

**GOING TO FARMERS' MARKET AND TALKING: STUDY ON THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS GIVEN BY FARMERS' MARKET VENDORS AND CONSUMERS - VIÇOSA-MG**

***FAZER A FEIRA E CONVERSAR: ESTUDO DAS REPRESENTAÇÕES SOCIAIS DE FEIRANTES E CONSUMIDORES - VIÇOSA-MG***

***HAZ LA FERIA Y HABLA: ESTUDIO SOBRE LAS REPRESENTACIONES SOCIALES DE JUSTOS Y CONSUMIDORES - VIÇOSA-MG***

Parley Lopes Bernini da SILVA<sup>1</sup>  
Rogério Tadeu de Oliveira LACERDA<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** The article analyzes the meanings attributed to farmers' markets by sellers and consumers, under the socio-anthropological aegis. To this end, the literature review and the application of semi-structured questionnaires at the Estação Livre Farmers' market and the Solidarity Economy and Family Agriculture Farmers' market – Quintal Solidário (both in the municipality of Viçosa-MG) are the foundations of this work. The analysis, anchored in the Theory of Social Representations, allows mapping polysemic aspects of representations about food, economic production and sociocultural relations that are established in these spaces of hybridization in face of contemporary experiences. The study concludes that sellers and consumers attribute different economic and social interaction meanings to farmers' markets, sometimes directed to economic issues, and sometimes to cultural exchanges made possible in this space.

**KEYWORDS:** Farmers' Markets. Social Representation. Viçosa-MG.

**RESUMO:** O artigo analisa os significados atribuídos às feiras por vendedores e consumidores, sob a égide socioantropológica. Para tal, a revisão bibliográfica e a aplicação de questionários semiestruturados na Feira Livre da Estação e na Feira de Economia Solidária e Agricultura Familiar – Quintal Solidário (ambas no município de Viçosa-MG) são os alicerces deste trabalho. A análise, ancorada na Teoria das Representações Sociais, permite mapear aspectos polissêmicos das representações sobre os alimentos, da produção econômica e das relações socioculturais que se estabelecem nesses espaços de hibridação frente às vivências contemporâneas. O estudo conclui que vendedores e consumidores atribuem diferentes significados econômicos e de interação social às feiras ora direcionados às questões econômicas ora as trocas culturais que nela são oportunizadas.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Feira-livre. Representações Sociais. Viçosa-MG.

<sup>1</sup> Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Florianópolis – SC – Brazil. Master's in Rural Extension (PPGER-UFV). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9278-1235>. E-mail: [parley.bernini@posgrad.ufsc.br](mailto:parley.bernini@posgrad.ufsc.br)

<sup>2</sup> Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Florianópolis – SC – Brazil. Professor at the Postgraduate Program in Business Administration (PPGAdm-UFSC), Postdoctoral fellow at the Polytechnic School of the University of São Paulo. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5151-172X>. E-mail: [rogerlacerda@gmail.com](mailto:rogerlacerda@gmail.com)

**RESUMEN:** El artículo analiza los significados atribuidos a las ferias por vendedores y consumidores, bajo la égida socio-antropológica. Para ello, la revisión de la literatura y la aplicación de cuestionarios semiestructurados en la Feira Livre da Estação y la Feria Economía Solidaria y Agricultura Familiar – Quintal Solidário (ambas en el municipio de Viçosa -MG) son las bases de este trabajo. El análisis, anclado en la Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales, permite mapear aspectos polisémicos de las representaciones sobre la alimentación, la producción económica y las relaciones socioculturales que se establecen en estos espacios de hibridación frente a las experiencias contemporáneas. El estudio concluye que vendedores y consumidores atribuyen diferentes significados de interacción económica y social a las ferias, a veces dirigidas a cuestiones económicas, y otras a intercambios culturales que se hacen posibles en ellas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Mercado abierto. Representaciones Sociales. Viçosa-MG.

## Introduction

The studies that deal with the formation of farmers' markets and markets in history are of a unique variety, having historically accepted that the appearance of fairs dates back to the 11th century, with the opening of commercial routes between East and West, having the Sea as a transit route. Mediterranean, place of commercial development led by the villages (SACCO DOS ANJOS; GODOY; CALDAS, 2005). In the mid-13th century, when land routes became threatening, sea routes gained importance and in the 14th century the establishment of markets in centers of population relevance (such as London) diminished the importance of farmers' markets (PEDRO; COULON, 1985). Seeking the meaning of the word, Minnaert (2008 apud CUERVO; HAMANN; PIZZINATO, 2019, p. 293) informs that “the farmers' market is a space that encompasses a scenario of social practices that fosters and takes place through interpersonal relationships. The word ‘feira’ (farmers' market) comes from the Latin *feria*, which means ‘party day’, it is a place for sales, exchanges, meetings and conversations”.

In addition to commercial exchanges, the farmers' market is recognized as a space for interpersonal relationships where “face-to-face contact through the link between production and consumption” is intensified (GUIMARÃES; DOULA, 2018, p. 02, our translation). This aspect was not limited to the European scenario but was also maintained in the Americas. In the Brazilian historical context, they assume the role of providing opportunities for urban populations to supply food with the most varied products from agriculture, livestock, fishing and handicrafts. Mascarenhas (2008 apud GUIMARÃES, DOULA, 2018, p. 08, our translation) point out that in addition to the Iberian tradition, the Brazilian street market inherits “popular African practices called *quitandas*, from the Kimbundu *kitanda*, which means market,



consisting of “groups of black women around outdoors, squatting or having trays, which sell small farming and fishing products”<sup>3</sup>.

As referenced by Cuervo; Hamann and Pizzinato (2019, p. 285, our translation), “the farmers' market can usually be understood as the group of people who 'make the fair' – producers, consumers, and others – who share an interest in its space”. Thus, the opening is present, sometimes to the old, sometimes to the new, in a movement of malleability and hybridization. Emphasizing the cultural interactions that it provides, Sacco dos Anjos, Godoy and Caldas (2005, p. 19, our translation) consider that one of its characteristics is to be “a social space that holds peculiar attributes that, presumably, ensure its persistence in contemporary society”.

