechanisms and/or devices of control and governance based on formal (laws, contracts, standards) and informal (values, customs, habits) norms and practices. It is these norms that enable common guidelines, references and

conventions that guide and order exchange relationships between actors, involving goods, merchandise and services, including establishing hierarchies, power relations and coercion.

Governance standards established when social norms are instituted have five characteristics, which are essential for any market (not just food markets): 1) how the specificities of traded products are constructed; 2) how these products circulate in time and space; 3) who are the participant actors with power to manage these dynamics and build rules; 4) what rules and norms of production, circulation and use/consumption of products are legitimized; 5) what is the position of the market in a broader economic and social context (PLOEG; YE; SCHNEIDER, 2022).

In the case of territorial food markets, despite their structural diversities, common governance patterns can be summarized as follows, taking into account the five characteristics described above.

Territorial markets in which family farmers participate are centered on a family production system, which grows food that bears the “brand” of this system and is valued and appreciated by consumers (1). Transactions are carried out through both geographically and socially short channels (2). The main actors in the management of all dimensions of the supply chain (production, packaging, transportation, marketing) are family members (3). The rules and norms that determine the operation of these markets are nested within shared understandings between producers and consumers. These norms arise from the processes of historical, political, and cultural formation of exchange relationships in the territories (4). Finally, family farming markets are not directly controlled by capital, much less by the pursuit of the greatest possible profit. They operate as alternatives or represent opposition to global markets (5) (PLOEG; YE; SCHNEIDER, 2022).

Thus, there is a clear capacity of agency of family farmers to strategically manage the commodification processes. Even recognizing that the intensification of relations with broader markets has changed agricultural practices, and affected the organization of work, the principles of sociability and the way these farmers interact with markets, the nested markets perspective ascribes centrality to the collective capacities of these actors to choose, based on the social institutions they build and share, what marketing channels they will access (DEGGERONE, 2021).

However, we should remember that territorial markets do not exist in isolation, nor do they form ‘pure types’, as Max Weber said. In this sense, it is worth noting the relationship between the specific type of territorial market and the context in which it is immersed. In a recent article, Bernard Pecqueur (2024) highlighted the relationship between territorial markets and the food system. Pecqueur emphasizes that the conventional system produced a rupture between farmers and space. This rupture caused the disappearance of coherent sets of ecosystems based on practices and processes constructed by actors in territorial environments. However, it is such rupture that makes possible to devise new territorial food systems (PECQUEUR, 2024).

According to Pecqueur, a food system can be defined based on five constituent functions of supply chains and their flows: production, processing, distribution, consumption and recycling. The systems are open to the spatial environment (urban core, peri-urban area, peripheries), and require anchoring. Anchoring is the set of specific elements involved in the qualification of products and

goods that are related to the geographic, cultural, social and historical dimensions of the territories, which distinguish one system – and one territory – from another (PECQUEUR, 2024).

In short, territorial markets are a form of interaction mainly based on reciprocal relations (POLANYI, 2012). However, this type of market coexists with other forms, such as those based on domesticity, centrality and self-regulation mechanisms.

This is the referential basis adopted by Schneider (2016) and Marsden, Lamine and Schneider (2020) to suggest a typology of food markets constructed and accessed by Brazilian family farmers, which ultimately represents a meeting point or convergence between economic sociology and rural sociology.

5 Typology of food markets and marketing channels: an ongoing methodological construction

The methodology that will be outlined below has as its critical starting point the understanding that the study of markets is not restricted to supply and demand relations. The forms of exchanging, transacting, negotiating and exchanging are permeated by sociological dimensions that stem from historical processes of conformation of the markets and the relations that constitute them. However, supply and demand relations can be understood as the phenomenological, practical, empirical expression of the existence of market institutions, which can be grasped and identified by examining the marketing channels used to connect sellers and buyers.

As Schneider (2016) points out echoing Karl Polanyi's approach, markets exist only as *market relations*. That is, markets are *theoretical expressions of ensembles of relations* that configure different forms of exchange and interchange. However, methodologically, these market relations must assume a *real and phenomenical character*, which is concretized in the dimension of *marketing channels*. In other words, marketing channels express the *ways of being and existing* of market relations.

This entails the need to create a methodological proposal for a typology of markets and marketing channels. The typology follows Swedberg's (2005) suggestion that "it is possible to create a typology of markets by focusing on the type of merchandise that is traded: money, consumer goods, machines to be used in production, and so on" (2005, p. 241). This suggestion was linked to Polanyi's (2012) idea about the coexistence of different types of economic integration, which are indicators of economic actors' motivations to engage in social exchange relations. Thus, a typology was created that allows us to understand the diversity of farmers' interactions with markets and their different forms of ordering and embeddedness.⁶

To understand the dynamics of the different types of markets, it was necessary to define an empirical unit of analysis that would allow observing objective and discrete differences, hence the choice of marketing channels accessed by

⁶ The typology has been tested nationally through ongoing research linked to the *Public Policies and Innovations Project for Building More and Better Markets for Family Farmers in Brazil – creation of the market research network*, which is funded by CNPq.

economic agents. According to Schneider (2023), marketing channels can be defined as interdependent devices that are

endowed with physical (material infrastructure), technological and informational resources that allow a product, good or service to be commercialized (commercial exchanges), that is: transferred from one agent or space to another to be used or consumed through purchase, barter or other form of exchange.

This definition highlights the existence of a myriad of commercial forms carried out by social actors, which are expressed in different marketing channels. In the case of family farming, this commercial versatility is expressed in a *continuum* that ranges from production for the family own consumption to participation in specialized production systems. In between these poles there is a set of social and economic arrangements that establish different exchanges and types of sales (direct and indirect), formal and/or informal marketing and distribution relationships, among others (DEGGERONE; SCHNEIDER, 2022).

