

Geography Speaker Series

Fall 2018



Ethan Schoolman

Assistant Professor,
Department of
Human Ecology
Rutgers University

Matters of embeddedness: Are the values and practices of farmers related to their participation in local food systems?

What role do ethical ideas about civic and environmental responsibility play in motivating farmers to participate in local food systems? And do local food systems actually provide environmental benefits, in terms of incentivizing farmers to conserve natural resources and reduce reliance on agricultural chemicals? Surprisingly, these questions are far from settled in the literature on local food. In this talk, Dr. Schoolman will discuss findings from studies using diverse sources of data, including original surveys of Midwest fruit-and-vegetable farmers and vendors at farmers markets in New Jersey. Preliminary findings point to the importance of distinguishing between different ways of marketing local food. From farmers markets to CSAs to farm-to-school, different ways of participating in local food systems can be characterized as having different relationships to the social and ecological “embeddedness” and the agricultural practices of farmers. These findings have implications for how everyday people, advocates, and policymakers might evaluate what can be achieved by continuing to support local food systems in the Midwest, New Jersey, and all across the U.S.

September 28

3:00 PM

TIL-246, LIV

Ethan D. Schoolman is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Ecology. Prior to coming to Rutgers, Dr. Schoolman was a Dow Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the School of Natural Resources and Environment and the Erb Institute for Global Sustainable Enterprise at the University of Michigan, where he also received his Ph.D. in sociology.

Dr. Schoolman’s research centers on the environmental and social dimensions of local, regional and alternative food systems. He is currently working on several projects examining how participation in local food systems influences the farming practices and decision-making processes of specialty crop growers. In addition, he is pursuing research on inequalities in access to fresh and healthy food, crop diversification strategies developed by farmers in response to consumer demand for local food, factors that facilitate successful collaboration in interdisciplinary environmental research, and ethical consumption outside of politically-engaged, green consumers.