Understanding its persistence implies contextualizing that, in the current scenario of food industrialization, issues related to food safety assume relevance at the political and institutional level (SACCO DOS ANJOS; GODOY; CALDAS, 2005) and it is at farmers' markets that the attributes of what is considered “natural”, “rural” and “healthy” become more visible in their diversity and abundance. In addition to these attributes, farmers' markets make it possible to maintain food culture and regional identity (PEREIRA; BRITO; PEREIRA, 2017), bringing consumers and buyers closer together. Menasche (2004) points out that currently the quality of food is measured and reinforced when associated with the field, or that they are connected to what is desirable. In such a way, the connection with the rural origin of the food:

seems to condense all the advantages that distinguish desirable food from industrialized food. [...] The foods that come from abroad are considered the best. Of greens, it is said that “even the leaf is softer”. Chicken, meat and milk, “there is no comparison”, “it has a different taste”, those from the supermarket do not even compare (MENASCHE, 2004, p. 122, our translation).

Thus, the importance and persistence of open farmers' markets can be explained, primarily, by the new orientations of the consumer who seeks not only what has been called food security<sup>3</sup> but also food safety. Secondly, in contrast to the impersonal and anonymous relationships of supermarkets, fairs are characterized as social spaces for the exchange of knowledge and mercantile practices guided by mutual recognition between merchants and customers (GUIMARAES; DOULA, 2018).

---

<sup>3</sup> Food security is understood as those with “generic orientation in favor of expanding the availability and guaranteeing access to socially and culturally referenced food” and safety food as those with “guarantees regarding the quality of food and the absence of health risks for the universe of consumers” (SACCO DOS ANJOS; GODOY; CALDAS, 2005, p. 05, our translation),



One has to consider that before “arriving at the farmers' market” a series of activities are necessary (planting, harvesting, distribution, transport, among others) and when one “is at the farmers' market” there is a rapprochement between consumer and marketer - producer and merchant at the same time -, which also implies “maintaining a space for the viability of regional family farming” (SACCO DOS ANJOS; GODOY; CALDAS, 2005, p. 19, our translation). Currently, for the consumer, knowing where, by whom and how food is produced are factors that indicate food safety, conscious consumption and differentiated status.

Brazilian researchers point out that farmers' markets allow for a cultural narrowing between rural and urban areas (CARNEIRO, 1998; MENASCHE, 2004). Professional, economic, leisure, educational and cultural activities come together in a flow that involves exchanges of goods, words, memories and worldviews (COUTINHO; DOULA, 2014). Cuervo, Hamann and Pizzinato (2019), point out that the farmers' market is a space for interpersonal communication in which:

a relational ethics is established through face-to-face contact, involving occupation of space, products, people, meanings, shared knowledge. It is in this process that the established network generates trust and brand relationships, for example, the legitimacy of food quality (CUERVO; HAMANN; PIZZINATO, 2019, p. 293, our translation).

Following the analytical line of symbolic values involved in the space of fairs, this article is justified by seeking to understand who are the individuals who go to the farmers' market; how social relations are built and what meanings are attributed to two farmers' markets: the *Solidarity Economy and Family Agriculture Farmers' market* (known as *Quintal Solidário*), promoted by the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV) and the *Feira-livre na Estação*, promoted by the City Hall from Viçosa, a city located in the Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais.

Some particularities, such as the priority of offering local agroecological production, the solidary economy and the link between these farmers' markets and researchers from the Federal University of Viçosa and networks of social movements, justify the choice of these spaces for the analysis provided by the use of the Theory of Social Representations.

### **Characterization of farmers' markets**

The *Feira-livre da Estação* (Station Farmers' market) takes place at night, held in the central part of the city of Viçosa, in the space known as Balustrada, a guardrail that surrounds the Railway Station. The creation of the Balustrade dates back to 1924. The Station was built in 1912, on a stretch of the Leopoldina Railroad, and currently works as a cultural space. The



Station was listed by the City Hall as historical and cultural heritage in 1993 and the Balustrade in 1999 (IPATRIMÔNIO, 2022).

Feira da Estação, in addition to the presence of farmers accredited by the city hall, has the participation of Grove Roots Network (Rede Raízes da Mata - RRM), founded in 2011, with the objective of bringing agroecological producers closer to consumers. The network, mobilized by agroecology groups at the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV), Zona da Mata Center for Alternative Technologies (CTA-ZM) and Technological Incubator of Popular Cooperatives (ITCP-UFV), among others, proposes to value local production safe and encourage the “emergence of new experiences” in Viçosa (ARANTES *et al.*, 2018, p. 07, our translation).

RRM's participation is justified when considering that the current homogenization of the agri-food market does not adhere to local realities and quality standards. In this way, an alternative space is promoted, encompassing those who produce, those who consume and researchers from the university and research centers, aiming to promote “social interaction between producers and the relationship between the Network and the producers with other social actors, access to markets for agroecological products and the possibility for the local community to purchase agroecological products” (ARANTES *et al.*, 2018, p. 07, our translation). Specifically, *Feira da Estação*, created in 2017, is committed to “offering horticultural products produced in the municipality by family farmers, free of pesticides and irrigated with treated water to guarantee the health of the food in terms of the presence of worms such as fecal coliforms and other parasites that infest the aquatic environment” (FOLHA DA MATA, 2018, n.p., our translation).

The Solidarity Economy and Family Farming Farmers' Market, or *Quintal Solidário*, was created in 2016 by ITCP-UFV<sup>4</sup> together with the Union Section of UFV Teachers (ASPUV). This is an extension project developed by the UFV that aims to “value and promote products and services from solidary economic enterprises and family farmers in order to promote the generation of work and income, integration between producers and consumers” (LIMA COSTA; STROPPA MOREIRA, 2019, p. 134, our translation).

In this project, guidelines such as agroecology, food security and sustainability are highlighted as distinctive. Being held on the university campus of UFV, it has the participation of marketers by public selection, developed by public notice contemplating "Solidarity

---

<sup>4</sup> “The Technological Incubator of Popular Cooperatives at the Federal University of Viçosa - ITCP-UFV (Portuguese initials) is an extension, interdisciplinary program [...] Since its creation, ITCP-UFV has been advising popular groups that develop various economic activities within the scope of family farming, crafts, popular recycling, food, service provision, among others” (LIMA COSTA; SANTOS; PRIORE, 2019, p. 14, our translation).