In an early and pioneering work on market typology, Schneider (2016) suggested that market diversity could be grasped in examining access to marketing channels. In that work, which is reproduced on the left side of Figure 1 below, the author indicated two criteria: autonomy *versus* dependence and the production of private goods for the family's own use *versus* public goods intended for exchange value. In short, the typology sought to grasp the greater or lesser intensity of farmers' interaction with markets and the destination of the food produced by the family (SCHNEIDER, 2016).

The central and distinctive element in marketing channels used in local, territorial, conventional and institutional markets are contracts. While in local and territorial markets the sales channels used are practically informal and do not have contractual relations, in conventional and institutional markets contracts are mandatory, that is, it is not possible to carry out a marketing transaction without the existence of a formal mediation device between sellers and buyers.

The institutional theoretical perspective that underpins the typology assumes that markets can be regulated and controlled by rules and norms (laws, contracts, taxes, reputation, tradition, etc.) and that these spaces can be expanded and enlarged (public policies, cooperatives, social networks). For this to occur, however, it is necessary to understand the internal sociological dynamics of such spaces.

Chart 1 - Typology of markets and channels of commercialization

Proximity	Territorial	Conventional	Institutional
Farmers association; Pick-your-own; Baskets delivery; Municipal open-air market; Consumers group (CSA); Door to door sales; On-farm sales;	Small cooperative; Regional open-air market; Sporadic open-air markets; Hospitals, daycare centers; welfare organizations; Specialty stores, boutiques;	Large-scale private agribusinesses; Middlemen, hawkers; Large cooperative enterprises; Wholesaler companies; Agro-industrial processors; Regional and transnational	Nursing homes, popular restaurants; Jails, prisons, detention centers; Fair trade companies; Government stocks (CONAB); Armed forces; Public universities; School meals (PNAE)

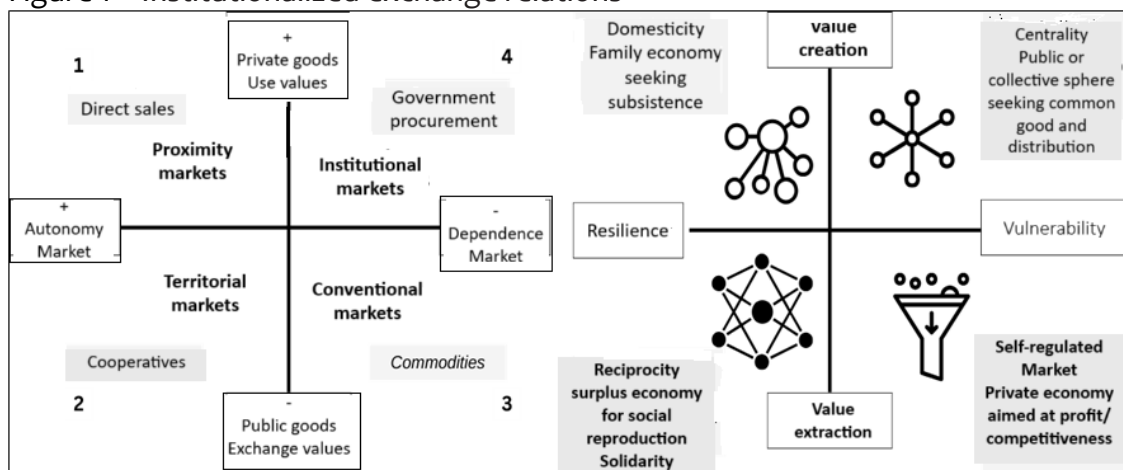


Source: Based on Schneider (2016; 2023).

The chart above summarizes the four types of food markets and marketing channels accessed by Brazilian family farmers. *Proximity markets* are generally spaces where only direct sales occur, exchanges are interpersonal, and relationships of friendship and trust predominate. *Territorial markets* are characterized by a greater presence of supply and demand relationships. Therefore, forms of regulation based on reputation, origin and prices become predominant, what allows geographic expansion of these markets. *Conventional markets* are those characterized by competitive exchanges, absence of a specific defined location, regulation through contracts and price systems and dominance of private economic agents. Finally, *institutional markets* have as their main characteristics being regulated by the State and driven by demand (SCHNEIDER, 2016).

Figure 1 summarizes the types of markets, marketing channels and social exchange relations institutionalized in each of them (domesticity; centrality; reciprocity and self-regulation). Furthermore, the vertical and horizontal axes present the economic dimensions of value creation and extraction and the social dimensions of resilience and vulnerability produced by the interactions of family farmers with the markets.

Figure 1 – Institutionalized exchange relations



Source: Schneider (2023).

By considering these types of markets through the lens of the debates on sociology of markets presented above, we may infer that proximity markets are those in which local social networks of interaction and trade are predominant, resulting in small commercial spaces where domesticity relations predominate. Conventional markets are those in which commercial exchanges based on impersonality and formal contracts prevail. Generally, due to power inequalities and

competition, family farmers have limited agency and autonomy in these markets. Institutional markets, for being characterized by centralized economic relations, are based on formal norms and rules and are restricted in terms of resources, sales volume, and number of involved farmers. Finally, territorial markets are characterized by the construction of common norms and resources, which allow the spatial extension of social networks of interaction and trade, while preserving farmers' resilience and governance, expanding relations of economic cooperation and reciprocity. In this sense, markets of this type can represent an increase in both production scale and income, besides improving development processes in family farming.

The hypothesis behind these interpretations is found in the following statement: *the greater the diversity of markets with which farmers interact and within which they are integrated, the better their conditions for maintaining and reproducing their livelihoods will be* (ELLIS, 1988). Conversely, the more homogeneous and standardized the interactions and relationships between farmers and markets, the poorer their conditions for social reproduction will be. Therefore, the social and economic diversity characteristic of family farming depends not only on the heterogeneous production systems it develops, but also on the existence of and its insertion in multiple marketing channels.

Thus, it is possible to infer a typology of markets and marketing channels for family farming that express the diversity of commercial relationships established by these actors. We can classify three groups of family farmers according to the number of marketing channels they access:

- 1 – **Exclusive:** family farmers who access only one marketing channel;
- 2 – **Diversified:** family farmers who access two to three marketing channels;
- 3 – **Super diversified:** family farmers who access four or more marketing channels.

