The Markets of Montpellier: Food Culture, Identity and Belonging in France

by

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Abstract

Focusing on immigration, food consumption and cultural identity, this thesis examines the expression of ethnic identity in city spaces in France. Several months of ethnographic fieldwork in Montpellier, France centred on three of the city's food markets: two self-identified as farmer’s or organic, and one as North African. The sale of paysan goods at the farmer’s market sees shoppers and producers engage in a series of well-versed economic and cultural exchanges, revealing the importance of local production and consumption for the development of a distinct Montpelliérain identity. The market emerges as a politically and socially integrated community, a site of civic citizenship and regionalist sentiments. The North African market, recently displaced from its traditional plaza to a small parking lot, has an alternative character: a valued communitarian space for participants, it is a site of ethnic commerce and diverse consumption. Yet this space is externally perceived as a site of illegality and foreignness, with critics challenging the market’s legitimacy and campaigning for greater control on public space usage. In the contrasting experience of Montpellier's outdoor food markets, I trace ongoing struggles to define local social and civic identities.
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Introduction

The outdoor food market is a key link in the life of many French cities. Nestled in a plaza or shaded by aged chestnut trees in a parkade, it brings the neighbourhood to life. It encourages lingering, fragrant produce spread out in large baskets, cheese in one corner and bread in the next. Clients take their time. They are looking for “real human contact, the kind that you can’t find anymore in other places” a vendor tells me. His market is in the city of Montpellier and he is carefully balancing fair trade products on a wooden table, a colourful table-cloth already spread out. It is a busy day, heat of summer wilting basil leaves, the rotisseries down the line fanning herself with a newspaper. People are circulating amongst the stands, there are clients, merchants, transients, producers, store owners, parents and children. A community temporarily forming around produce stands and baskets of olives, enveloping the early morning plaza in a cacophony of sounds and tempered activity. A multiplicity of social and economic characters meeting, exchanging and engaging, the market functioning as a public forum and a site of local sociability.

Focusing on immigration, food consumption and cultural identity, this thesis examines the expression of ethnic identity in city spaces in France. Taking the outdoor food market as the point of analysis it delves into questions of belonging, civic participation and cultural consumption. Following de Certeau, the market is
engaged with as a “landmark for the understanding of human relations within the practice of neighbourhood”. Markets function as macro-, micro-, and meso-spheres of social interaction, local sites of civic participation where overlapping identities meet, chafe and compete. The outdoor food market performs a cultural function: the economic barter that sees vendors sell clients bundles of goods are secondary in importance to the social exchanges taking place. While 1/3 of French households frequent markets on a regular basis they dispense only 3.8% of their food budget there. The attraction is not economic, but more nuanced, the market site functioning outside the supply-and-demand that guides most urban commerce. The site’s sociability, the opportunity to meet, casually engage with fellow market-goers, neighbours and citizens, absorb local colour and have real human contact, as the above vendors notes, are the primary attraction.

In approaching the outdoor food market, I am interested in tracing the practices and procedures that inform food culture. The market, I will argue, is a site of identity formation: through select cultural and physical consumption, the body is re-disciplined, integrated into regional social and economic norms. To participate in market life is to show allegiance to distinct local ideals, to value quality food, and publicly support a form of commerce that has been rendered irrelevant by suburban big-box stores. Yet the market is also a site of contested belonging. The displays of French-ness, the terroir goods and traditional decorations, are challenged by the emergence of ethnic commerce. While the market strives to retain French tradition, its surrounding neighbourhoods are increasingly diverse. In the city of Montpellier, the clash of meaning has come to the forefront: in 2005
the Marché du Plan Cabanes, a nominally North African market on the periphery of the city-centre, was displaced from its central plaza to a small parking lot several blocks away. The action stirred debate on public space usage, appropriate commerce and desirable community. Living in Montpellier at the time, the discourse surrounding the relocation captured my imagination; the resolve to centre fieldwork on the city’s markets informed by a desire to understand the social and economic processes behind the decision. Outdoor food markets, I want to suggest, are integrated into wider social dynamics. The relocation of the Marché du Plan Cabanes links to broader discussions on the meaning of immigration, and more specifically, the social imaginary surrounding French-Maghrébin communities.

The study that follows is based on three months of ethnographic fieldwork in Montpellier, France. Alongside the Marché du Plan Cabanes, I completed research in two more central markets: the Marché des Arceaux and Marché Paysan d’Antigone. Thriving with customers, drawing large weekend crowds, each of the three markets is a key joint in neighbourhood life. The Marché des Arceaux, stretching out below the city’s historic aqueduct, is the largest market, bringing together upwards of 80 vendors on Saturday mornings. It has a reputation for organic products and fair trade goods, local farmers joining in alongside import-merchants, clothing, jewellery, arts and crafts, household tools and plants. The market is several minutes walk from the Marché du Plan Cabanes, yet the two sites share few clients and have very limited overlap in vendors. The Marché du Plan Cabanes, squeezed in its small lot, draws shoppers
from the city’s suburban housing estates with discount prices and ample produce variety. Although physically connected to the city-centre, the Marché du Plan Cabanes stands apart: there is little pedestrian traffic between the café and plazas of historic Montpellier. The Marché Paysan d’Antigone is the city’s premier farmer’s market, and the third comparative field-site. Located in a recently built housing complex just east of the city centre, it is renowned for high quality local produce, with an independent market association governing vendor participation. The Marché Paysan d’Antigone is, in many ways, an archetype of

Illustration 1: Locations of the Marché des Arceaux, Marché du Plan Cabanes, and Marché Paysan d’Antigone within the city-centre of Montpellier. Map prepared by Jose Aparicio, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia.  

the traditional French market: cheese and breads, fragrant tomatoes and artisan foods spread out on colourful tables shaded by large umbrellas, it panders to gourmand shoppers seeking distinctly regional goods. The city’s mild weather allows for year-round activity, with the three markets under consideration part of
a wider circuit of seasonal and tourist fairs, small neighbourhood markets, wine
tasting festivals and artisan expositions.

The analysis that follows is divided into three sections. A brief methodological
chapter provides an introduction to Montpellier and its region before delving into
the interpersonal and ethical issues informing the ethnographic process.
Participation in market life is understood as performative, and the gendered,
cultural and social norms associated with being a foreign researcher are explored.
The limits of the three case studies are acknowledged, and difficulties with
archival access and an inability to interview city officials are discussed. The
subsequent chapter examines the Marché Paysan d’Antigone and the Marché des
Arceaux, drawing on interviews and participant-observation to build an
understanding of the local, ‘quality’ market. Here, the market is understood as a
site of authentic and legitimate terroir consumption where regional belonging is
negotiated through the demonstration of cultural expertise and public support of
French heritage and traditional farming. Yet the civic and social citizenship
presumed by participants in the two premier markets is not universal, and as the
final chapter suggests, users of the Marché du Plan Cabanes have a notably
different consumer experience. At the Plan Cabanes local identities are contested
and public space disputed. Locked in a protracted battle with Montpellier’s
municipality, vendors and shoppers continually struggle to establish the market's
value and meaning, further arguing that relocation has disrupted an important
communitarian space. The Marché du Plan Cabanes is continually posited as
problematic, undesirable and in need of outside intervention, with racialised
discourses of cultural difference used to distinguish the space from other markets in Montpellier. The three key chapters are preceded by a brief prelude: a photographic and textual description of the daily rhythms of market life, it combines experiences in all three fieldwork sites.
Prelude: three markets, one morning, two purchases

Going to the market is not a passive activity. Its stalls and wares spread out in the plaza, it must be navigated, engaged with, food tasted, fabrics touched, the din of vendors shouting acknowledged. Being “free to go to the market is above all a state of mind; a question of not merely how to organize one’s time but of general attitude. One needs to be open to take in the market, open, like a visitor entering a foreign city, to whatever may be discovered there.” In the market, greetings are over dramatized, selecting apples a performance, you are there to see and be seen, and to acknowledge this traditional mode of commerce in an age when most shopping is done in air-conditioned big-box stores at the city’s periphery.

The noise of the market is perceptible first, then the pungent smells of breads, mint and fresh slices of melon. It catches the vendors shouting:

‘Watermelon from Ourzazat!’

And then a challenge from the stand across, a competitor rhythmically dicing a large watermelon into thin triangles, offered to you from the edge of his knife.

‘Come, come friends, and try this watermelon!’
Vendors call out to clients. They call out to each other. They yelp when one of the stands, a long metal table supporting crates of potatoes, tomatoes and onions collapses. A client has reached for a cucumber and kicked-in one of the folding legs. In a domino effect one crate pushes on another, and soon produce is spilling into the plaza, rolling towards the neighbour. Grapes are squished. The client is quick, he has grabbed one corner of the crumbling table. The stall attendants are swifter, they have already pulled off the scale and are propping up the stand with wooden crates. The table end that hits the grounds sends out a metallic clang that echoes over the market. All other noise stops for a moment, then restarts with laughter and nods of disbelief from more practiced clients.

Sometimes a group of musicians arrive to play renditions of the Gypsy Kings. They are usually welcomed. But when children with yellow plastic cups emerge asking for change, their noise is hushed and they are scooted to the sidewalk.

Illustration 2: Melons for sale. All photos by author.
‘Where are your parents? This is a disgrace!’ The vendors mockingly act as a choir, singing absurdities to each other over the stands until someone more timid gasps in dismay at their racy lyrics. Car horns can drown out the market. Car horns competing with the exponentially louder ring of the angry, boxed in, bus driver obliterates even the most ardent vendors.

Illustration 3: Garlic.

A symphony of noises, added to them the sound of produce being deliberately tossed. One farmer is targeting another with potatoes. The second responds in kind, a well-meaning onion lands in the lettuce. A string of garlic threateningly hoisted.

‘Àïe, àïe, àïe, l’ail! Eat garlic and live to be 100!’