Economic Enterprises (groups, associations, cooperatives) and Family Farmers" (LIMA COSTA; SANTOS; PRIORE, 2019, p. 11, our translation). According to Costa *et al.* (2019, p. 12, our translation):

The profile of the initiatives involved is varied, encompassing social movements, networks of prosumers, mental health patients and participants in social inclusion projects. In total, there are 35 stalls/benches divided into three sectors: a) Crafts (14); Minimally processed foods (12) and Hortifruti (09). In addition to marketing, the farmers' market aims to be a space for coexistence and social integration, opening the doors of the Federal University of Viçosa to the community of Viçosa through cultural attractions, space for children and workshops. The cultural program of the Farmers' Market, for example, seeks to value local attractions and since the beginning of the Backyard, different activities have been carried out, such as musical performances, dance workshops, *cirandas*, choir and *capoeira*.

In general, both *Feira da Estação* and *Quintal Solidário* start from the premise of becoming differentiated spaces of consumption, of valuing local and agroecological production and, in the case of *Quintal*, of solidarity economy. According to the founders of *Quintal Solidário*, the solidarity economy encompasses a variety of collective actions of cooperation and solidarity. Thus, “as a critique of the economic model of individualized profit, the solidarity economy proposes to suppress the inequalities created by production and distribution, prioritizing group and solidarity interests through technical and scientific advice, legal and the like” (LIMA COSTA; SANTOS; PRIORE, 2019, p. 10-11, our translation).

It also aims to facilitate access to income-generating activities “in which the economic objective is accompanied by social objectives that produce social and proximity bonds” (LIMA COSTA; STROPPA MOREIRA, 2019, p. 135, our translation). It is “a system of articulation between producers, traders and consumers based on relationships of trust, transparency and proximity” (LIMA COSTA; SANTOS; PRIORE, 2019, p. 11, our translation).

Still as a criticism of the “mere utilitarian logic inherent in the market mechanism, the solidarity economy postulates that the responsibility for self-management of economic processes is collective” (LIMA COSTA; STROPPA MOREIRA, 2019, p. 135-36, our translation) and supports the joint insertion of the various actors in a trade that involves “production and consumption according to values of sustainability and justice (LIMA COSTA; SANTOS; PRIORE, 2019, p. 11, our translation). It is noteworthy that within the scope of these initiatives, between 2009 and 2013, family farming “corresponded to 52.6% of solidary economic activity, as exposed by the National System of Information on Solidarity Economy (Sies)” (LIMA COSTA; SANTOS; PRIORE, 2019, p. 11, our translation). In addition to these



aspects of production and marketing, the solidarity economy addresses the specific demands of today's consumers, who are more demanding in their purchase decisions, because:

Now, in his assessment, this consumer considers a set of factors such as price and quality, origin, origin, sustainability, relationship with the environment, with employees and communities participating in the process. Thus, different opportunities present themselves to the small producer. [...] the country concentrates concrete possibilities for family farmers who, at the same time as they are producers of food and other agricultural products, play the role of conservators of biodiversity (BITTENCOURT, 2018, n. p., our translation).

By characterizing both farmers' markets, the influence of researchers and scientific concepts in the conception and conduction of these projects is perceptible, creating a differentiated or alternative profile in relation to the conventional farmers' market. Based on these considerations, the article investigates the social representations of stallholders and consumers about food, economic production and the sociocultural relationships that are established in both spaces. The methodological path of the investigation, of a qualitative nature, involved bibliographical research and the application of semi-structured questionnaires to merchants and consumers, in 2020. The data are analyzed using the Theory of Social Representations.

### **Social representations as forms of knowledge and interpretation**

The landmark of the theory of representations is credited to Émile Durkheim, at the beginning of the 20th century with the concept of Collective Representations, having its reformulation by Serge Moscovici in 1961 (LOPES, 2013) as Social Representations. Moscovici, contrary to Durkheim, who understood representations as stable, collective, coercive and homogeneous forms of knowledge, proposes to study the different configurations of meanings and actions created by heterogeneous social groups which live in the same society. His studies opened up investigative perspectives in different disciplines (ARRUDA, 2002), since Serge Moscovici prioritized the specificities of representational phenomena in modern society (JODELET, 2001).

Social representations (and their study) establish an interface between social, cultural and psychological dimensions, exhibiting a transversal status with several areas of research such as Anthropology and Sociology. It is, in such a way, a bonding theory (bonding and cohesion), where “the surveillance exercised by the group over the individual decreases as the bonds between them become denser and more reciprocal” (MOSCOVICI, 2001, p. 56, our



translation). They are built due to the need to know, understand, adjust, dominate, inform or identify what the subject has around him. Thus, the Theory of Social Representations seeks to treat phenomena, directly observable or reconstructed, through the intervention of science, legitimized as an explanation of cognitive processes and social interactions. For Sêga (2000):

Social representations are presented as a way of interpreting and thinking about everyday reality, a form of knowledge of the mental activity developed by individuals and groups to establish their positions in relation to situations, events, objects and communications that concern them. It is practical knowledge that gives meaning to events that are normal for us, forges the evidence of our consensual reality and helps the social construction of our reality (SÊGA, 2000, p. 128-29, our translation).

As proposed by Jodelet (2001, p. 17, our translation), social representations “guide us in the way of naming and jointly defining the different aspects of daily reality, in the way of interpreting these aspects, making decisions and, eventually, positioning oneself in front of them defensively”. In such a way, they are not something faithful and reliable, “neither the subjective part of the object, nor the objective part of the subject” (SÊGA, 2000, p. 129, our translation), but rather the cohesion between the world, its objects and the subjects that surround them. confer meanings.