The analysis of this gradient of sales channel diversity is complemented by a set of indicators that allow us to understand the social and economic relations established by the actors within them. These indicators are: *infrastructure* (physical and material resources used); *logistics* (distribution and marketing strategies); *pricing* (price mechanisms; exchange, purchase and sale strategies); *regulation* (formal or informal norms and rules guiding marketing).

In addition to the channels dimension, the typology analyzes the different types of markets that encompass them. The markets have their own characteristics according to their nature, dynamics, type of farmer, spatial reach and forms of regulation and governance that they establish (SCHNEIDER, 2016).

Therefore, the diversity of marketing channels is linked to different types of food markets. Each type of market has characteristics that can be accessed and understood according to indicators and variables, such as *the exchanges nature* (own consumption vs. sale); *power* (number of options regarding sales/exchange channels); *information* (access vs. restrictions on prices paid); *uncertainty* (exchange norms and rules: reputation vs. contracts); *competitiveness* (price, cost, competition).

The developed typology is based on a set of dimensions (channels and markets), indicators (infrastructure, regulation, competitiveness, uncertainty, etc.) and variables (own consumption, norms and rules, price, etc.) that allow us to

understand the governance processes within food markets of Brazilian family farming. Developing an in-depth discussion on market governance is beyond the scope of this article, but it is worth highlighting that this topic is related to a key sociological issue, namely the power relations between agents that participate in the markets.

Several empirical studies have been developed in recent years to test the proposed typology and investigate the dynamics between family farming and markets. Deggerone (2021; 2022) demonstrated the low diversity of channels accessed by family farming in Aratiba/RS, highlighting the predominance of conventional and territorial markets in the actors' economic dynamics and the fact that those who adopted diversified marketing strategies showed greater ability to keep a balance between productive autonomy and social reproduction.

Farias (2023), when analyzing goat and sheep farming in Ceará, found a scenario of greater diversification of accessed marketing channels. Despite limitations in commercial control in some cases, the author demonstrated how family farmers build sales diversification strategies that result in greater resilience in the face of markets.

Finally, Salvate (2019) and Almeida (2022) tested the above detailed typology for analysis of territorial markets, seeking to investigate its main characteristics. Salvate (2019) identified that in strawberry and agritourism markets, the dimensions of product distinctiveness and agent connectivity were more significant, and that in the Organic Farmers Market, distinctiveness and governance predominated. Almeida (2022), in turn, when investigating the case of Ubá's mango market, found that the socio-material infrastructure and distinctiveness dimensions were the most significant in the relations between farmers and the market.⁷

In short, the food markets and marketing channels typology allows us to recognize the diversity of exchange spaces accessed by family farmers. The application of the methodology has shown that greater diversity of marketing channels and types of markets provides opportunities for improving family farmers' conditions for maintaining and reproducing their livelihoods and enhancing their resilience in the face of difficulties.

6 Brief Notes on Typologies in Social Sciences

In social sciences generally, and in sociology in particular, resorting to typologies or classifications to segment, separate or hierarchize different social types is a procedure frequently carried out by technicians, policy makers, as well as by scholars and researchers. Classification can be defined as an intellectual operation to subdivide a concept with a given level of generality into several (two or more) narrower steps with lower level of generality (Marradi, 1990).

In general, mechanisms for classifying the social reality are used to sort out problems of complexity or wider heterogeneity of a given social group. There are two

⁷ The territorial markets dimensions refer to: a) distinctiveness; b) connectivity; c) multifunctionality; d) governance; e) sociomaterial infrastructure. For a more in-depth theoretical discussion and analysis of the results of each variable, we recommend the authors' previously published works (ALMEIDA; SALVATE; SCHNEIDER, 2022; SALVATE; SCHNEIDER, 2022).

main scientific methods: the deductive system, inspired by Descartes, and the inductive-empirical system, inspired by Francis Bacon and David Hume.

The first one is the method that goes from the general to the particular. In the second, conversely, the reasoning moves from the specific to the general, since by means of rejecting and excluding competing possibilities we can arrive at a specific cause.⁸ These scientific methods are the basis of the two main classificatory approaches used to develop typologies, namely *intensional classification* and *extensional classification*. The intensional classification It is associated with *top-down* or deductive approaches, in which the events or objects to be classified are treated according to pre-selected classification principles, such as expert analysis, literature review, historical trajectories, interviews with key actors, field observations (Saravia-Matus et al., 2016). In the case of the extensional classification (also referred to as *bottom-up* or approaches based on data or statistics), the objects or events of a given set are grouped into two or more subsets according to similarities perceived in their empirical states regarding one or (more often) several features.⁹

The objective of any classification and typology elaboration is to create groups, classes or types with the least possible internal variability, using data and information available on each observation (Kageyama; Leone, 1999). The use of multivariate analysis techniques such as principal components and *clusters* is mobilized to aggregate observations into as much as possible homogeneous types.¹⁰

In the social sciences, particularly in rural sociology, according to Whatmore (1994), there are basically three approaches for developing typologies, namely: positivist, realist and hermeneutic. In the positivist or taxonomic approach, types are identified through a selection of empirical data with the aim of ordering observations in either ascending or descending order to identify formal and morphological traits, similarities and differences. In the relational or realist approach, identification of types is based on theoretical assumptions that stem from causal or structural relationships with the aim of explaining processes and establishing cause-effect relationships using deductive procedures. Finally, in the interpretive or hermeneutic approach, identification of types is based on the sense or meaning attributed to certain practices or beliefs through discourses and representations, aiming to explain behavioral and cognitive aspects (it is common to resort to emic categories, which are the way subjects express their subjective understanding of a given phenomenon).

Chart 2, below, presents the typology models suggested by Whatmore (1994) and indicates some of the characteristics related to abstraction, analytical objectives and implications for public policies.