No one wins the battle. They couldn’t possibly when the potatoes are so poorly aimed and the onions already mashed from practice. Yet the farmers menace
each other at every chance. The clients are delighted, watching them play out their game. A clove is tossed at a passer-by, who buys a bag of garlic and inquires about the neighbour’s potatoes. The beep of the scale as every client’s goods are weighed and bagged.

‘Have you already had a taste?’

The wine producer has two large barrels of rosé and coteaux du Languedoc in the back of a truck. Bring an empty bottle, the plastic two-litres used for water, and fill them up for 1.50€ per litre. The barrels make a satisfying ‘glug, glug’ sound as wine is poured out. The vendor dealing in electronics and personal items is punching belt-holes for a client. The leather gives way easily, the belt is measured, bought.

There’s a conflict. Around the social table one producer accuses another of disrespect. The words are too distant to be heard, but the gestures clear. So is the shouting. The two are pulled apart, each reaches for their drink and turns to opposite sides of the group. Backs turned, the conversations continue. There is rivalry, but never explicitly. An olive vendor decries the incompetence of city officials. They have placed another stand across the way, and now clients can buy their olives elsewhere. How could the city be this brash? The placement helps neither of them!

Competition is quietly masked. A vendor is strategic in laying out his stand. At the front are bananas and tomatoes. These draw in clients, they are staples, and
cheap at that. There is rarely any profit on the bananas but the vendor is not troubled. The bananas are bait, he says, they pull people in because it makes everything seem so easy to buy, easy to eat, within easy reach. The psychology of the market is revealed. There are several varieties of tomatoes and of peaches, with multiple price-levels. The costlier at the front, displayed for their perfect colour and shape. The more affordable by the cash register. The clients browse and try to compare with other stands. But it is impossible. The neighbouring produce stand has an equally mesmerizing variety or products and prices. One would need a pen and paper to work out a value-versus-cost comparison. The vendor smiles smugly, it is unclear if he is overpriced or undercutting. And he certainly won’t tell.

Illustration 4: Preparing a honey sample for a shopper.

The farmers are intuitive with pricing. They specialize in single produce varieties and can’t work the multi-tiered magic of the larger stands. A walk-about the
market reveals another producer is selling for 0.30€ cheaper. The price is dropped by 0.20€, the variety of melon noted on the plaque to ensure customers can spot the difference. Business picks up. It is like a deluge. Clients clump around the stand sending stall assistants in a frenzy, but then silence until another mob arrives. If no one is buying, no one else approaches. Crowd mentality. Did the neighbour just throw a potato at us?

Then a client passes by. In a blink the vendor knows if they will buy. Their body language reveals their intentions without meaning to. The onlooker walks by, glancing over their shoulder. No point in calling out, they cannot be enticed. They are just gawking. Another stops at the stand, looks carefully, but they stand at an angle to the stall and still facing the walkways. The vendor does not budge, leaning against the truck. The inexperienced apprentice jumps at the chance but soon learns the psychology of the client. These too are gawkers. But when a customer approaches and stands squarely, hips facing the stall, eyes darting over the produce, a bag is prepared. Even if they are at a distance a simple hello draws them in. They are ready to purchase. They have made up their mind.

Be careful with them, eh! A vendor pulls a single green bean from a crate and snaps it in half. The bean breaks neatly. These are no string beans, see! No strings! They are good, local produce. The broken bean is left by the till for the next client to see, for the demonstration to be repeated. The pastries garner a reaction, always.

‘Have a taste, no obligations to buy!’
A hand cautiously reaches for a morsel, the sweet almond butter and orange zest is devoured. The reaction is immediate. A wide grin, eyebrows raised in surprise, a quiet ‘mmm’. The taster raises their hand and shakes their fingers. It means they are impressed. Is the price per unit or by weight? It is difficult to budget for the gustatory delights of the pallet.

Illustration 5: Behind the counter, cash box.

Clients and vendors lean over the produce to meet each other for an exchange. Goods for cash. Credit is never accepted. That’ll be 4.75€. A client hands a 5€ bill and the vendor holds it over the stand, keeps it in their hand and in view until the change is counted out and handed back. There can be no dispute about the value of the note handed to the vendor. The client must be assured of honesty at all times. The soundscape of the market is a cacophony of sounds, but the hiss of vendor-client arguments never enters the milieu. It would shatter the convivial, playful atmosphere.
A different scene outside the market. Here, the outsiders are set up with illegal stands, selling illegal mint and fragrantly ripe illegal melons. How could food be illegal? If you don’t pay your city dues the official will reproach you. You have no official space at the market. And are you officially part of the Chamber of Commerce? The stands are spread on the ground, not at the mandated one meter height. Camionettes selling goods out the back have license plates from the region. A pregnant woman pours fruit in a plastic bag and accepts the set-price payment. Clients are numerous, but quick. They scurry away not bothering to linger and chat over the scale, as there is no expectation of loyalty to the vendor. The municipal police spy out the gentlemen selling fresh Moroccan mint, then tell him to move on.

Illustration 6: Eggplant
The real market has a clearly demarcated limit. It is a world unto itself, a long walkway with stands on either side. Trees provide shade above the colourful umbrellas. Cloths hang over the tables hiding the mess below. Vendors face each other, and the crowd inches along the length of the space between them. A captive audience. Behind the stalls and the attendants are parked the transport trucks and vans. There is no vendor’s parking lot. They drive onto the market plaza and inch as closely as they can to their designated selling spot. They station themselves parallel to the walkway, compactly lining the outside of the market. From a distance it looks like an impenetrable wall of white car veneer, a shell through which the vibrancy of the interior bazaar is barely visible. All legitimate activity takes place inside this husk. You have to enter at the bottom of the walkway and stroll up to exit at the top end. Or you can try to weave between the parked vehicles but you will find yourself on the wrong side of the stands, the vendors chiding you for nosing in their space. The market is like a procession, a compulsory march past stands and stalls of little interest, until you reach the chocolatier at the end for a much deserved reward.

Amongst the stands leaflets are being handed out. A group in matching shirts promotes a candidate for the legislative elections. The political will of the neighbourhood can be gauged through these stagings. In one market the leaflets call for an end to discrimination, in another the Green Party takes to the podium, in a third it is a candidate seeking urban renewal and public security. Sometimes all three are present, the market instinctively divided between them. A stand in support of a free Palestine. Another decrying the evils of genetically modified
crops, a letter from southern hero José Bové on display. Between the punters a young man holds up a different set of photocopies. They are poor and have children to feed, can you spare some change? A bag of goods is provided. With a scowl a transient asks how much it cost to make the photocopies.

It is the end of the day and the market is folding up. Bread is repacked in large paper sacks, then stacked in tall crates that are hoisted into the van. The mint is dipped in water. The water shaken off over the herbs at the stand, a faint perfume of mint and basil lingers. The heat plays havoc with the delicate green leaves. They need to be refreshed before being wrapped in dampened burlap. Empty boxes restacked, full crates enveloped in plastic. They are heaped on a trolley then loaded onto the refrigerated truck’s dock and shelved. The truck buzzes fiercely. The vendors rush to each other’s stands with food orders. They do their personal shopping at the market. Everything needed is packed in one basket and dropped on the scale. A flat rate, well below market price, and in exchange a few eggs and some lavender goat cheese. It pays to be an insider.

Remnant produce is collected in plastic bins and lined on the edge of the stand. Reduced prices for what could not sell and will not hold until the next market day. Three melons for 2€. Over a kilogram of eggplant for a fraction of the price. A woman collects all the organic, local, lettuce leaves for her turtle. They are free at the end of the day. Hardened croissants quickly sell, the slices of pizza even faster. An elderly woman passes through and counts out her change methodically. She shares a bin of produce with another customer. Things are so
expensive, she says, but she has no choice, she has to eat. The vendor pours an extra handful into the bag, and rounds down the total. Then offers to carry the bags for her.

Illustration 7: Sunflower seeds.

As the stands are being rolled in, a contest is being settled on the market grounds. City cleaners clip at the edges, disposing of scattered produce. At the other end a group of scavengers are collecting discarded tomatoes, apples and bundles of wilting greens. The scavengers are radical socialists, some proclaim themselves anarchists. They are students at the university. Activists working towards food equality, decrying the wasteful, bourgeois nature of the market. In one day they collect enough to eat for a week. They share the produce amongst each other and have potlucks. The scavengers are bent on outsmarting the city cleaners, who are bent on obliterating any sign of the market by 2pm so the space can be re-converted back to a parking lot. The scavengers fan out as the street cleaning machine kicks into gear, yanking the last of the reduced price produce for free as
the vendors have no motivation to repack them. The yellow table cloths and boisterousness of the market conceal the remarkable activities of a wide array of social actors.

Illustration 8: Quail eggs.

Then a pause. A break at the end of the day. The rites of the market: the vendors gather to have a glass. For some an aperitif, a *rosé* or a white wine. Perhaps a white wine with grenadine syrup, or even better with fizzy lemonade. “The wine’s colour links it to the stages of the day: white wine in the morning, for specific dietary reasons, is considered a stimulant”. So says Mayol, analyzing the acts of market goers in Lyon of the 1970s. Has that little changed? The vendors know the barman, their drinks slide over the table without need for an order. The apprentice, me, stalks the sideboard for the small bowl of appetizer olives.
On being a ‘fly on the wall’: positionality, subjectivity and ethnographic research

‘Where are you from?’ A banal query considering my accented French, shuffle of foreign field-research forms, and markedly complicated name. My answer was anything but spontaneous. I had carefully prepared a set of replies, to be called upon depending on a shifting set of circumstances and settings. The most logical, I decided, would be to say ‘Vancouver’. All the research forms listed the University of British Columbia as my address, as did my business cards. Usually this simple answer sufficed. However, if pressed further, I could expand to ‘Canada’. When a raised eyebrow and a ‘Where is your name from?’ indicated suspicions of my veracity, my answer would devolve to ‘Canadian-Bulgarian’ or ‘Bulgarian-Canadian’. I could never decide on the succession of identities in my double-barrelled nationality. Short of launching into my life history replies would end there and promptly turn to a counter-question: ‘And when did you start working at this market?’