The theory of social representations focuses on the forms and content of knowledge, prioritizing the cognitive, emotional and communicative aspects that intervene in the creation, modification and circulation of images and meanings, hence its particular interest in discourses, including oral, written, imagetic or propagated by the different medias, for example (JODELET, 2001). Another aspect of the theory considers that “it should be studied by articulating affective, mental and social elements alongside cognition, language and communication” (JODELET, 2001, p.26, our translation), because the subject's (or social group's) worldview) and their actions are made explicit through the representational resource.

Representing implies “acting on the world and the other, which leads to its functions and social effectiveness” (JODELET 2001, p. 28). Likewise, it implies giving meaning to what is lived and experienced (PESAVENTO, 1995), marking social belongings that enable identities to the members of a community, given that “the consensual nature of a representation is generally partial and localized” (LOPES, 2013, p. 25159, our translation). The dynamism of social representations resides in the fact that they are interpretations of a reality, which changes over time, as well as by the very circulation of individuals in different social groups, that is, although it becomes a referential instrument that allows communication in a same language, the representation is open “to the possibility of polysemy, where sometimes innovative themes





are presented that provoke conversions of experiences, of perceptions that lead to a new vision” (SÊGA, 2000, p. 130, our translation), sometimes the rigidity of the ways of thinking and acting already tested and sanctioned.

Thus, social sharing alludes to a mechanism of determinations connected to the structure and relationships in which sharing an idea (or language) is to affirm social bonds and identifications subject to constant reformulations and validations (JODELET, 2001). In summary, and as stated by Serge Moscovici (2001, p. 55, our translation), “representations highlight facts and interpret a reality” that “is socially constructed and knowledge is a construction of the subject, but not disconnected from its social inscription” (ARRUDA 2002, p. 151, our translation). Based on these assumptions, the use of the theory of social representations in this article implies understanding farmers' markets as a phenomenon where production, commercialization, consumption and interpretations are inseparable elements (SACCO DOS ANJOS; GODOY; CALDAS, 2005) subject to discourses, interpretations and disputes.

### **Methodological procedure**

The research presents a qualitative analysis based on the Theory of Social Representations. As a methodology, a bibliographical review and field research were used, with observation and application of questionnaires in the spaces of the two farmers' markets described above, between August and September 2020. A semi-structured questionnaire was applied to 5 vendors who participate in the *Feira Livre da Estação* and 5 for *Quintal Solidário* vendors.

Having 15 questions, it asked about their representations of what the farmers' market is; the meanings they attribute to the practice of being a vendor; how he combines his participation in the farmers' market and his private life; questions related to work overload (home/farmers' market), among other aspects, so that they could express opinions, outline circumstances or organize associations of ideas to what was being asked. Its application took place between March and April 2020.

Another semi-structured questionnaire was applied to 20 regular consumers (10 at each farmers' market) in the same period as the fairgrounds, in both cases unintentionally. It also had 15 questions with the same questions as the stallholders (with the exception of the question related to work overload, which was replaced by “define the farmers' market in one word”).



In the analysis, the IRAMUTEQ software was used and its functions "Similitude Analysis" (which consists of the elaboration of a trace that allows identifying what is common and what is specific in the speeches of vendors and consumers about the farmers' market) and "Cloud of Words" (in which the set of phrases is arranged in dissimilar dimensions, considering that larger words indicate maximum importance in the textual corpus, removing conjunctions; prepositions and numerals), aiming to group the interviewees' speeches - inserted in their integrity - "with a relational purpose, comparing different productions based on specific variables that describe who produced the text" (CAMARGO; JUSTO, 2013, p. 03, our translation).

The article has a qualitative approach, characterized as a set of interpretive techniques that seek to describe and understand the subjective character of the subject/object, studying their particularities and experiences (MINAYO, 2009). This choice stems from the fact that, in the views of Godoy (1995), the researcher appropriates the qualitative nature when there are several actors involved in multiple social processes and with different perceptions of social reality that require a particular analysis, which neither it is always obtained quantitatively (MINAYO, 2009).

It is, finally, a scientific method of investigation that focuses on the subjective character of the subject/object analyzed, studying their particularities and individual experiences (JACCOUD; MAYER, 2008). The justification for its use came from the fact that, through this instrument, it is possible to collect from the subject their worldviews based on the reality that they have, and that the application "with users is a way of qualitatively understanding their motivations and expectations" (FABERLUDENS, 2011, p. 5, our translation), anchored in content analysis.

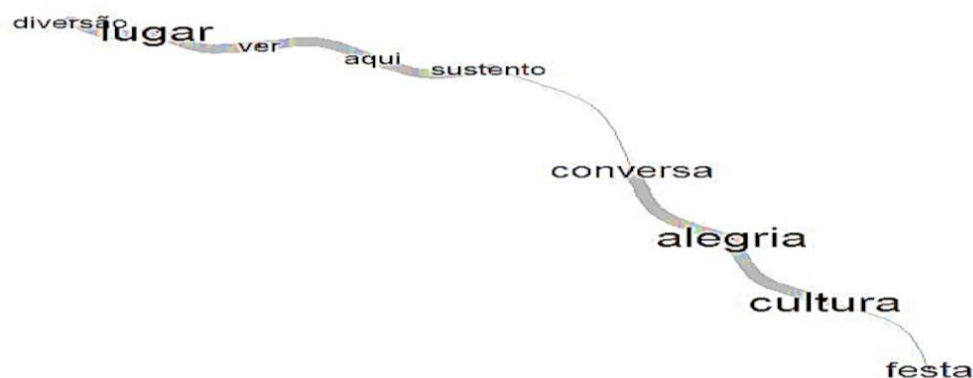
Content analysis is considered a descriptive and interpretative contribution, widely used by the Theory of Social Representations, since in the speeches (oral, written, visual) the representations materialize, that is, it becomes possible to analyze the ideas and the different worldviews that the narratives convey (JODELET, 1993; 2001; MOSCOVICI, 2003; ARRUDA, 2014), given that "everything that is said or written is subject to content analysis" (HENRY; MOSCOVICI, 1986, p. 36, our translation).