8A review of the works of Descartes, Bacon and Hume can be found in Andery et al. (1994)

9 A third approach suggested by Marradi (1990) is named by him as *classing*, in which the operations of classification involve the assignment of objects or events to previously defined classes or types. For a more in-depth description, we suggest consulting the review by Saravia-Matus et al. (2016).

10 Examples of elaboration of typologies using factor analysis (to identify a smaller number of actors, such as non-observable measures that gather information on the considered variables by analysing their correlations) and cluster analysis (to form homogeneous groups of municipalities, according to their similarities) can be found in Concha, Waquil and Schneider (2009) and Schneider and Waquil (2001).

Chart 2 - Different theoretical approaches to constructing typologies and their relationships

Approaches to typologies	Epistemological context	Basis for abstraction	Primary analytical objective	Influence on public policies
Positivist approach	Positivist	Formal and morphological characteristics (explored area, work, etc.)	Sort out empirical observations	Very influential due to the 'authority of the scientific method' and ease of replication
Relational approach	Realistic	Causal and structural relationships (degree of commodification of production processes, etc.)	Theoretical development: explaining causal processes	Restricted influence due to lack of legitimacy of the explanatory reasons, and criticism for the lack of standardizable criteria/methods
Interpretive approach (Discourse and experiences analysis)	Hermeneutic	Interpretive arguments and representations by agents	Theoretical development: explaining behavioral processes	Marginalized, due to the scientific methods and technical usage problems

Source: Whatmore (1994, p.33).

Typologies that stem from intensional classifications are associated with *top-down* or deductive approaches that interpret reality drawing on reflection or abstract categories. This involves using the Cartesian method to create classifications of reality based on pre-existing social categories, ordering them according to certain criteria, indicators and theoretical variables developed *ex ante*. The positivist approach identified by Whatmore is similar to typologies that stem from extensional classifications as suggested by Marradi. In this case, unlike the previous ones, the starting point is the data and/or empirical information existing in/about reality that can be organized based on discrete indicators such as income, level of education, ownership of assets, use of technological devices, among others.

The construction of a typology implies observing similarities and differences between these information and empirical data (hence called *observations*) and ordering them according to correlations of the morphological characteristics or of observable regularities. The positivist approach does not rely on *a priori* categories, since it assumes the epistemological primacy (well-suited to the empiricist style of Bacon and Hume) that truth and knowledge reside in the development of explanatory causal relationships based on the gradual and progressive enumeration of reality, for which the development of types and classes that reduce the quantity and/or heterogeneity of observations plays an important role. Finally, interpretive typologies resort to the construction of typologies based on the hermeneutic classification of representations and meanings of human action. In this case, the types are more permeable to the existence of similarities between some indicators or variables.

Classifications of social reality to build types is a recurring procedure in social sciences, particularly in empirical sociology.¹¹ Perhaps the most widely known classification is that developed by Ferdinand Tonnies (1947) to distinguish communities and societies, which gave rise to a theoretical model of sociological interpretation that sought to explain social differences through this antagonism. Later, but still under the positivist approach, Emille Durkheim's work on mechanical solidarity (typical of traditional rural communities with reduced mobility and low social differentiation) and organic solidarity (characteristic of modern industrialized societies with a high social division of labor) was fundamental to the construction of what he called average social types, which were pioneeringly applied by the author in his classic study on suicides. With Durkheim, for the first time, sociology began to use multivariate statistics to classify the different types of suicide, based on the universe of death records in France and Germany, and thus determine the average suicide rate according to its type (egoistic, altruistic and anomic) and correlated variables, such as sex, age (young people X adults) and religion.

7 Digital food markets: emergence of a new marketing channel?

In recent years, food markets have experienced the spread of a new type of marketing, which refers to the digitalization of exchanges and transactions involving food and other farming products. In fact, the use of resources to mediate economic exchange relations reflects the exponential increase in digital devices as a form of mediation of social relations in general. Personal communication, access and exchange of information is currently carried out mainly through digital social networks. The analysis of digitalization dates to the turn of the 21st century, when authors such as Castells (1999) identified a new set of social relations generated by the expansion of knowledge-based information and communication technologies (ICTs). Digitalization can be defined as all those “sociotechnical processes that involve the use of digital technologies in the restructuring of social and institutional contexts” (NIEDERLE, SCHNEIDER, CASSOL, 2021, p. 13).

Regarding contemporary food systems, Brunori (2022) argues that they are experiencing a “twin transition”: on the one hand, the incorporation of processes and practices focused on ecology and sustainability, resulting from climate change. On the other hand, the digital transition, which has expanded as a mediating element of food systems relations, with digitalization being a resulting sociotechnical process (BRUNORI, 2022).

In the case of food markets, the COVID-19 pandemic has induced and accelerated several processes of digitalization in family farming food marketing, leading farmers to develop and use various sociotechnical devices (GAZOLLA et al., 2023; SCHNEIDER et al., 2020). This innovative process of using ICTs for food sales, however, entails the extension of previously existing commercial relations established in the family farming physical markets.

¹¹ Empiricist sociology is largely identified with the Chicago school in the United States and especially with the theoretical paradigm founded by sociologist Talcon Parsons in the mid-1930s, whose great influence persist nowadays.

Digitalization does not eliminate physical spaces and face-to-face interactions between farmers and buyers/consumers. On the contrary, exchange and trade interactions mediated by ICTs are based on social networks, institutions and culture mobilized in physical markets (proximity; territorial; institutional; conventional). In many cases, digital markets face competition from physical markets, making their regularity and scaling-up difficult.

Thus, exchanges mediated by digital devices do not constitute new markets – according to the sociological definitions discussed above – but rather new *marketing channels* whose main characteristic is the mediation exercised through the mobilization of ICTs. The novelty of digital marketing channels for family farming food lies in the sociotechnical interface on which they are based. This interface, mediated by ICTs, goes beyond the social dimension inherent to markets, even though it is mobilized and managed from such dimension.