My unease with deft questions was productive. As Ali notes, “the feeling of discomfort is useful for me as I am forced to re/assess what I do”. While asking questions about cultural identity, I could not but embroil my personal history in the research. Like Ali I learned to draw on moments of apprehension and embarrassment, not shy away from challenges, and recognize that introspective
Fieldwork meant a personal engagement, a constant intrusion into the habitual practices of research participants, and in return their engagement with my personal and professional life. Research was negotiation, a push-and-pull where each party demanded to know more about the other before allowing access to the intimate, personal space of the everyday. Quiet fly-on-the-wall observation was both impossible and wholly undesirable: instead I worked at merchant stalls, helped unload crates, met with vendors and shoppers in the market and outside, built friendships, voiced my opinion and was grateful for the opportunity to ingrain myself in marché life. The researcher, Rose reminds, is an active participant whose performance is inscribed in the results. The findings cannot be separated from the method itself. Scrutinizing the bumps and thrills of fieldwork is, I have found, an important tool for understanding the situational work of cultural geography.

Selecting field sites was a mixed process: driven by keen research questions on the politics of cultural consumption and ethnic identity, it was also inherently personal. I had previously lived in Montpellier and felt an easy comfort with the city. Many of the markets I had visited in a different capacity some years prior: as a student they figured large in my weekly routine. The Marché du Plan Cabanes was, and during the course of fieldwork continued to be, down the street from my home. I lived in the neighbourhood, shopped there regularly, knew the maze of streets in the historic centre and could effectively negotiate my way to a bargain. Returning to Montpellier in the guise of a graduate researcher, the importance of markets to the social and civic life of the city loomed in my memories. As did the
unique cultural milieu of Montpellier: a meeting of global and local, strongly regionalist yet cosmopolitan, it has an atmosphere that long-time residents and more recent arrivals like to claim as unique, spectacular, and apparently unforgettable.

Illustration 8 (left): Montpelier's city-centre, Place de la Comédie; Illustration 9 (right): pedestrian shopping street in the city-centre.

Nestled at the mouth of the River Lez, Montpellier looks south to the Mediterranean and north to the Cévennes mountains. It is a double-capital: of the Hérault department, and of the Languedoc-Roussillon region. Billed as the 8th largest city in France, the Greater Montpellier Area has a population of 400,000, with the city proper accounting for half the inhabitants. A university presence that dates to the 12th century, Montpellier is home to the oldest still-functioning medical school in Europe along with the Arts and Humanities Université Paul Valéry, the Science and Technology focused Université Montpellier II. With 12 students per 100 inhabitants Greater Montpellier has the second-highest proportion in France; within the city-proper 43% of residents are under the age of 30. Labelled a ‘Europole’, a silicon valley of southern
Europe, Montpellier is home to IBM (since 1965), Dell (as of 1992) and in 2010 will boast the only Apple Computers retail store in the country. It is the fastest growing city in France and it's tight housing market has raced to keep up with burgeoning demand.²⁰ Rents pinch. Historically the seat of a wine producing region, Montpellier’s rapid development since the mid-20th century is attributed to, among many things: the taming of surrounding swamplands and conversion into residential areas, the successful attraction of lucrative businesses, expansion of the educational sector, development of sea-side resort communities, steady migration and a string of visionary mayors.²¹

Languedoc-Roussillon, Montpellier’s administrative region spans from the Rhône River to the Pyrenées mountains. Catalan sentiment toward the Spanish border and Occitan flags within Montpellier are outward demonstrations of a nuanced cultural identity that distinguishes itself from Paris and the north. Rugby is more closely followed than football, bullfights and corridas stretch into the summer months, and Montpellier’s Tourism Office expertly works this ‘southern’ flavour into heritage guides and cultural attractions.²² Proximity to the Iberian peninsula and North Africa make Languedoc-Roussillon the 4th largest immigration reception area of France.²³ A pattern of migration from Spain during the Franco years was, in the 1970s and 1980s, replaced by new trajectories with Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. At last count – the period 1990-1999 providing the most recent comprehensive data set – 205,000 migrants resided in Languedoc-Roussillon of whom 54% arrived from other European countries, 27% from Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, a further 8% from other parts of Africa, and 10%
from Asia and the Americas. In 1999, 10% of Montpellier residents were foreign born compared to 9% for the region, and 7.4% for France. A portrait of the region would not be complete without mention of unemployment: Languedoc-Roussillon has the dubious particularity of having the highest rate in France. In 1999 the region recorded 18.6% unemployment among the total active population, with a soaring 55.3% and 50.4% among the Tunisian-Algerian and Moroccan populations respectively. The elevated level is in part linked to a declining agricultural sector and a recent demand for highly skilled employees. The situation has eased – in relative terms – and in late 2007 Languedoc-Roussillon posted an overall rate of 10.7% with Montpellier hovering around the 12% mark.

Entry into Montpellier’s markets came in bursts. I collated information leaflets and consent forms, made introductions and strolled into the already familiar spaces. Carving out a presence was sometimes facile: the leaflets quickly scanned, passed around with welcoming handshakes. Vendors in the Marché Paysan d’Antigone were particularly encouraging, providing me with digital copies of market archives and newspaper clippings, along with photos and the Marché Paysan d’Antigone Association Statutes. I was not the first researcher to approach with a project: a graduate thesis encompassing the market had been produced some years earlier, and the market occasionally played host to journalists and city officials. I was quickly ingrained in the weekly cycle, volunteering as an assistant at a produce stand and occasionally partaking in the farmers’ early morning breakfast rituals. Vendor spill over between the Marché Paysan d’Antigone and
the Marché des Arceaux made entry into the latter simple. At the Marché des Arceaux I also volunteered, this time at an artisan stand. Interviews were quickly arranged, vendors happy to chat behind the stand as the crowds wove by, some inviting me for a farm visit, which in two instances I accepted. Lack of personal transport made greater forays into the surrounding countryside difficult. Still I learned to sell potatoes, pastries, melons and the occasional pot of foie gras, the ins-and-outs of the market slowly revealed over the three months of summer fieldwork.

At the Marché du Plan Cabanes my sudden appearance was greeted with noticeable reserve. The market’s relocation and ongoing antagonism with City Hall likely contributing to vendors’ unease with an outsider’s inquiries. I was asked if I worked for the police, and several times whether I was a journalist or if I was being paid to collect information. Introductions were influenced by a difference in position: a white, female, Anglophone researcher I sought to enter a space where the majority of vendors and a notable proportion of shoppers were male, identifying with a minority ethnic group, and speaking French, Berber, Turkish and Arabic. In a neighbourhood with exceptionally high unemployment rates – hovering around the 32% mark\textsuperscript{29} – seeking a volunteer position among the stalls would have been unconscionable. The market daily played host to groups of out-of-work men, some helping at stands in exchange for groceries, others using the social cluster to exchange information on job opportunities. Rather than compete for a position behind the till I became a regular in a local café. It had barely peeked open as I was starting fieldwork, I was among the very
first clients. With the café owners, waiters and surrounding vendors playing the role of gatekeepers I inched my way into research. Here, more than in other locations, I was conscious of the interplay between personal and research identities, the gendered space of the market and my own position as outsider influencing the nature of exchanges.

The knottiness of my hyphenated nationality intersected with the multiplicity of identities at play in the market grounds. Introducing myself as Canadian-Bulgarian raised the spectre of immigration, of being ‘foreign’, and particularly in the Marché du Plan Cabanes opened doors to discussions of ethnicity and local identity. Questions became patterned, intrigue surrounding my age of immigration particularly pronounced: did I remember the ‘old’ country, was it easy in the ‘new’ country, would I call myself ‘Canadian’. The fieldwork process, England reminds, “is structured by both the researcher and the person being researched”. Building rapport and trust necessitated that I divulge my own biography before asking participants to broach the complicated web of meaning attached to theirs.

The paths of identity sometimes collided. A key informant habitually challenged the hyphenation of my nationality: on hearing an introduction of Canadian-Bulgarian, he would forcefully intervene in conversations, cut me off, and shout out ‘Canadian!’ I was unwittingly singularized. Dual-nationalities are absent in French naming conventions, with identity reduced to two categories: French or foreign. The collection of statistical data on ethnic markers is prohibited by law,
and so the designation of visible minority is absent and categories of ethnicity untenable. Instead ‘immigrant’ is used as a general reference for individuals of diverse background. Freedman explains the ‘immigrant’ label as:

[a] refusal to accept as French many who do in fact have French citizenship is indicated by the continuing use of the word ‘immigré’ to refer to many of the children and grandchildren of immigrants (especially of North African origin), who have always lived in France and have French nationality by law.

In the key informant’s nervousness over my self-presentation I read his personal anxieties of nationality and belonging. Jostling between his French identity and a Moroccan heritage, he underscored his Montpelliérain-ness to clients while privately acknowledging a personal association with the cultures of the Maghreb. If being of immigrant origin is incompatible with being French, then my determination to invoke a dual identity operated not only outside local norms but also beyond social expectations. The colloquial multiculturalism of Canada contrasting with French expectations of immigrant-assimilation reminding, perhaps, of more personal struggles in self-definition.