## Results and discussion

From the open question that asked the stallholders and consumers the meaning of the fair and its importance, a set of terms was obtained that denote representations of a positive meaning, both in the economic dimension for the stallholders, and in the cultural dimension, for consumers. (Figure 1):

**Figure 1** – Similarity analysis for the meaning of the farmers' market



Source: Research data, 2020

The terms identified in the upper left corner correspond to the responses of the stallholders, who understand the fair as a properly physical space, as a “place” (*lugar*) and “sustenance” (*sustento*). It appears that there is an interpretation that it is in this space that the flow and commercialization of its products takes place and it is through it that its activity is recognized by those who acquire them (SATO, 2007; SILVA; SILVA, 2016; BORTOLO; MELO; FERREIRA, 2019). Thus, the farmers' market is a place of work, but this work combines the previous tasks of agricultural production and transport (COUTINHO; DOULA, 2014), which allows a closer approximation of the rural with the urban. By working at the farmers' market, the vendors earn their livelihood (while contributing to the food supply of consumers), but this is not a space where work is seen for its negative aspects; on the contrary, the term fun indicates informality and a playful interpretation of the activity.

The terms displayed in the lower right corner were enunciated by consumers, with the most evocative words being “conversation” (*conversa*), “joy” (*alegria*), “culture” (*cultura*) and “party” (*festa*). It can be understood that the representations of these subjects prioritize the fair within the scope of sociocultural, communication and learning practices and dynamics, where those who sell learn from those who buy and the opposite is also done (SACCO DOS ANJOS;

GODOY; CALDAS, 2005; CUERVO; HAMANN; PIZZINATO, 2019). In this cultural practice, conversation is the fundamental exercise of exchange and inter-knowledge, which contrasts with the impersonality and anonymity of relationships established in supermarkets.

When asking consumers about the feeling of being at the farmers' market, terms related to well-being are highlighted, detailing positive emotions that indicate the personal exchanges that overlap with the simple act of buying and consuming (Figure 2).

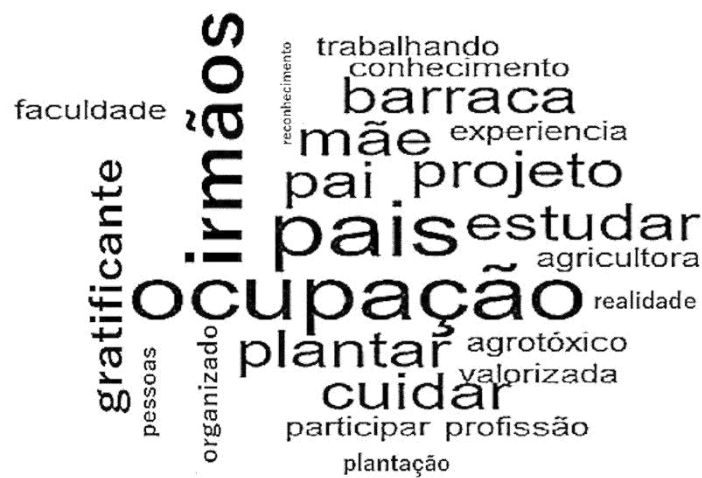
**Figure 2 – Word Cloud – Consumers**



Source: Research data, 2020

Terms like “cultural” (*cultural*); “people” (*gente*); “joy” (*alegria*), “well-being” (*bem-estar*) and “happiness” (*felicidade*) demonstrate the willingness of consumers to be in these spaces precisely because they allow a feeling of welcome compared to other commercial establishments. Terms like “people” (*gente*), “friends” (*amigos*), “relatives” (*parentes*) indicate familiarity and intimacy. It should be considered that in these farmers' markets, as seen previously, in addition to the food trade, there are presentations of artistic and cultural activities where words such as “attraction” (*atração*), “lively” (*animado*), “cultural” (*cultural*) and “joy” (*alegria*) reinforce the meaning of the fair as “place” (*lugar*) of cultural spectacle and regional identity (SÊGA; 2000; PEREIRA; BRITO; PEREIRA, 2017; CUERVO; HAMANN; PIZZINATO, 2019). Likewise, when questioning “what it means to be at the farmers' market” to the stallholders (Figure 3), the answers indicate a different set of terms, which build a narrative about work and about the fair as a “place” (*lugar*) of “sustenance” (*sustento*), as shown in Figure 1

Figure 3 – Word cloud – vendors



Source: Research data, 2020

In the image, it can be seen that work-related terms refer to the appreciation of agricultural activity, “planting” (*plantar*) and the concern to offer food without “agrochemicals” (*agrotóxicos*), which reinforce the idea of food security and safety security and which symbolically attest to an agriculture that offers healthy and natural foods (CARNEIRO, 1998; MENASCHE, 2004; SACCO DOS ANJOS; GODOY; CALDAS, 2005). It is worth remembering that both farmers' market have the offer of agroecological products as their objective and criteria for screening the stallholders.

Terms such as “parents” (*pais*), “brother” (*irmão*), “occupation” (*ocupação*) and “profession” (*profissão*) are also highlighted, indicating a direct relationship with the generational transmission of the activity. The transmission of the profession and the stalls runs through generations of stallholders, whether in farmers' markets or in municipal markets (GUIMARÃES; DOULA, 2018). Thus, when the market traders were asked who/what influenced them to become a market trader, 70% of respondents stated that they had their parents as a reference; 20% did not indicate who motivated them and 10% alluded to the family, without specifying the maternal or paternal figure in the speech. Some reports, transcribed below, show similarities in terms of generational influence, notably among stallholders who work at the *Feira da Estação*:

My father, and today we work together. There are Wednesdays when he comes and on the other I come to work (E1, Man, *Feira Livre da Estação*).

My family (father and mother) are all from the countryside (...) and that's why I learned to do it, I didn't have the opportunity to study more than the 3rd grade knows, but I encourage my children a lot. I say it like this: if you want to stay at the farmers' market, you can, but it's important to study a lot. Better a swollen hand than a hoe in the hand (E3, Woman *Feira Livre da Estação*, our translation).

The statements of the stallholders at the Station confirm a representation oriented towards a constructed and shared social reality (JODELET, 2001; LOPES, 2013), in which professional heritage and family identity validate a collective idea of the bond of succession and continuity with the group around which individuals belong. Being a marketer is a symbolic link between relatives, notably between parents and children, which presupposes the generational passage of a heritage that allows for the creation of affective relationships with the people who attend the farmers' market and with the very “place” where the work is carried out with the statement that “It's a family thing, right? It came from the cradle and we keep going. I don't think anyone here is at the farmers' market just for being here, it's something in the family. I think” (E4, Woman, *Feira Livre da Estação*, our translation).