In other words, digital markets for family farming food can be classified as a new form or type of commercial interaction based on digital devices. Thus, it is possible to include them in the typology proposed by Schneider (2016), above analyzed.

Firstly, digital markets are characterized by the presence of family farmers with some degree of collective organization, which allows for a “migration” (of products, producers, consumers and rules and regulations) from physical to digital channels or a ‘reinvention’ of marketing strategies (GAZOLLA; AQUINO, 2021).

Regarding *infrastructure*, it is characterized by the use of physical and digital resources, which differentiates these channels from physical ones. The variety of possible types of digital commerce, which may vary according to the type of platform or digital channel accessed, implies the multiplicity of material, physical and technological resources that are mobilized.

Likewise, the *logistics* of these channels are linked to the nature of the digital channels accessed. For example, farmers can interact with either short-circuit digital channels (home deliveries within municipalities, mediated by *WhatsApp*) or institutional or commercial platforms with a longer reach (such as those developed by cooperatives). Each of these will require a specific set of infrastructures and distribution strategies.

Thirdly, and connected to the previous dimension, *pricing* is related to the nature of exchanges through digital channels. Price mechanisms can catch elements of interpersonality and solidarity, characteristic of local and physical markets – especially in those digital markets organized and managed by family farmers – as well as they can involve pricing mechanisms based on competition and impersonality, typical of conventional markets (when managed by “external” actors). In other words, what distinguishes digital channels is the fact that the forms of mediation (communicative, logistical, etc.) are digitally exercised, even though the characteristics of this digitalization may vary.

Fourthly, the forms of *regulation* of exchanges and governance mechanisms in the case of digital markets for family farming appear to be also structured on relationships of trust, reputation and origin, and may as well be related to prices. In

an ongoing research in Maranhão, involving Canto Agroecológico,¹² it is possible to notice how trust is a value that “migrates” from the agroecological farmers markets circuit to digital marketing, what directly affects the reputation of farmers and the food sold.

Finally, digital markets can comprise diverse marketing channels, as presented by Niederle *et al.* (2021).¹³ Such diversity of channels implies that each of them will result in different dynamics. However, despite this diversity, in sociological terms we believe that the dimensions of social networks, culture and, above all, institutions, will continue to play a central role in exchanges and transactions, making room for a new research agenda around the relationships between family farming (rural sociology) and markets (economic sociology). This new agenda is essential to achieve sustainable, healthy and fair rural development processes and agri-food systems.

5 Final considerations

This article offered reflections that allow understanding the interaction between sociology of markets and rural sociology, especially in the context of family farming. Food markets are seen as central to ensuring access to healthy, quality food, in addition to driving innovation and productive inclusion.

The article highlights the evolution of sociology of markets, its theoretical approaches and the growing importance of markets for family farming and rural development, emphasizing the need to integrate different perspectives for a more comprehensive understanding of these phenomena. The incorporation of economic sociology premise further upholds that food markets are socially constructed and influenced by norms, values and institutions.

The institutionalization of exchanges is seen as essential for the consolidation of sustainable food systems, highlighting the role of standards (formal and informal) in this process. The resulting governance patterns define how dynamics and disputes are expressed in markets, highlighting five essential characteristics: product specificities, temporal and spatial circulation, stakeholder participation, legitimized rules and position occupied in markets in both economic and social contexts.

The territorial food markets approach recognizes the ability of family farmers to strategically manage commodification processes, ascribing centrality to their collective capacities and to the social institutions they build and share. This convergence between economic sociology and rural sociology allows for analyzing markets through the typology of agri-food markets and sales channels, understanding that the diversity of marketing channels provides better conditions for maintaining and reproducing the livelihoods of family farmers.

Regarding digital food markets, it was argued that the digitalization of these markets is an extension of physical markets, whose interactions start being mediated by information and communication technologies. The analysis of the digitalization of sales channels as well as the different types of food markets accessed by family

¹² The ongoing aforementioned research is part of the project *Digital food markets in Brazil: dynamics, innovations and challenges of marketing in family farming*.

¹³ According to Niederle *et al.* (2021), there are at least eight models of digital food markets.

farmers still requires reflection to incorporate explanatory elements of governance mechanisms, and this is an ongoing research agenda.

Finally, we can highlight two more general contributions from the debate undertaken. Firstly, research on markets is essential to understanding the processes of complexification of social life in rural areas, especially those linked to family farming. Even though market entry is a common and widespread initiative, the analysis of what markets are accessed, and in what ways this access occurs, needs to be better understood, since this is a central dimension related to the relations of domination and subordination intrinsic to the marketing processes.

Secondly, studies of markets and their classification based on quantitative criteria, such as the number of channels accessed, and qualitative criteria, such as the nature of exchanges and the modes of regulation and functioning of these spaces, are essential for developing public policies. More than that, this type of research can contribute to the construction of appropriate mechanisms for control and regulation for the local realities in which markets emerge.

This is not only a matter of possibility to design policies aimed at building markets as forms of protection for specific social groups, but also to create forms of access and operation of food marketing capable of restricting or avoiding the discretionary, imposing and excluding power of hegemonic economic agents. In this sense, we argue in favor of inclusive and participatory markets, in which control and regulatory and governance mechanisms are shared by all agents, that is, which make markets a resource for common use.

References

ALMEIDA, N. **A dimensão territorial dos mercados imersos: um estudo de caso sobre o mangá Ubá (MG)**. Tesis (Masters in Rural Development) – Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2022.

ANDERY, M. A. et al. Para compreender a ciência. Rio de Janeiro, Espaço e Tempo, 5ª ed., 1994.

BECKERT, J. How do fields change? The interrelations of institutions, networks and cognition in the dynamics of markets. **Organization Studies**, v. 31, n. 5, p. 605–627, 2010.

BERNSTEIN, H. Capitalismo e pequena produção de mercadorias. **Análise Social: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice**, n. 20, p. 11-28, 1986.

BLONDEAU, S. KORZENSZKY, A. Agricultura Familiar. **Nota de orientação jurídica** 8. Roma, FAO. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8227es>.