Referring to a Canadian-Bulgarian identity proved problematic in other ways. Bulgaria’s ascension to the European Union along with Romania in 2007 had been met with ambiguity and uncertainty, resurfacing some of the economic controversies surrounding the inclusion of Poland some years earlier. Worries of cheap labour from Eastern Europe, the Polish plumbers of lore, were burgeoned with the possibility of Bulgarians and Romanians joining the ranks of
those willing to work for lower wages and longer hours than the local labour force. Between vociferous calls for the Marché du Plan Cabanes to return to its original plaza, a Montpellier politician fretted in the local newspaper about the appearance of Polish workers on the Plan Cabanes construction site. Friends and research participants remarked that I was about to “become European”. My new, much contested status as a member of the EU brought with it a repertoire of stereotypes, questions and confusion. By identifying as Canadian I was accused of lying about my real nationality, my status as a Bulgarian immigrant negating the ability to name Vancouver as ‘home’. It proved personally and professionally dislocating. I meditated on the dividing line between ‘Europe’ and ‘Eastern Europe’ and where my Canadian-Bulgarian / Bulgarian-Canadian self could fit in. As the performance of my identity became more self-conscious, so I became aware that deep ambivalences punctuated the identities of many participants. The status of ‘immigrant’ became a conversation point, my firm position as outsider softened a little among Plan Cabanes participants struggling with equally disjointing matters.

The outdoor food market is a dynamic stage, a hubbub of neighbourhood life, where jesting actors vie for attention, patronage and admiration. Personas are over dramatized and boundaries pushed. In the milieu of the raucous market participants feel free to step outside their everyday character and become gregarious: teasing, nudging and publicly mocking fellow vendors and punters. The market, Pradelle remarks, is a “place where speech can be wild and provocative and no one will take offence”. Vendors joked and skidded, playfully
calling out to elder shoppers and preening teens alike. The mood one of entertainment more than commerce. With a smile and twinkle everyone transformed into ‘young man’ or a ‘young lady’, eligible for flirtation, regardless of their life situation.37 No one could escape the attention of wanton merchants. Nor would they want to. After all, a trip to the market was little more than an exercise in shopping without the rustic, unabashed sociability. I too was caught in the net of compliments, flirtations and conviviality, always seemed to be younger, more beautiful and intelligent when I tried to buy my weekly groceries. When the tables were turned and I stood behind the counter as a stall assistant, I too was expected to play the part of a precocious vendor to the fullest.

Social actors, Herbert argues, “display cultural competence by varying their behaviour across space”.38 And so, teased by fellow sellers for not knowing ‘customer relations’, I learned market lingo. In the farmer’s market I acquired a straw hat and played the part of a paysan. My accented French gave me away, of course, yet shoppers played along. Taken in by the performance demanded of the setting, a micro-society where “actors not only coexist as in a crowd but also related to each other”39 formed. A young lad responding to vendors’ taunts about having too many girlfriends with a quip about them having none, the aphrodisiac power of nearly every fruit and vegetable underscored. The jovial merchant-client exchange followed a predictable script: the two parties were engaged in a purchase, the vendor behind the counter the client waiting opposite, the allusions and innuendos flowing for the duration of the sale. The playfulness highlights the social importance of their relationship, downplaying the monetary function,
creating the illusion of carefree friendliness.\textsuperscript{40} Behaviour was suited to circumstances, and outside the market bounds neither party would entertain similar gibes. The completion of a transaction, bags folded away in a basket, signalled the banter’s end as each actor re-entered the space of habitual relations. Shouting after someone was inappropriate and categorically out of bounds. I was, admittedly, abysmal at farcical dialogue. Yet my attempts to integrate, mistakes and questions, revealed the implicit codes of behaviour embodied by long-time participants.\textsuperscript{41}

Producers and vendors often became good friends, extending invitations for lunch and dinner, an after-market apéritif in the local café. At the Marché Paysan d’Antigone I sometimes joined in on the farmer’s breakfast: tables set up between two stands, sitting in the opened hatch-back of a car, metal mugs of coffee or rosé and thick slices of bread with sausage, cheese and sweets. With my own small mug in hand I temporarily became part of the milieu, a market ‘insider’ among others. Gossip and tiffs circulating, my status as yet another stall helper making my personal life subject to the jostlings of fellow sellers. Here the competing roles of researcher and friend conflicted, creating a disorder of purpose: at times a good friend, in other instances I felt a “mercenary researcher” mining for data.\textsuperscript{42} Separating the two functions proved difficult. I re-circulated information sheets, a reminder that I was not a farmer’s apprentice quite like the others. Some participants requested that confidentiality be ensured, concerned that in the relatively small circuits of the organic and local markets their comments might be discerned. Their contribution has been masked, socio-economic characteristics
changed. In other instances I remained a social ‘outsider’. At the Marché du Plan Cabanes I rarely crossed to the vendor's side of the counter, sellers instead joining me in front of the stall, among the other clients, to chat. Our conversations retained the courteous ‘vous’ reference, only occasionally switching to the more familial ‘tu’. The distance between researcher and participant more pronounced, the terms of participation more clearly defined. My fluctuating market status defined the context of research, the findings presented in this thesis a product of constantly negotiated social and professional norms.

Vendors offered samples of their products, handing slices of bread, sweets, fruit. A collection of tomatoes assembled, merchants described pricing structures and advertising tactics, how the items were graded and sorted. Sellers with whom I worked as a stall assistant dropped produce in my bag as I packed up after a morning at the stall, others would hand me a slice of torte for a morning snack or give a generous sample of honey, tea, or olives. A gift economy proved central to market relations, the presentation of samples a way to demonstrating quality and expressing amity. Vendors shared amongst each other, giving generous discounts to colleagues, always adding a few freebies along with the purchases. Following interviews I was encouraged to ‘take something home’, sellers inquiring at our next meeting if I had succeeded in preparing quail eggs or enjoyed cheeses and pastries. Yet this gustatory delight proved as problematic as charming. I was weary of accepting too much generosity, aware of stallholder’s financial limits. Yet declining gifts brought an immediate rebuke, queries on whether I though a product substandard. A delicate balance made all the more challenging by
instances of gift-manipulations: plied with what seemed like mountains of fruit, I was chided for not reciprocating with my home phone number. Some research participants insisted on buying my morning coffee, suggesting that a young girl like me should never have to pay for her own beverages. And did I want to get a glass of wine after? Female shoppers were not immune from similar gestures, the gendered dynamics of the market coming to the forefront. The presentation of a food-gift creating a power dynamic between male vendors and their female clientele that could, if one desired, be subverted into a courting ritual. Shoppers who found themselves unwittingly cornered were quick to reprimand, walking away briskly, the gift sometimes left on the stall. Others viewed the pick-up lines as part and parcel of the market’s rustic charm, responding with a wink, a laugh, and an over-the-top counter-compliment. I swayed between the two extremes, neither rushing away or engaging, aware that my position as a stall-helper and market-participant could be jeopardized with a public reproach.

The heaps of gifted peaches, cherries and grapes seemed particularly hefty at the Marché du Plan Cabanes. Vendors were genuinely interested in sharing expertise, explaining varieties, highlighting the relevance of internationally sourced foods through tasting. As in other instances, gifts had a dual meaning: demonstrative of quality, they also played into flirtatious routines. I received not only fruity gifts, but messages on my cell phone. The number had been listed, along with a university email, on the information leaflets I had provided to all participants. While comical, the calls were also disconcerting, bordering on harassment and removed from the general light-hearted banter of market life. Catcalls followed,
uninvited guests would sidle to my café table and with an offer of fruit take a position across from me, watching to see if I ate their gift. Rebuffs were unacknowledged, my growing discomfort leading to market-avoidance during certain hours. In describing the varying characters encountered in fieldwork, Easterday et al invent the persona of ‘the hustler’: a male participant who prefers to ignore the academic role of the female researcher and instead focus on the misread potential for an outside relationship. The playful, teasing nature of market relations make the ‘the hustler’ - *le dragueur* - an accepted figure within bounds. Clients and vendors recognize this role and revel in labelling someone a ‘*dragueur des filles*’ for their racy calls and double-entendre jargon, or ‘*une jeune dragueuse*’ for young women implicated in the same process. Yet the individuals shadowing my cell phone and café table functioned beyond colloquial limits, the ‘joke’ persisting over weeks, becoming increasingly more suggestive and aggressive. I made a conscious effort to befriend female market-goers, and was relieved when more elderly, male participants intervened.

In response my self-presentation adjusted, body-language consciously altered to emphasize a professional distance, conversations formalized and brief interviews introduced as a way of highlighting the academic reasons for my presence. The most dramatic – and perhaps outlandish – adjustment to my Marché du Plan Cabanes persona was the acquisition of a fictive fiancé. As did other female colleagues completing fieldwork that summer I found changing my status to ‘engaged’ altered relations. Unwanted flirtations eased. I was racked with guilt for misleading informants, frustrated at performing a role I did not identify with. Yet
in redrawing some boundaries, others were made more stark: the uncomfortable complexity of relations was, it seemed, not only a function of gendered dynamics but of entrenched cultural stereotypes. To turn down proposals for a date, one market-goer admonished, was bizarre for someone like me. Being ‘engaged’ should make little difference: I was western. The market-goer explained his stance: the previous week he had started to watch a Quebecoise soap opera. Men had liaisons with their sisters-in-law, friends cheated with each other, co-workers knew no bounds, no one cared about being engaged or married. Affairs were normal and nothing bad ever came of them. The Quebecoise soap opera, he intimated, showed that Canadians were indifferent to affairs, and that if I decided to date someone else in Montpellier while my fiancé was in Vancouver, it was perfectly normal and very healthy. To really understand the market, he continued, I had to follow him for a few days: to the wholesalers, then the stalls, and finally to his home. He felt that my research would have little worth if details on daily lives were missing. And did I not think that my fiancé was already dating someone else? The men around me did not smoke, drink or dabble in drugs, they were for this speaker ‘clean’ and more desirable than wonton Canadians in Vancouver, who were undifferentiated from Montreal soap opera characters.