The stallholders of the Quintal Solidário, although some respondents ratify the family and generational influence, are also concerned about not feeling “unoccupied”; since the farmers' market is the path for those who have already retired and want another job, as when reading “I didn't have [influencers] as I told you, I started even as soon as I retired. I wanted something to distract” (E6, Man, *Quintal Solidário*, our translation); “My father who also had my grandfather and so on. It's already something in the family and I'm trying to bring my son, but he said he wants to go to college first and then think about it” (E7, Man, *Quintal Solidário*, our translation) and “My retirement [laughs]. It was either this or idleness” (E8, Man, *Quintal Solidário*, our translation).

Comparing the statements, it appears that the farmers' market can assume the meaning of “work” and a means of earning a “sustenance” for some stallholders, but also of “occupation” and opportunity for entrepreneurship which, as seen previously, is encouraged by the creators of the Quintal Solidário extension project. This polysemy is further confirmed when trying to understand “what it means to sell products at the farmers' market” for stallholders in both spaces:

It's the end of a difficult job. You have to wake up early, leave everything well prepared, take a car, travel here, set up the stall and when the people arrive, we need to be there with a smile on our face, right? It's not an easy thing, but knowing that there are these people who come here and value our efforts is really good, right? (E3, Woman, *Feira Livre da Estação*).



It's my chance to have money, to help my son and to be able to buy what I want, I'm the one who decides what I'm going to have. I managed to get a credit card at the farmers' market and now I accept a credit card payment (E4, Woman, *Feira Livre da Estação*).

It's more of a hobby, my income does not depend on the sale of these foods, but it's important for many here, I don't question that (E5, Man, *Quintal Solidário*).

It's where I can have fun, see new people and meet some old friends again, right? People who stay alone because of work barely see their wives [laughs]. Selling for the sake of selling is not so important (E6, Man, *Quintal Solidário*, our translation).

The stallholders who work at *Feira Livre da Estação* represent it as an opportunity to improve their economic condition, especially women, who attribute to the activity a chance of financial autonomy. As for the stallholders who participate in the *Quintal Solidário*, the activity is complementary and secondary in the economic dimension, but important as a space for socialization. When asking consumers “what it means to buy products from the farmers' market”, the answers presented a nucleation regarding the quality of what is offered for consumption (Figure 4):

**Figure 4** – Word cloud – consumers and what it means to acquire such products



Source: Research data, 2020

Words like “good” (*bom*), “eat” (*comer*), “care” (*cuidado*), “cultivate” (*cultivar*) and “food security” (*segurança alimentar*) indicate proximities of meanings that refer to the guarantee of agricultural production and the necessary attention to planting, but also to a “post field”, the final stage of the food that goes to consumption, with attributes of a safety that is not found in supermarkets (CUERVO; HAMANN; PIZZATO, 2019). Such security is evoked by those who produced it, that is, in the speeches of the stallholders, but also certified by the

institutional actors that promote both farmers' markets. Thus, in the representations of consumers, the product at farmers' markets is seen “as pure and, therefore, healthy. Adjectives related to nature would be attributed to fresh foods, or those from the farmers' market, or organic ones, or those brought in from outside” (MENASCHE, 2004, p. 121, our translation).

The last question, addressed to marketers and consumers of both farmers' markets, was based on verifying the hypothesis pointed out by Cuervo, Hamann and Pizzinato (2019) that the persistence of farmers' markets over time, despite the convenience and variety of products that a supermarket aggregates in the same space, due to the possibility of conversation. Respondents' opinion was asked about the phrase “people talk more in local producer markets than in supermarkets” (CUERVO; HAMANN; PIZZINATO, 2019, p. 293, our translation). The answers indicate an affirmative consensus, that is, there is a sense of a positive representation of this characteristic of the farmers' market, praised by the different actors and which reinforces the image that goods, people and words circulate in that space:

You just look to the side and see it happening. It's us talking to another vendor, with whom we buy. Anyway, it's something more intimate than going to the supermarket, right? (E6, Man, stallholder, *Quintal Solidário*).

When I go to market Y, for example, if I'm not with my son or any relative, I take what I have to buy and go back home. That's why I like the farmers' market because everyone is smiling (E1, Woman, consumer, *Feira Livre da Estação*).

No doubt! Because you are in the face of the market and so we can ask about the origin of the products. Sometimes they do it themselves and it is very good because we know what is healthy. You go to the market and you don't have these things. Worse, there is a market here that doesn't even look at the validity of the products, you know? I only found out when I had bought chocolate for my boyfriend and it was expired (E3, Woman, consumer, *Feira Livre da Estação*).

Here's something very good: it's almost difficult not to say something, even if it's just a “hello” to someone, because at all times we hear a stallholder saying something that makes us laugh, like: “a strawberry for the sweetie”, these things (E5, Woman, consumer, *Quintal Solidário*, our translation).

The speeches, finally, allow us to understand the valuation of farmers' markets as spaces for speech and circulation of messages and representations, especially when compared to supermarkets, qualified negatively as spaces of silence, anonymity and impersonality because “Going to the market is isolating from conversation. Here we play with everything and everything is a party, right?” (E9, Woman, stallholder, *Quintal Solidário*, our translation) and “People who go to the market barely look to the side. The most we can do is say thank you to



the cashier or look for someone who works in the market when we can't find something. I think the market is a place full of people and empty of conversation” (E3, Woman, stallholder, *Feira Livre da Estação*, our translation).

Thus, in addition to a place for the consumption of a product itself, there is a symbolic construction around the farmers' markets about trust, the credit attributed to words and the possibility of the ludic in the midst of commercial transactions or that “It is here that we know our client, establishes an intimacy and gets to know other stallholders. I myself have two people who every Wednesday are here to buy or chat. It's a really nice relationship!” (E2, Man, consumer, *Feira Livre da Estação*, our translation).