BRANCALEONE, C. Comunidade, Sociedade e Sociabilidade: revisitando Ferdinand Tönnies. *Revista de Ciências Sociais*. Vol. 39, nº 2, 2008

BRUNORI, G. Agriculture and rural areas facing the “twin transition”: principles for a sustainable rural digitalisation. *Italian Review of Agricultural Economics* Vol. 77, n. 3: 3-14, 2022

BURT, R.S. **Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition**, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992.

CALLON, M. Introduction: The Embeddedness of Economic Markets. in *Economics. The Sociological Review*, V. 46, (1_suppl), P. 1-57. 1998.

CASSOL, A; SCHNEIDER, S. A imersão social da economia em mercados alimentares brasileiros: uma abordagem institucionalista. **Revista de Economia e Sociologia Rural**, v. 60, n. 2, e233766, 2022.

CASSOL, A. P.; CRUZ, O. C. Mercados como cultura: Los lazos sociales, crédito rural y ferias de alimentos. **Eutopía. Revista de Desarrollo Económico Territorial**, n. 20, p. 8-31, 2021.

CASTELLS, M. *et al.* **Tecnologia da informação, globalização e desenvolvimento social**. Genebra: UNRISD, 1999.

CAZELLA, A.A., TECCHIO, A., SCHNEIDER, S., & BONI, V. The territorial basket of goods and services and the social construction of markets: contributions from cooperatives and family-farmers' agrifood processing enterprises in Santa Catarina. (Brazil). *Italian Review of Agricultural Economics* 79(1): 85-96, 2024. DOI: 10.36253/rea-14827

CFS. Committee On World Food Security. *Connecting smallholders to markets*. Rome: FAO, 2016.

CHAYANOV, A. The theory of peasant economy. **The American Economic Association. Homewood**, Illinois, 1966.

CONCHA, M.; WAQUIL, P.D.; SCHNEIDER, S. Tipologia dos municípios gaúchos com base nos dados dos Censos Agropecuário de 2006 e Demográfico de 2010. *Ensaios FEE*, Porto Alegre, v. 34, Special issue, p. 983-1006, 2013

DEGGERONE, Z. A. **Caracterização dos mercados agroalimentares no Alto Uruguai-RS: um estudo sobre o processo de mercantilização da agricultura familiar em Aratiba-RS**. Dissertation (Doctorate in Rural Development) – Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2021.

DEGGERONE, Z. A.; SCHNEIDER, S. Os canais de comercialização utilizados pelos agricultores familiares em Aratiba – RS. **Organizações Rurais & Agroindustriais**, [S. l.], v. 24, p. e1892, 2022.

DOBBIN, F. **Forging industrial policy: the United States, Britain and France in the railway age.** Cambridge: University Press, 1994.

DURKHEIM, E. Sociologia. 3ª ed., Coleção Grandes Cientistas Sociais, São Paulo, Ática. 1984

DURKHEIM, E. **Da divisão do trabalho social.** Translation by Eduardo Brandão. São Paulo: WMF Martins Fontes, 2010.

ELLIS, F. **Peasant economics: Farm households and agrarian development.** 1. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

FAO. Food and Agriculture Organization. **Agricultura e segurança alimentar no Brasil.** Brasília: FAO/Incra, 2019. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/brasil/fao-no-brasil/brasil-em-resumo/pt/>. Consulted on: Jan. 10, 2022.

FAO. Food and Agriculture Organization. **Gender in agriculture: closing the knowledge gap.** Rome: FAO, 2014.

FAO. Organização das Nações Unidas para a Alimentação e Agricultura. Mapping of territorial markets : Methodology and guidelines for participatory data collection. 2021. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/fr/c/CB5217EN/>. Consulted on: June 26, 2021.

FARIAS, J. L. de S. **Um estudo sobre as estratégias de comercialização dos agricultores familiares produtores de pequenos ruminantes no Sertão dos Inhamuns – CE.** Dissertation (Doctorate in Rural Development) – Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2021.

FEITOSA, E.R.M., NUNES, E.M., ANDRADE, H.D., SCHNEIDER, S., ROCHA, A.B. Nexus: agricultura familiar, energias renováveis e construção de mercados nos territórios rurais do Rio Grande do Norte. *Revista de Economia e Sociologia Rural*, 60(3), 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1806-9479.2021.238969>

FLIGSTEIN, N; DAUTER, L. A sociologia dos mercados. **Caderno CRH**, Salvador, v. 25, 66, p. 481-504, 2012.

FLIGSTEIN, N. Markets as Politics: A Political-Cultural Approach to Market Institutions. **American Sociological Review**, v. 61, n. 4, p. 656–73, 1996. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096398>.

FOURCADE, M. Theories of markets and theories of society. **American Behavioral Scientist**, v.50, n.8, p. 1015–1034, 2007.

FRIEDMANN, H.; MCMICHAEL, P. A agricultura e o sistema estatal. **Sociologia ruralis**, v. 2, 1989.