I was taken aback, surprised at both the dating-strategy and the logic that informed it. Not imagining myself as a coquettish Western tourist, I had failed to consider that popular images of Quebecois’ (and Canadian’s) moral extravagance could factor into market perceptions. Researchers cannot be wholly reflexive and self-aware, argues Rose, but “what we may be able to do is something more
modest but, perhaps, rather more radical: to inscribe into our research practices some absences and fallibilities while recognizing that the significance of this does not rest entirely in our own hands”. Negotiating identities in the Marché du Plan Cabanes saw me draw back at times, evading gregariously flirtatious or aggressive market-goers, and in the process neglect opportunities to speak with key gatekeepers. My reticence has produced knowledge gaps, the comments detailed in later chapters capturing the experience of affable participants.

Difficulties of a different nature were pronounced not only in field-sites, but also in institutional settings. I was unable to access relevant municipal documents and archives, particularly relating to the Marché du Plan Cabanes. Requests were funneled through the local archival office, demands for information on Montpellier’s markets returned boxes of documents relating to the Marché Paysan d’Antigone and the Marché des Arceaux, and nothing on the Plan Cabanes. Public-access laws dictate that city documents be opened to the general public seven years after their enactment, setting clear limits on examinations of the 2005 Marché du Plan Cabanes relocation. Yet the unavailability of any pre-2000 documents on the site was surprising. University colleagues suggested I submit a formal request to the City Archivist, detailing specific time-periods and topics: at my departure a month and a half later requests for information were still unanswered. Archival attendants indicated that permission would have to be granted in conjuncture with the municipality. Fellow researchers suggested that speaking with a city planner ‘under the table’ would be easier. The summer holiday season made that impossible. As a result much of the detail on City Hall’s
actions with respect to the Marché du Plan Cabanes is gathered from newspaper articles and magazines, a process carried out with a microfiche scanner for lack of freely accessible digital files. Details on budgets, municipal meetings and decision making, and policy changes are absent.

Institutional blocks proved challenging in another instance: I was unable to officially acquire a copy of the municipal by-laws governing city markets. The document sets the terms of market participation, mandating everything from stall-size and height, working hours, acceptable forms of advertising, and the fees associated with vending in public space. Early into the research process I visited the municipal Commercial Services department, verbally requesting a copy of the by-laws. As with the archives, I was informed that Mayoral permission would be necessary, and at a subsequent visit the department head indicated that she would be unable to see me without City Hall authorization. The by-laws, I was informed, were not publicly available. Although I soon received the charter through other sources, a sympathetic informant eventually arranged for a supervised visit to the Commercial Services office. I was handed a copy of the by-laws and placed in a shared office with another civil servant. I was permitted to read the by-laws and take notes, but could not duplicate the documents. Asking the presiding civil servant for clarification on certain points was also allowed. The visit affirmed the veracity of the bylaws I had otherwise acquired. It also raised further suspicions of a deliberate attempt to obstruct research on the Marché du Plan Cabanes.
I also struggled to contact city officials: an attempt to speak with the City Hall Commerce attaché who oversees markets was unsuccessful, again requiring formal permission from the Mayor. Along with a lack of access to archives and municipal documents, the inability to contact the political decision markers involved in the relocation of the Marché du Plan Cabanes places notable restrictions on the findings detailed in this work. I am limited in my ability to comment on economic, urban planning and social factors considered by the municipal council, and can only assume that the decision to permanently resettle the Plan Cabanes market is more complex and knotty than appears. In commencing this research project my objective, structured by time-limits and personal interest, has been to examine the function and meaning of outdoor food markets from the perspective of farmers, artisans, and the sellers who enliven the space on a daily and ongoing basis. Their perceptions are at the core of this thesis, my conclusions coloured by vendors’ experiences of market life. Building trust, particularly in the Marché du Plan Cabanes, required taking a stance: being sympathetic to North African vendors affected by the relocation allowed for productive fieldwork. A research as well as personal position, my viewpoint also limited directions of exploration: in the closed social circuits of the Plan Cabanes, engaging with individuals applauding the market’s displacement would have, I believe, closed carefully negotiated friendships with those adversely affected by the process.

Fieldwork, as McDowell notes, produces partial information and the limits of findings must be recognized. The ethnographic experience, suggest Cerwonka
and Malkki, is an improvisation, requiring situational tactics to negotiate dilemmas and recognize opportunities. Market interactions were performative, coloured by local norms and expectations, an engagement as much with research questions as a response to the idiosyncrasies of participant personalities. Recognizing the complexities stirred by my status as a Canadian-Bulgarian, female, geographer I hope to provide some context for the subsequent analysis and suggest ethnography as a negotiation rather than a steady progression of data collection.
Cultivating identity: *paysan* expertise, regional production and the space of the market

Traversing Montpellier on a Sunday morning is a solitary pursuit. Few pedestrians are to be found before 9am. The cafés snail across the plazas after 10am, and stores are closed for at least an hour longer. In the central square McDonalds is soundly shut. Only the bakeries are open, and tempting with their baguettes and patisserie. After the quiet of the 20-minute walk, arriving at the Marché Paysan d’Antigone is a surreal experience. Even at 7:30am it is buzzing, vendors nearly set up, and more astonishing, clients queuing to be served. Clients who, weighed down under two monstrous bags of produce, local wine, and artisan goods delight in telling you that Sunday mornings are for rest and family. Carting those bags to the bistro at the bottom of the market and then home seems short of restful.

Asking clients why they like shopping at markets, I was often told that they were looking for quality, good food, a nice atmosphere, because it was close to home, to meet friends and to support local farmers. At least for customers at the Marché des Arceaux and the Marché Paysan d’Antigone the draw of the market is tied to qualitatively cultural demands. No mention of deals or discounts on food, no worries over costs, convenient hours, or selection of easy to prepare meals.
Outdoor food markets seem to have a distinct function that is not fulfilled by the big-box stores on the city’s periphery. As Pradelle suggests, the market experience is often focused on the pleasures of gourmet consumption and the delights of partaking in a weekly neighbourhood ritual. Markets, then, emerge as a site where social membership to the local community can be carefully cultivated through appropriate consumption.

Concepts of quality and ‘good food’ have a further meaning: they function as nuanced discourses of identity and belonging. Consumption denotes more than the selection and tasting of food. It is a process through which foodstuff is attributed a cultural value that allows insiders to discern their activities from that of less informed actors. The customers who heave their bags of farm-fresh produce home on Sunday mornings are participants in a broader process of asserting an exclusive Montpelliérain identity.

Illustration 11: Marché Paysan d’Antigone, view from behind the stands.
The association between food and identity has a complex history, and one that extends far beyond the dynamics of Montpellier’s premier local, organic markets. It is closely tied to the myth of French cuisine and gastronomic superiority developed in the post-revolutionary period. What Ferguson terms ‘culinary nationalism’ emerged alongside equally nationalistic linguistic, literary, political and social movements and played a role in defining the identity of the new republic. As outlined below, the process required that the kaleidoscope of regional tradition be integrated into the national whole, all the while retaining their unique flavours and meanings.

The growth of culinary nationalism was less a political process and more a function of the cultural awakening of a new Paris. Reconfigured through Haussmann’s sweeping urban visions, site of multiple revolts and governmental collapses, and capital of an emerging nineteenth century European modernity, Paris was the republic’s cultural, social and imaginative centre. It was also the site of the first restaurants, and home to gastronomic luminaries credited by Ferguson with the re-invention of French cuisine. The grand auteur of the gastronomic revolution was Marie-Antoine Carême whose seminal 19th-century works The Art of French Cooking and The Parisian Chef laid out a carefully articulated method for food preparation. Rather than focus on the composition of individual meals, Carême valourized the cooking techniques required to make béchamel sauce, bouillon, and marinated meats. These guidelines, with some adjustment for regional availability of products, could be transmitted and copied.
throughout France. As Ferguson notes, “an overtly class culinary model turned into a national cultural phenomenon.” No longer simply a meal, food became a discipline and one made accessible to anyone able to follow the steps of a recipe.

The great success of Carême’s work, and that of his student Auguste Escoffier, was to transform regional dishes into a coherent French culinary tradition. To prepare a quiche-Lorraine in Paris or ratatouille beyond Provence meant to recognize the value of local specialties outside their original context. The variety of France, and especially the variety of its terroir became a point of national pride, a heritage that allowed one to imaginatively consume a shared past. This culinary collaboration was one more ‘invented tradition’ that became “an instrument with which to practice nationalism.” Following de Certeau’s logic, the focus was no longer on the individual merits of foods, but rather on their use, manipulation, and integration into a broader discourse of the art of being French. The power of culinary nationalism lays in its very everyday-ness, its constant expression in the banality of the evening meals, and persistent and recurrent consumption by all strata of society.

The development of a national gastronomic lexicon is paralleled by another equally important occurrence: the establishment of regional monopolies on the production of wines, cheeses, and artisan specialties. That is, the concept of terroir. The term has powerful connotations in French. At most basic it is ‘earth’, ‘soil’ or ‘rurality’. Its colloquial meaning is more specific and refers to “a set of attitudes and practices that are unique to the French people and the French
soil.” In essence terroir is a marker of identity. It ties the provenance of certain goods to a singular, spatially limited, geologically homogenous, and culturally unique geographical area. To designate a food as being of specific terroir is to imply that there is only one authentic mode of production.

The politics of terroir garnered national attention in the early twentieth century as regional foods became economically viable. Some, like the wines of Bordeaux and Roquefort cheese, had a long history of cultural and legal protection, while others like Champagne and Camembert were budding contenders for terroir recognition. The label Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC) is the formal recognition of products emanating from a terroir heritage. Its emergence is linked to the public scramble for exclusive rights to the Champagne name.