### **Final considerations**

The approach of an object such as the fair allows several analyzes that intersect from the historical search for its transformations and adaptations to different contexts, its role and importance in the social, economic, political and environmental fields, as well as its perpetuation in a scenario of high food industrialization and the “boom” of fast-food behavior.

In this research, priority was given to analyzing the differentiated representations of what “doing” the farmers' market means, sometimes highlighting their economic function, sometimes their socializing function. The same occurred with consumers, who did not report their conceptions about consuming at the farmers' market in a unidimensional way, valuing both the quality of the food and the socio-cultural activities.

Both farmers' markets constitute differentiated proposals due to the actions of institutional actors from a university, the agroecological profile and the solidary economy, but such attributes were not equally highlighted as distinctive by those who frequent these spaces, whether they are marketers or consumers. The offer of fresh, healthy, rural food, a point emphasized by the participants, is an attribute that characterizes fairs in general, and makes art of the social imaginary about these spaces, as shown in the bibliography.

Also, as other works have shown, the particularity of the farmers' market resides in its opposition to supermarkets, not only with regard to the goods offered, but mainly due to the type of social relations that are possible in each of these spaces, of distance and impersonality or proximity and familiarity. It is in this sense that this research deepened the understanding of the farmers' market as a space for conversation, and in the specific case of the farmers' markets analyzed here, a space for spectacle, since artistic and cultural activities take place in it that connect vendors and consumers to the same regional identity. Thus, both those who sell and



those who buy return, without knowing it, to the original meaning of the term “*feira*”: party. And as a party, the farmers' market provides playful moments of social belonging.

It must also be considered that the research presents its originality when applied to a theme which has few particular analyses: the farmers' market as a place of social and economic exchanges which, in turn, can be a factor of social improvement (as presented by the respondents at the free fair at the Station) or escape from idleness (as stated by the traders at *Quintal Solidário*). Moreover, the contribution of the Theory of Social Representations as an instrument for discourse analysis, as well as its research design using the Iramuteq software, provided an opportunity to assess the phenomenon beyond social and leisure issues. With the use of the tool, objective issues were evidenced, such as the fact that consumers go to farmers' markets since they understand that there will be safe food for consumption - because there they will be face to face with those who produce them -, unlike buying in hypermarkets.

Finally, it is important to highlight the limits of the research described here and the impossibility of generalizations, indicating that there is a need to investigate other profiles of farmers' markets, for comparative purposes. Here, the analysis anchored by the theory of social representations sought to contemplate the interpretation of different actors of what going to the farmers' market means; the circularity of frequent communication between consumers and merchants explains similar representations, given that they are built from the personal and collective experience of the group that experiences and talks about the same reality.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** This work was carried out with the support of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - Brazil (CAPES) - Financing Code 001. The authors also thank the availability and welcome on the part of the merchants and consumers present at the *Feira Livre de Viçosa* and *Quintal Solidário*.

## REFERENCES

ARANTES, A. *et al.* O papel da extensão universitária na criação da Rede Raízes da Mata. **Anais do VI CLAA, X CBA e V SEMDF**, v. 13, n. 1, jul. 2018. Disponível em: <http://cadernos.aba-agroecologia.org.br/index.php/cadernos/article/view/97>. Acesso em: 06 maio 2020.

ARRUDA, A. Teoria das representações sociais e teorias de gênero. **Cad. Pesqui.**, São Paulo, n.117, p.127-147, nov. 2002. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0100-15742002000300007>

BITENCOURT, D. Artigo - Agricultura familiar, desafios e oportunidades rumo à inovação, **EMBRAPA**, 2018. Available: <https://www.embrapa.br/busca-de-noticias/>



/noticia/31505030/artigo---agricultura-familiar-desafios-e-oportunidades-rumo-a-inovacao.  
Access: 27 Apr. 2020.

BORTOLO, C. A.; MELO, D.; FERREIRA, G. H. C. Os distintos usos e usuários na feira livre do bairro Major Prates no município de Montes Claros-MG. **Revista Geofronter**, Campo Grande, v. 1, n. 5, p. 77-89, fev. 2019. Available: <https://periodicosonline.uems.br/index.php/GEOF/article/view/3531/pdf>. Access 28 Oct. 2019.

CAMARGO, B. V.; JUSTO, A. M. **Tutorial para uso do software de análise textual IRAMUTEQ**. 2013. Available: <http://www.iramuteq.org/documentation/fichiers/tutoriel-en-portugais>. Access 01 Sept. 2019.

CARNEIRO, M. J. O ideal rurbano: campo e cidade no imaginário de jovens rurais. *In*: SILVA, F. C. T. (org.). **Mundo rural e política: ensaios interdisciplinares**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Campus, 1998. p. 97-117.

COUTINHO, M. M.; DOULA, S. M. Representações sociais sobre a Aids entre jovens rurais e urbanos de Minas Gerais. **Semina: Ciências Sociais e Humanas**. v. 35, n. 2, p. 77-90, 2014. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5433/1679-0383.2014v35n2p77>

CUERVO, M. R.; HAMANN, C.; PIZZINATO, A. Feira agroecológica enquanto comunidade de prática: redes de sociabilidade, consumo e resistência. **Sociedade e Cultura**, v. 22, n. 1, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5216/sec.v22i1.43743>

FABERLUDENS. **Métodos de pesquisa etnográfica**. 2011. Available: [http://www.ligiafascioni.com.br/wpcontent/uploads/2011/05/aula3\\_metodos\\_pesquisa\\_etnografica.pdf](http://www.ligiafascioni.com.br/wpcontent/uploads/2011/05/aula3_metodos_pesquisa_etnografica.pdf). Access: 03 Jan. 2020.

FOLHA DA MATA. **Feira livre noturna completou nove meses em Viçosa**. 2018. Available: <https://www.folhadamata.com.br/noticia-feira-livre-noturna-completou-nove-meses-em-vicoso-2929>. Access: 07 May 2020.

GODOY, A. S. Introdução à pesquisa qualitativa e suas possibilidades. **Revista de Administração de Empresas**, v. 35, n. 2, p. 57-63, 1995.