- GAZOLLA, M., AQUINO, J., GAIEVSKI, E. H. Mercados alimentares digitais da agricultura familiar no Brasil: dinâmicas durante e pós pandemia da COVID-19. *Mundo Agrario*, 24(57), e228, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.24215/15155994e228>.
- GAZOLLA, M.; AQUINO, J. R. de. Reinvenção dos mercados da agricultura familiar no Brasil: a novidade dos sites e plataformas digitais de comercialização em tempos de Covid-19. **Estudos Sociedade e Agricultura**, CPDA-UFRJ, v. 29, n. 2, p. 427-460, 2021.
- GRANOVETTER, M. Ação econômica e estrutura social: o problema da imersão. **RAE eletrônica**, v. 6, n. 1, 2007.
- GRANOVETTER, M., E SWEDBERG, R. **The sociology of economic life**. United State, Westview Press, 1992.
- HEBINK, P.; PLOEG, J. D.; SCHNEIDER, S. (Eds.). **Rural development and the construction of new markets**. Haia: Routledge, 2014.
- IPES-FOOD. Food from somewhere: building food security and resilience through territorial markets. 2024. Available at: <https://ipes-food.org/report/food-from-somewhere/>. Consulted on: July 31, 2024.
- KAGEYAMA, A. LEONE, E.T. **Uma tipologia dos municípios paulistas com base em indicadores sócio-demográficos**. Instituto de Economia, UNICAMP, 1999. (Working Paper).
- KRIPPNER, G. The elusive market: embeddedness and the paradigm of economic sociology. *Theory and Society*, 30, n. 6, p. 775-810, 2001.
- KUHN, T.S. A estrutura das revoluções científicas. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1991.
- LÊNIN, V. **O desenvolvimento do capitalismo na Rússia** : o processo de formação do mercado interno para a grande indústria. 3. ed. São Paulo : Nova Cultural, 1988.
- LEVIN, P. **Culture and Markets: How Economic Sociology Conceptualizes Culture**. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 619, Cultural Sociology and Its Diversity (Sep., 2008), pp. 114-129.
- LIE, J. Sociology of markets. **Annual Review of sociology**, v. 23, n. 1, p. 341-360, 1997.
- LOCONTO, Marie Allison. Agroecology, local food systems and their markets. *AGER: Journal of Depopulation and Rural Development Studies*, 2018, v. 25 n. 2, p. 13-42, 2018. Available at: <<https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01966250>>. Consulted on: July 04, 2021.
- MACKENZIE, D. Opening the black boxes of global finance. **Review of international political economy**, v. 12, n. 4, p. 555-576, 2005.

MARRADI, A. Classification, Typology, Taxonomy. **Quality and Quantity**, v. 24, n. 2, p. 129-157, 1990.

MARSDEN, T., LAMINE, C., SCHNEIDER, S. **A research agenda for global rural development**. Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Elgar Research Agendas. 2020.

MARSDEN, T.; RENTING, H. Compreendendo as Redes Alimentares Alternativas: o papel de cadeias curtas de abastecimento de alimentos no desenvolvimento rural. In: GAZOLLA, M.; SCHNEIDER, S. (org.). **Cadeias curtas e redes agroalimentares alternativas: negócios e mercados da agricultura familiar**. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2017. p. 53-58, 2017..

MARX, K. **O capital: o processo global de acumulação capitalista**. São Paulo: Difel, 1982.

MCKENZIE, F.C.; WILLIAMS, J. Sustainable food production: constraints, challenges and choices by 2050. *Food Security*, n. 7: 221–233, 2015.

MENDRAS, H. **Sociedades Camponesas**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1978.

NIEDERLE, P. A. ; SCHNEIDER, S.; CASSOL, A. P (Org). **Mercados alimentares digitais: inclusão produtiva, cooperativismo e políticas públicas**. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, 2021.

NIEDERLE, P. A. et al. Inclusão produtiva por meio de mercados alimentares digitais: desafios para a construção de estratégias cooperativas solidárias. In: NIEDERLE, P. A.; SCHNEIDER, S.; CASSOL, A. P. (Org). **Mercados alimentares digitais: inclusão produtiva, cooperativismo e políticas públicas**. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, p. 25-66, 2021.

NIEDERLE, P., WESZ JR., V. **As novas ordens alimentares**. Porto Alegre, Ed. da UFRGS. 2018.

OSTROM, E. Beyond markets and states: polycentric governance of complex economic systems. **American economic review**, v. 100, n. 3, p. 641-672, 2010.

OSTROM, E. Coping with tragedies of the commons. **Annual review of political science**, v. 2, n. 1, p. 493-535, 1999.

PARSONS, T. **Economy and society: a study in the integration of economic and social theory**. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956. xxi, 309p, 1956.

PECQUEUR, B. Can the territorial food system provide solutions to recurring crises in the global food system? *Italian Review of Agricultural Economics* 79(1): 5-14, 2024. DOI: 10.36253/rea-15170

PECQUEUR, B. O desenvolvimento territorial: uma nova abordagem dos processos de desenvolvimento para as economias do Sul. **Raízes**, v. 24, nº. 01 e 02, jan./dez. 2005. <https://doi.org/10.37370/raizes.2005.v24.243>.

PLOEG, J. D. VAN DER. **Camponeses e impérios alimentares: lutas por autonomia e sustentabilidade na era da globalização**. Porto Alegre: UFRGS. 2008.

PLOEG, J. D. VAN DER.; YE, J.; SCHNEIDER, S. Reading markets politically: On the transformativity and relevance of peasant markets. **Journal of Peasant Studies**. 2022. Doi:10.1080/03066150.2021.2020258.

PLOEG, J.D. Newly emerging, nested markets: a theoretical introduction. In: HEBINCK, P., PLOEG, J.D., SCHNEIDER, S. (Org.) **Rural Development and the Construction of New Markets**. Routledge: London, UK; p. 16–40, 2015.

POLANYI, K. **A Grande Transformação: as origens de nossa época**. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Elsevier, 2012.

POLANYI, K. Economy, technology and the problem of freedom. In: For a New West Essays, 1919–1958. Polity Press, UK, 2014.

POLANYI, K. La economía como actividad institucionalizada. In: POLANYI, K.; ARENSBERG, C. M.; PEARSON, H. W. (Org.). **Comercio y mercado en los impérios antiguos**. Barcelona: Labor Universitaria, 1976.

POLANYI, K. The Contribution of Institutional Analysis to the Social Sciences. In: For a New West Essays, 1919–1958. Polity Press, UK, 2014a.

PREISS, P. V. *et al.* Abastecimento alimentar e COVID-19: uma análise das feiras no Vale do Rio Pardo-RS. **Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional**, v. e021007-e021007, 2021

RAUD-MATTEDI, C. H. J. Análise crítica da Sociologia Econômica de Marx Granovetter: os limites de uma leitura do mercado em termos de redes e imbricação. **Política & sociedade**, v. 6, p. 59-82, 2005.