The battle for Champagne was fierce, and in 1905 and again in 1908 resulted in parliamentary legislation to protect the brand and the terroir of its origin. To the perpetual chagrin and financial ruin of vintners, throughout France and in foreign wine markets the word ‘champagne’ was continually applied to any sparkling white wine drink. In effect ‘champagne’ was treated as a generic name, a moniker for a texture and production method that traded on the fame of the original Champagne. The ruse extended to foreign brands mimicking the traditional Champagne bottle and label, and gaining substantial profits from the association. Claiming that authentic Champagne flowed uniquely from their vines the growers of the Marne department in eastern France decried all other ‘champagnes’ as foul imitations. When the matter became the subject of French
legislation, producers from several departments angled for a cut of the Champagne fortune.

As Guy notes, the importance of Champagne to national culinary heritage was already well established at the turn of the century and did not need reaffirmation. The question before parliament was more nuanced: to determine the legitimate Champagne *terroir*, the land that nurtured the grapes and spawned the original production method. The process would allow the drink to be standardized and all imitations marked as illegal copycats. The public struggle surrounding this initial AOC was in fact an internal competition among a select subset of French wine producers. Exclusive use of the name depended on proving that Champagne had a single lineage. Producers from the Marne department claimed Champagne as their own by reference to the mythical Dom Pérignon, a monk credited with perfecting the technique at a regional abbey. As Guy notes the claim was hotly contested by growers in neighbouring Aube who argued that Champagne was a tradition non attributable to a single individual, and so the property of all producers in north-eastern France. Challenging the national cult of Dom Pérignon failed, and the Marne emerged victorious. Producers of the Aube may produce sparkling wine, but it is certainly not Champagne.

Boisard notes a similar process of AOC authentication for Camembert, France's most popular cheese. The soft-centred, raw milk treat is tied to a village of the same name in Normandy. It is produced exclusively from the milk of herds feasting on Normandy grasses, and must be ladle-poured and moulded following
the historic practices of that village. The myth of Camembert credits Marie Harel, a peasant woman living in the area during the French Revolution with its creation. Her ingenuity and rural expertise is celebrated with statues and historic plaques, and forms part of the lore of Camembert that has become nothing less than “the collective property of the entire nation.” Perhaps not on the scale of Dom Pérignon, Marie Heral is a symbol for French gastronomic diversity and proves that Camembert is not only an authentic, rigorously controlled, quality product but also one exceptionally invented in France.

Both Camembert and Champagne have transcended their village origins to join the ranks of national heritage. Their success is predicated on two elements: the belief that gastronomy is on par with other cultural monuments in national importance and need of protection; and that the paysan, the farmers, are uniquely situated to speak and represent these culinary traditions. Like the term terroir, the concept of the paysan has layers of meaning. In one sense it could refer to Weber’s classical concept of a pre-modern peasant, a small-scale farmer incapable of integrating into capitalist distribution systems. In other contexts it describes a highly skilled harbinger of French rural traditions, a category of rural individuals entrusted with the protection and transmission of gastronomic norms. The Marché Paysan d’Antigone uses the second meaning of the term in its title, clearly situating itself within the discourse of terroir and tradition. Here, the paysan is positioned as having authentic knowledge of agriculture, an expertise that has to be learned through practice and cannot be falsified through industrial production.
The *paysan* holds a dear place in the culinary heart of France, and has become the symbol of a rural culture under threat from commercial enterprise. In the Languedoc region the *paysan* present a powerful and sometimes militant force. While José Bové, who gained fame with the dismantling of a McDonald’s fast-food restaurants in Haute Languedoc, is the most recognized face of *paysan* resistance to global agri-business, it is the wine producers of the region who have led the staunchest battles to protect traditional production. Although Bordeaux is more recognized for its wines, with an annual output of 16-million hectolitres, the Languedoc-Roussillon region is the single largest wine producer in France, and third largest in the world. Regional wine was first cultivated under Roman influence, then benefited immensely from the start of intra-regional trade with the construction of the Canal du Midi, and following the introduction of railways established itself as the main supplier to France’s newly industrialized north. Red wine was the backbone of the regional economy, a crucial export and one that continues to be an important agricultural product of Languedoc-Roussillon.

In 1907, faced with a regional glut and sharply dropping prices, steep competition from the newly established wines of Algeria, and fears of doctored products sold under local labels, small-scale producers staged violent riots. Known as the ‘red vintners’ – *les vigneron rouge* – a reference to both the colour of wine and to the wine makers communist leanings, they blocked roads, sabotaged harvests, and demanded that the French government control wine quality and prioritize local production over foreign imports. The list of discontents included accusations of
impropriety levied at commercial wineries which, by virtue of their size and scale of output, were said to have lost ties with the paysan tradition. Vintners faced off with the military and barrels of wine were ceremoniously poured into quickly reddening streams. Similar events continued through the 20th-century. The entry of Spain into the European Union saw brigades of masked Languedoc producers storming supermarkets and smashing shelves and bottles of duty-free Spanish wine, grainy photographs of their raids splashed in national newspapers. The summer of 2008 was equally rife with sabotage and violent clashes. In June several thousand wine makers engulfed the centre of Montpellier to decry low prices and lack of government protection, with numerous arrests, followed by yet more barrels of wine ceremoniously dumped. A month later a member of the Committee of Vintner Action was arrested for the fabrication of homemade explosives, with suspicions of participation in sabotages the previous year. Brazen and loud, this present discontent, as that of the ‘red vintners’, centres on issues of local economy, identity and terroir heritage.

Today the Languedoc-Roussillon region has 18 AOC wine designations. In 2007 on the 100th year anniversary of the 1907 riots, Montpellier celebrated the ‘red vintner’ with city-wide street exhibitions, museum installations, forums, debates, newspaper features, wine tasting, and much conviviality. The paysan struggles in defence of traditional production are firmly entrenched in local memory and living history. They are also powerfully ingrained in consumption patterns. To eat local is to demonstrate cultural knowledge and embody social discourses that mark as superior products with a clear terroir lineage. ‘Culinary nationalism’
has grown beyond the scope of Carême’s gastronomic discipline and transformed into an identity marker and lifestyle.

In Montpellier, the Marché Paysan d’Antigone and to a lesser extent the Marché des Arceaux have become the urban conduits of agrarian traditions. Here, one can find locally grown figs, organic lettuce, regional foie gras and wines, all sold by farmers and knowledgeable artisans. These are sites of unique cultural consumption, a place to publicly display a respect of paysan traditions and regional heritage. By analyzing the discourse surrounding notions of terroir in these two markets I want to focus on expressions of identity and belonging in civic spaces. If national identity is tied to consumption, then could one become a cultural citizen by shopping at regional markets? And further, through what mechanisms is ‘culinary nationalism’ manifested and how do city shoppers use an economic exchange with farmers to assert their French identity?

Illustration 12: Marché des Arceaux, dried herbs for sale.
While at both markets clients can find an ample selection of farm-fresh produce, a significant difference must be noted between the two. The Marché Paysan d’Antigone is exclusively a farmer’s market whose statute requires that all participants be producers or artisan. By contrast, while the Marché des Arceaux has many farmers among its stallholders – in fact, many of the same ones that sell at the Antigone market – it is open to any vendors, and has high participation from food wholesalers, commercial resellers, clothing stalls and houseware merchants. Ethnographic work in both markets has involved volunteering as a stall assistant and conducting interviews. The process has revealed a culturally ingrained distinction between ‘farmers-producers’ and ‘vendors-resellers’. The two categories are rarely conflated, and in keeping with the vocabulary of research participants I refer to individuals who sell produce derived through their own agricultural undertaking as ‘farmers’ and ‘producers’, while those who purchase groceries at a wholesale market or through regional supply networks
are ‘vendors’ and ‘resellers’. While research has indicated some significant problems with this binary system of designation, the use of these terms throughout interviews and in conversation means that quotes and field-note excerpts would lose context if the vocabulary is nuanced.

The discursive separation of farmers and vendors is not only colloquial, but also part of city bylaws. Any producer selling at the market is required to clearly and legibly indicate their agricultural status and site of cultivation at their stand. A walk through the Marché Paysan d’Antigone reveals a plethora of laminated, colour-coded plaques that designate producers (yellow) and local artisans (green), along with the village closest to their farm and sometimes a postal code. Being a paysan is not a trivial occupation. For the farmers, and especially for the clients, the designation carries a connotation of expertise, authentic production, the upholding of rural traditions and a regional identity.

Illustration 14: Local radish for sale, Marché Paysan d’Antigone.
The clients’ conception of the *paysan* as the foremost expert on food production is made apparent through numerous actions, not least the selection of produce. At both markets shoppers have two options: either to get a basket and choose the good themselves; or to ask the farmer to select the produce for them. As this field-note from a morning in the market illustrates, having the farmer’s help in choosing groceries has a particular meaning:

Some clients select their own produce, handed it to me so I could weight it and give them a total price, and then asked me to pour it into their baskets. No plastic bags please, and then a frown if I offer. Others ask me to gather the produce for them, and then package it and price it. This happens most often with the fresh figs, which are incredibly sticky. The clients’ tacit trust of my abilities as an apprentice to the stall is limited to potatoes (covered in dirt), salads (slightly damp), aubergine, peppers, and all manner of basic if messy to handle goods. However, when there is a request to select a melon I am the last person to ask. The melons are fragrant, medium sized, orange-yellow cantaloupe that are now coming into season. With few exceptions, all clients demand for the expert advice of the farmer. Clients want their melon selected for them, and to have the finer points of the process described. They ask for: a melon for noon of today, and another to be eaten mid-week; several small, very ripe melons for a brandy dessert; something fragrant to be had with prosciutto. The important thing is that the farmer makes the selection. He tests the stem. If it falls off easily the melon is ripe. If it is fragrant, and a deeper shade of yellow, it is also ripe. A honey coloured syrup formed at the rind indicates that the melon is *à-point*, perfectly ripe. Even though he has taught me the basics, my expertise is scrutinized. I am not trusted with the selection, except perhaps by new clients and tourists who have no reason to question my position at the stand. Long-time clients ask that I find the farmer, because, as always, they have a special occasion that requires his knowledgeable expertise.