GUIMARÃES, T. T. D.; DOULA, S. M. Memória e identidade: o processo de sucessão e herança no Mercado Municipal de Montes Claros – MG, 2018. Brasil. **Mundo Agrário**, v. 19, n. 40, e078. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24215/15155994e078>

HENRY, P.; MOSCOVICI, S. Problèmes de l'analyse de contenu. **Langages**, 3e année, n. 11, p. 36-60, 1986. Available: [https://www.persee.fr/doc/lgge\\_0458-726x\\_1968\\_num\\_3\\_11\\_2900](https://www.persee.fr/doc/lgge_0458-726x_1968_num_3_11_2900). Access: 26 June 2022.

IPATRIMÔNIO, Patrimônio Cultural Brasileiro. **Viçosa – Balaustrada**. Available: <http://www.ipatrimonio.org/vicoso-balaustrada/#!/map=38329>. Access: 10 Nov. 2022.

JACCOUD, M.; MAYER, R. A observação direta e a pesquisa qualitativa. *In*: POUPART, J. *et al.* (org.). **A Pesquisa qualitativa**. Enfoques epistemológicos e metodológicos. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2008.



JODELET, D. Représentations sociales: un domaine en expansion. *In*: JODELET, D. (Ed.) **Les représentations sociales**. Tradução: Tarso Bonilha Mazzotti. Paris: PUF, 1989, p. 31-61. Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) - Faculdade de Educação, 1993.

JODELET, D. **Representações sociais**: um domínio em expansão. Rio de Janeiro: Editora EdUERJ, 2001.

LIMA COSTA, B. A.; SANTOS, C. C. B.; PRIORE S. E. Aproximando produção e consumo: a experiência do projeto de extensão “Quintal Solidário”. **Revista ELO - Diálogos em Extensão**, v. 8, n. 1, 2019. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21284/elo.v8i1.1189>

LIMA COSTA, B. A.; STROPPA MOREIRA, M. A. Sentidos e contradições do trabalho de mulheres artesãs na economia solidária: estudo de caso de uma feira em Viçosa, Minas Gerais, Brasil. **Otra Economía**, v. 12, n. 22, p. 133-152, 2019. Available: <https://revistaotraeconomia.org/index.php/otraeconomia/article/view/14817/9467>, Access: 05 May 2020.

LOPES, T. J. S. As representações sociais e a educação. *In*: CONGRESSO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO, 11., 2013. **Anais [...]**. 2013. Available: [http://educere.bruc.com.br/ANAIS2013/pdf/9077\\_6744.pdf](http://educere.bruc.com.br/ANAIS2013/pdf/9077_6744.pdf). Access: 04 Oct. 2019.

MENASCHE, R. Risco à Mesa: Alimentos Transgênicos, No Meu Prato Não? **Campos - Revista de Antropologia**, [S.l.], v. 5, n. 1, p. 111-129, jun. 2004. DOI: <https://revistas.ufpr.br/campos/article/view/1638>

MINAYO, M. C. S. **Pesquisa Social**: teoria, método e criatividade. 21. ed. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2009.

MOSCOVICI, S. Das representações coletivas às representações sociais: elementos para uma histórica. *In*: JODELET, D. **Representações sociais**: um domínio em expansão. Rio de Janeiro: Editora EdUERJ, 2001. p. 45-66.

MOSCOVICI, S. **Representações sociais**: investigações em psicologia social. 3. ed. Tradução: Pedrinho A. Guareschi. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 2003.

PEDRO, F. C. P.; COULON, O. M. A. F. **As Rotas Comerciais e as Feiras Medievais**. 1985. Available: [http://www.miniweb.com.br/historia/artigos/i\\_media/rotas\\_comerciais.html](http://www.miniweb.com.br/historia/artigos/i_media/rotas_comerciais.html). Access: 10 Sept. 2019.

PEREIRA, V.; BRITO, T.; PEREIRA, S. A feira livre como importante mercado para agricultura familiar em Conceição do Mato Dentro (MG). **Revista Ciências Humanas**, Taubaté, v. 10, n. 2, p. 67-78, dez. 2017. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32813/rchv10n22017artigo6>

PESAVENTO, S. J. Em busca de uma outra história: imaginando o imaginário. **Revista Brasileira de História**, São Paulo, v. 15, n. 29, 1995. Available: [https://www.anpuh.org/arquivo/download?ID\\_ARQUIVO=3770](https://www.anpuh.org/arquivo/download?ID_ARQUIVO=3770). Access: 28 Oct. 2019.



SACCO DOS ANJOS, F.; GODOY, W. I.; CALDAS, N. V. **As feiras-livres de Pelotas sob o império da globalização: perspectivas e tendências**. Pelotas, RS: Editora e Gráfica Universitária, 2005.

SÊGA, R. A. O conceito de representação social nas obras de Denise Jodelet e Serge Moscovici. **Anos 90**, Porto Alegre, v. 8, n. 13, jul. 2000. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22456/1983-201X.6719>

SATO, L. Processos cotidianos de organização do trabalho na feira livre. **Psicologia e Sociedade**, v. 19, n. esp. 1, 2007. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0102-71822007000400013>

SILVA, I. T.; SILVA, A. B. A feira livre na contemporaneidade: estudo de caso em uma pequena cidade paraibana. **Revista GeoSertões**, Cajazeiras, v. 1, n. 2, p. 6-20, nov. 2016. Available: <http://revistas.ufcg.edu.br/cfp/index.php/geosertoes/article/view/36/pdf>. Access: 28 Oct. 2019.

#### How to reference this article

SILVA, Parley Lopes Bernini da; LACERDA, Rogério Tadeu de Oliveira. Going to farmers' market and talking: Study on the social representations given by farmers' market vendors and consumers - Viçosa-MG. **Estudos de Sociologia**, Araraquara, v. 27, n. 00, e022032, 2022. e-ISSN: 1982-4718. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52780/res.v27i00.15758>

**Submitted:** 15/05/2022

**Required revisions:** 22/06/2022

**Approved:** 25/07/2022

**Published:** 21/12/2022

**Processing and publication by the Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.**  
Correction, formatting, standardization and translation.