SALVATE BRASIL, N. **Mercados Imersos: Uma nova abordagem sobre a construção social dos mercados**. Dissertation (Doctorate in Rural Development) – Faculdade de Ciências Econômicas, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2021.

SALVATE, N.; SCHNEIDER, S. L'anatomie des marchés ancrés. Proposition méthodologique pour l'étude des marchés. In: Catia Grisa; Éric Sabourin; Ludivine Eloy; Renato Maluf. (Org.). **Systèmes alimentaires et territoires au Brésil**. 1ed. Montpellier: Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée ? PULM, v. 1, p. 157-179, 2023.

SALVATE, N. ; SCHNEIDER, S. Anatomia dos mercados imersos: proposta metodológica para o estudo dos mercados. In: GRISA, C.; SABOURIN, E.; ELOY, L.;

MALUF, R.. (Org.). **Sistemas alimentares e territórios no Brasil**. 1ed. Porto Alegre: Editora da UFRGS, v. 1, p. 179-204, 2022.

SARAVIA-MATUS, S., Even, M-A.; Georgieva, N.; Giovannetti, J-F. **Literature Review Report and Proposal for an International Framework for Farm Typologies**. Publication prepared in the framework of the Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, FAO, Rome, 2016.

SCHNEIDER, S; ALMEIDA, N; SALVATE, N. A dimensão territorial dos mercados imersos: o caso da manga Ubá em Minas Gerais. In: VALENCIA-PERAFÁN, Mireya E. et al; (Orgs.). **Desenvolvimento territorial, sistemas agroalimentares e agricultura familiar**. 2. ed. (E-book), São Leopoldo, RS: Oikos, p. 232-255, 2022.

SCHNEIDER, S; CASSOL, A. Food and markets: the contribution of economic sociology. In: DUNCAN, J.; CAROLAN, M.; WISKERKE, H. (Eds) **The Routledge handbook of sustainable and regenerative food systems**, Routledge, England, 2021.

SCHNEIDER, S. **Agricultura Familiar e Mercados**. In: MARQUES, F. C.; CONTERATO, M. A.; SCHNEIDER, S. (Org.) **Construção de Mercados e Agricultura Familiar: Desafios para o Desenvolvimento Rural**. 1. ed. Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 2016.

SCHNEIDER, S. **Estrutura e funcionamento dos mercados**. Apresentação de Power Point em Reunião de Grupo de Pesquisa. 2023.

SCHNEIDER, S. *et al.* Os efeitos da pandemia da Covid-19 sobre o agronegócio e a alimentação. **Estudos avançados**, v. 34, p. 167-188, 2020.

SCHNEIDER, S. Reflexões sobre diversidade e diversificação agricultura, formas familiares e desenvolvimento rural. *Revista RURIS*, Campinas/UNICAMP/SP, Vol. 4; Nº 01, 2010.

SCHNEIDER, S. Reflexões sobre diversidade e diversificação agricultura, formas familiares e desenvolvimento rural. *Revista RURIS*, Campinas/UNICAMP/SP, Vol. 4; Nº 01, 2010.

SCHNEIDER, S.; CASSOL, A. Fostering new rural-urban relationships through markets, and the key role of governance. IN: SCHNEIDER, S., PREISS, P.V, MARSDEN, T. (Ed.) **Food and Agriculture in Urbanized Societies (Research in Rural Sociology and Development, Vol. 26)**, **Emerald Publishing Limited**, Bingley, p. 83-105. 2023.

SCHNEIDER, S.; PREISS, P.V.; MARSDEN, T. (Ed.) **Food and Agriculture in Urbanized Societies (Research in Rural Sociology and Development, Vol. 26)**, **Emerald Publishing Limited**, Bingley. 2022.

SCHNEIDER, S.; SALVATE, N.; CASSOL, A. Nested Markets, Food Networks and New 3 Pathways for Rural Development in Brazil. **Agriculture**, v. 6, n. 4, p. 61, 2016.

SCHNEIDER, S.; WAQUIL, P.D.; Caracterização Socioeconômica dos Municípios Gaúchos e Desigualdades Regionais. *Revista de Economia e Sociologia Rural* (Impresso), Brasília, v. 39, p. 117-142, 2001.

SHANIN, T. The nature and logic of the peasant economy: a generalization. **Journal of Peasant Studies**, v. 1, n. 1: 63–80, 1973.

SILVA, G. P. da.; SOUZA, R. S. de. Os circuitos curtos de comercialização e consumo de Santiago (RS). In: Editora Científica Digital (Org.). **Open Science Research III**. Editora Científica Digital, v. 3, 2022.

SMELSER, N; SWEDBERG, R. (Ed.). **The handbook of economic sociology**. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2005.

STEINER, P. La Revue économique 1950-1980: La marche vers l'orthodoxie académique? **Revue économique**, p. 1009-1058, 2000.

SWEDBERG, R. Markets in Society In: SMELSER, N; SWEDBERG, R. (Ed.). **The handbook of economic sociology**. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2005, pag. 2233-253

SWEDBERG, R. **Principles of economic sociology**. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2003

TÖNNIES, F. **Comunidad y Sociedad**. Buenos Aires: Losada. 1947

WHATMORE, S. Farm household strategies and styles of farming: Assessing the utility of farm typologies. In: Van De Ploeg, J.D. and Long, A. (eds) *Born From Within: Practice and Perspectives of Endogenous Rural Development*, pp. 31-37. Van Gorcum, Assen, Netherlands, 1994.

WEBER, M. **Economia e sociedade: fundamentos da sociologia compreensiva**. Brasília: Ed. da Unb, 1991. 422 p, 1991.3TT

WHITE, H. Where Do Markets Come From? **American Journal of Sociology**, v. 8, n. 7, p. 517–47, 1981.

WILKINSON, J. **Mercados, redes e valores: o novo mundo da agricultura familiar**. Porto Alegre: UFRGS, 2008.

ZELIZER, V. **La negociación de la intimidad**. Fondo de Cultura Económica. Buenos Aires. 2009.