The melon selection dance was one of the more persistent patterns of market work. Even other stall assistants, some of whom had worked there for several years, regularly deferred to the farmers when it came to the melons. The scenario was repeated across several stands. Occasionally other products were subject to
the same scrutiny, and demands made for the farmer to be involved in selection. This often happened with heritage tomatoes and in instances when several varieties of potatoes, salads or onions were displayed. Here, the farmer would be called on to either define the variety and harvesting technique, or to explain the particular virtues of one good over another. Alternatively, clients would ask if the produce was local, and have the exact location of cultivation for grapes and peaches explained with careful reference to the yellow ‘paysan’ plaque noting the postal code of the farm. When the location was revealed or the farmer explained the variety on sale, clients often responded with delighted exclamations in support of local production or the importance of eating quality foods.

“They know how to eat them, but not how to choose them” clarified one farmer when asked why clients wanted assistance to select a melon. The farmer is perceived as most qualified to choose because he grows the melons, follows their cycles, has years of experience in harvesting, and is able to make the desired selection by knowing their exact level of ripeness. For the client who on Sunday is buying an item to eat later in the week, it is important that the melon be several days from gustatory perfection. Clients, then, conceptualize food quality not only in a sensory manner – that it taste and look good – but in a fashion that requires an informed and legitimate authority to validate their selection.

That paysan expertise, another farmer notes, comes at a price:

True, there are people who say that it’s [the market] expensive. But there are a lot of people here who are from the countryside who
know their work. And they will explain what they know...They [clients] appreciate the work we do for them.

Customers not only buy melons and tomatoes, but the qualification of the person cultivating them. This is where the difference between farmers and vendors is most forcefully made. To be a farmer is to follow in the paysan tradition, and to have full control over production. As one farmer told me in conversation, her decision to leave a big-city job in favour of the countryside was prompted by a desire to guide her own work, to be able to cultivate the land, and to follow her personal beliefs on the value of quality, organic production. Another farmer explained that his produce was so good because he was able to monitor every point of cultivation. Working outside conventional agro-business and labour market constraints – leaving the big-city job – gives certain legitimacy to the product. The melons are not produced to meet a quota, there is no predetermined schedule for ripening, farmers are not rushed by a boss demanding profits. That farmers must still make a living is not disputed. However, their ability to dictate the terms of their work makes the final product qualitatively superior. Pradelle finds that for the market to succeed it must be a site where the client can “find herself face to face with a tradesperson who in various ways stages their own fundamental freedom.” Farmer’s regular affirmation of their liberty to independently set the terms of their work is part of the formula. A sharp contrast is made with resellers who are portrayed as constrained: dependent on external supply chains, profit-driven, lacking the means of controlling quality, and thus less ‘free’ to make an honest sale.
So it follows that if farmers provide a quality product at a price, then vendors provide a generic good cheaply. Price and skills are inextricably linked, and made a function of agricultural qualifications. By asking farmers to describe the difference between their work and that of resellers, the terms of this difference are laid bare. One producer notes:

The resellers, they buy from producers. So, if they buy from true producers, that’s alright. But sometimes they buy at commercial outlets where they don’t know the provenance of the food. If they bought at a producer, they would know where the goods came from. For me, if I was a reseller, that would be absolutely essential...[but] most of the time when they buy, they buy commercially...And it seems to me that a reseller has to be worried about the traceability of their products.
The resellers are divorced from the mechanism that ties farmers to the land, and by extension to a product that has a higher economic value. The vendors’ failures to recognize the importance of sourced food is made to speak to their broader inability to fully serve clients. Discussing the sample tasting offered by farmers at market, one producer notes:

Each summer we teach people through sampling. So we do tasting of cheese, honey, wine, oysters, foie gras, and so on. And the tasting, teaching how to sample is very important. And it’s, a producer can do it. But not a vendor. A producer is working with his products, he can [offer tastings], and a vendor can’t do that. That’s the difference between producers and vendors...Tasting isn’t done in any old way.

Through tastings and by explaining produce varieties, farmers impart some of their knowledge to customers. This authenticity requires a traditional know-how that, at least according to some farmers, vendors are simply not able to imitate. By shopping at a paysan market city clients are able to establish a peripheral connection to terroir, and thereby contextualize their consumption. Farmers are aware of this cursory link and ensure that the relationship between site of production, regional history, and small-scale farming is emphasized.

A honey producer from the Cévennes region north of Montpellier explains:

Honey is at once a representation of a vegetation, of a landscape, of a region, and of the people who live there, and also of a heritage. For instance, honey from the Cévennes. Honey from the Cévennes is a representation of a region – the Cévennes – with its chestnut trees. It is also an image of a civilization, the protestant communities and their history of resistance, their famous stone houses where they would take refuge, and the honey they would keep, like the one I have on display at my stand. It is also made famous by Stevenson who wrote ‘Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes’ and in his pack sacks he would carry jars of honey. The
same that I have on the stand over there. So, honey is a representation. And we can explain to everyone that honey is an image. At once, it reminds of a flower, an aroma, and a history.

The pots of honey are transformed into living historical objects by their ties to the land. Their elevated status demands that the farmer harness the land and effectively draw from it a cultural meaning not found in the goods of international commodity chains. Quality food is derived through both expert cultivation and the commodification of rurality. The honey effectively has a local identity that cannot be duplicated, and one that market goers can literally consume. The link between terroir and economic value is explicitly made:

The terroir it’s heritage, these two things are linked. And the terroir that’s the earth, that’s production. .... And I think there’s a clientele for this sort of thing. And I also wanted to tell you the farmers they are rivalled by other farmers it’s normal. The farmers of Europe are going to be rivals. But one thing has something the other doesn’t, it’s the terroir and it’s the heritage. Your products have to be linked to heritage.

For Leitch this deepening interest in terroir production speaks to a “strategic symbol reversal, [where] the food artisan is envisaged not as a backward-thinking conservative standing in the way of progress, but rather as a quintessential modern subject, a holder par excellence of national heritage.” Honey from the Cévennes is sought after precisely because it is divorced from modern, industrial production. Through those jars of honey the historical events that determine the character of the region are defined, and the product along with its terroir are situated in broader discourses of what it means to be Languedocien. As Bessière aptly notes heritage is “no longer considered solely as a link between past and present, but also as a reservoir of meaning necessary to understand the world: a
resource in order to elaborate alterity and consequently identity.”

Food is thus a cultural performance, one that plays to the social aspirations of clients keen to assert their place of belonging in the region.

So far the link between terroir, history and space has been discursively established. Farmers say their product is superior, they claim to produce in the region, and argue that they are more qualified than vendors. For the markets to have such a draw more than oral confirmation is necessary. Clients have to be assured that the individuals behind the stall are in fact legitimate farmers, and not just skilled resellers hoodwinking shoppers into paying double for a kilo of vegetables.

Illustration 16: Olive stand, Marché des Arceaux.
Illustration 17: Empty produce crates, Marché des Arceaux.

With money and reputations staked on authenticity, the problem of ‘faux-paysan’ – fake farmers – is a sticking point. As one producer at the Marché des Arceaux quietly told me, “I am not sure if I should say this, but there are some who lie”. That is some who, despite appearances to the contrary, seem to be just a bit extraordinary in their ability to deliver an exemplary product. A farmer details their suspicions:

Tomatoes, this year everyone is having difficulty growing tomatoes. It’s the whole department: those who are organic, those are not organic, all different methods, and this year the tomato is late with everyone except them [another stand at the market]. They are different. They are the only ones in the whole department, in the whole region, to have early tomatoes. We wonder.

At Montpellier’s Marché Paysan d’Antigone, measures have been put in place to ensure authenticity. Two statutes from the Association Charter address the question. First, Article 4 of the Charter outlines the goals of the association as:

- Promote the agricultural and tourist products of the below
noted geographic regions;
• To facilitate the direct distribution of agricultural products originating from farms situated in the departments of: Hérault, Aude, Tarn, Aveyron, Gard and Lozère;
• To contribute to the further development and diversification of farming in these regions. 

Through this measure the geographic extent of ‘local’ is defined as the area surrounding Montpellier and the five nearest departments, or administrative districts. The express purpose of the market is to support local agriculture through direct farm sales, a point firmly made through Article 6: Item 1 of the Charter stating that membership will be granted only to:

• Farmers covered under AMEXA [national farmer’s health and insurance scheme], whose site of exploitation is located in a township of one of the departments mentioned in Article 4 [noted above], and who sells exclusively and without middlemen agricultural goods, both primary or value-added, produced solely on their respective farms.

The clause for value-added allows for farmer to sell jams, wine, foie gras, prepared pies, and in some cases jewellery and handicrafts made with local products.

Compliance with the Charter is ensured in several ways. To join the Marché Paysan d’Antigone an applicant must be ratified by the Association’s Administrative Council. The Council is composed of eleven members elected through a general assembly, who are in their own right farmers, vintners, and artisans. Participants are required to present a list of products they cultivated or fabricate to Council, who in turn determine which goods can be sold in the
market. With consideration to the limited client base, the Association has quotas for the number of producers in each category: there can only be only one onion farmer, two olive stands, four cheese makers (of which two fabricate chèvre and two brebis), a single fishmonger, and at most ten grocers. A farmer cannot add products outside their designated list to the stand, and may change occupation – for instance from foie gras to poultry and eggs – only with the consent of Council, or else risk losing their place at market. The use of quotas and approval of individual goods for sale means two things: that farmers are forced to specialize; and more importantly, that if any participant introduces goods outside their declared list they are brought to the attention of the Administrative Council.

Illustration 18: Vegetable art, Marché Paysan d’Antigone.
If any doubts are raised as to the authenticity of a farmer, the Association takes action to validate the product. When asked if they have encountered ‘faux-
paysan’ one farmer explained the process:

That’s why we had to kick one of them out, because people think they can come and just sell anything. And for us, because, well, if they do it [bring products from other farms/regions] you can see that it’s off. We have the right to carry out inspections. We have to inform them before we do it, but we would come and do an inspection...at the site of agricultural exploitation. So, if we see that there are some doubts, we send four or five people who will carry out an inspection at the farm and determine if the person is a producer or not.

The ability to inspect is a powerful tool. To customers it guarantees that farmers are not making false claims. The food on sale is precisely what is advertised.

The notion that a true paysan can be distinguished from a ‘faux-paysan’ through a farm visit is instructive in other ways. It suggests that authenticity can be calculated and evaluated. The terroir quality is not, after all, so intrinsic that it cannot be gauged by others who are invested in its protection. The argument put forth by defenders of Champagne and Camembert was precisely this: there is one recognized, set method of cultivating traditional products and any deviation, be it through the addition of foreign ingredients or by growing champagne grapes in a neighbouring department, renders the product inadmissible. The AOC label is the legal definition of the correct mode of fabrication. Of course many of the tomatoes and peaches sold in Montpellier’s markets are not AOC standard. However, the notion of authenticity carries down the rank of small-scale farmers,
all the while preserving the deep-held belief that good food is inextricably linked to a defined landscape, local heritage and traditional production methods.

The difference between a farmer and a vendor – the accusation against those who sell non-farm produce being that they are essentially resellers - is made by reference to a common understanding of what it means to be a paysan. It includes a sense that legitimate production sees the farmer cultivate his own land, and more pertinently, does so while recognizing the unique agrarian heritage of the five departments listed in the charter. A look back at the ‘red vintners’ of 1907 reveals a similar list of suspicion: by accusing large-scale wine producers of breaking with regional traditions, the vintners argued that being ‘commercial’ and using imported grapes were wholly out of step with the meaning of paysan. At the Marché Paysan d’Antigone the protection of regional tradition is placed in the hands of the farming collective, and subjected to internal regulation. If you are proven to have bought wholesale, you are disassociated and your paysan status publicly called into question.

The market is a collection of agrarian experts, and as such, it is transformed into a space where the limits of regional identity and the meaning of heritage and tradition can be defined, and in turn consumed. There is, however, one other element of the equation. The market formulation would be futile if shoppers failed to recognize the importance of a culinary identity. Would paysan practice and terroir folklore matter if no one wanted to buy them? As Ferguson notes
respect to Carême’s invention of French gastronomy, good food is not only about trained chefs, but also trained customers.\textsuperscript{85}

The concept of ‘quality’ is the key to unravelling the conundrum. Shoppers consistently seek ‘quality food’ and ‘good food’. When asked why they shop in the market, many clients respond with reference to the superiority of the produce, the finesse of the wine, the fresh-out-of-the-oven smell of pies. Certainly all of these qualities are dependent on the trained expertise of farmers and artisans. However, they are also a function of a trained clientele capable of discerning the best from the rest. One farmer explains:

Quality is a product, we’ll let that, for example a chicken let’s say. We will feed it for four months. That means that it’s not pushed, it will have flavour, and that’s the same for salad and fruit. We can choose to give it a bit of help, put it in a cage and force feed it, feed it, until it fattens. And since it doesn’t move it won’t use a lot of calories. But the meat will be dead, it will be fat. We would gain a month of feeding but it won’t be the same meat as a chicken who is quality. But of course it depends on taste, there could be people who like the other.

The punch is in the last line. Not all eaters value the more natural mode of production associated with ‘quality food’, the contention being that their pallet lacks the culinary education to demand better. To want quality is to know how to recognize it. Another farmer speaks on the same issue:

Quality is a food that has taste and that’s fresh. At Antigone [Marché Paysan] what we sell on Sunday was picked on Saturday. It’s freshness, you can’t find that elsewhere. It’s unique. Next to having our own garden we can’t find fresher. That’s quality...Taste, they’ve [fruits] got a real taste. There’s variety, the selection, it’s not the variety you would find in the big distributors, here they are different and often better...[produce] is not treated [with pesticides] or as little as possible. It is well presented, it smells good, it is
pleasant, when we eat it, it is good. When we keep it we can keep it for up to a week or fifteen days in the fridge. Of course you’ve got to pay for that. But the quality, it’s a choice, it’s really a choice.

Quality is a mindful decision to eat well. For farmers the choice is to practice agriculture in a conscientious manner; for clients the choice is to learn to appreciate and enjoy the fruits of that labour.

Both parties to the market transaction – the producers and the shoppers – must have the education to perceive quality. At the Marché des Arceaux and the Marché Paysan d’Antigone this is well noted. One regular client articulates this point:

[Many of the producers] are passionate, they speak about their trade with passion, and most of them are also intellectuals....their dress and their appearance, they put on hats that look very peasant, but in reality they are all intellectuals. You speak with them and you see that they are very cultured. You can speak with them about many things. It’s an intellectual...it’s people who travel a lot, who have things to say, who are curious.

The farmers are perceived as educated not only in agriculture, but also in politics, culture and history. They are able to so successfully relay traditions specifically because they have competences in these social fields. The same can be said of clients. In both markets notable city figures visited regularly: municipal councillors, archivists, the directors of the Montpellier opera, television and radio personalities, professors, several doctors from the medical faculty, retired judges, and the list goes on. As one farmer noted, clients:

...Don’t come for the price because it’s expensive. They are looking for quality. They want advice...they also come for a cultural exchange
At times selling produce at the stands felt like an intellectual meeting over food. Farmers and clients were happy to step aside and discuss a piquant point of local politics or a national incident. If recognizing quality is linked to education and cultural expertise, then not just anybody can be a connoisseur of market goods. There are intellectual requirements for subsuming a regional, market identity. As will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, exclusion based on the lack of these criteria is often an unrecognized function of market life.

To ensure that clients are amply aware of the unique attributes of a quality market, farmers and artisans stage regular reminders. At the Marché Paysan d'Antigone straw hats were supplied and farmers and stall assistants wore them for the duration of the day. The hats created a distinct country-bazaar feel, and combined with the colourful provençal-style tablecloths used to cover the front of stall tables, artfully highlighted the paysan nature of the market. Many producers know their customers well and have built friendships over the years. Children and grandchildren are brought to the market and introduced to loyal farmers. A convivial ambience is staged, and as one vendor told me “this atmosphere is typical of village markets, but not city markets”. In other words, rural sentiments are brought to urban neighbourhoods with visual references to terroir and paysan traditions. The unique heritage of Languedoc is performed for clients who can affirm their belonging to the community through regular consumption.
As Pradelle astutely notes, the street market “which people like to imagine as having operated for centuries, is in reality in its present form, quite a modern phenomenon.”\textsuperscript{86} The playful atmosphere of Montpellier’s markets is in part the result of the relocation of wholesalers – the economically powerful, internationally supplied traders who provision most supermarkets in the city – to the industrial zones on the periphery of the city. The neighbourhood markets, thus, have a limited role in food distribution and can instead be re-imagined as sites of spectacle. As one market participant asserted, the emphasis is on service rather than volume of sales:

I am not a vegetable seller. I am there to serve them [clients], to discuss with them, and to exchange recipes.

The recasting of the outdoor food market into a largely cultural role is partly linked to a growing desire for local rootedness and a defined regional identity. Shoppers buy terroir so they can, in their urban apartments, retain a link with the culinary heritage that defines what it means to be French. Consuming AOC products and engaging with the friendly paysan means, even if at a superficial level, that one is still involved in the protection of those age-old traditions. As Leitch argues, food is no longer a private pleasure but a national preoccupation.\textsuperscript{87} A point strongly argued by Montanari who writes:

Food is neither good nor bad in the absolute, though we have been taught to recognize it as such. The organ of taste is not the tongue, but the brain, a culturally (and therefore historically) determined organ through which are transmitted and learned the criteria for evaluations...Definitions of taste belong to the cultural heritage of human society.\textsuperscript{88}
Food, then, is a cultural tool and an identity marker. Although the importance of maintaining heritage – be it culinary, literary, or architectural – should not be dismissed, at issue is the mode of determining what is socially valuable and which traditions are worthy of attention. For culinary nationalism to function, *terroir* must be recognized as being exceptionally French, and non-duplicable. It must also be made the provenance of a defined group of experts – *paysan* – and validated by society as a whole through ready consumption.

The challenges of *terroir* are derivatives of its perceived benefits. By virtue of being exceptional, it is made inaccessible to anyone who does not embody the discourses of regionalism and exclusivity inherent to *paysan* traditions and AOC protectorates. Although AOC designations are debated at the national level, the more banal expression of culinary nationalism is manifested in the everydayness of the local market. Here, the distinction between producers and vendor is monetarily manifested in the varying price levels between farm-grown and wholesale goods. The *paysan* tomato is more expensive because it is socially more desired. However, one cannot single-handedly declare themselves ‘*paysan*’ and automatically join the ranks of this guild. Rather, as the case of ‘*faux*-paysans’ illustrates, admission to this group demands acceptance from the established majority: the four or five farmers who check your land simultaneously ensure literal adhesion to the Association statutes, and ideological devotion to the common goal of perpetuating traditions. This process of internal controls ensures that the Marché Paysan d’Antigone, and to a lesser extent the organically-focused Marché des Arceaux, are sites of authentic and
legitimate terroir consumption. To shop there is to publicly claim support of the discourses governing heritage traditions and cultural production. However, this cultural citizenship is not bestowed on all clients. With the purchase of quality food attributed to an intellectually informed choice, the decision to shun higher-priced terroir foods is consequently tied to an absence of cultural expertise. As will be detailed in the subsequent chapter, cultural citizenship through consumption is not open to all participants.
Contesting cultural identities in public space: a North African market reordered

Clinging to the edge of Montpellier’s historic city-centre the Marché du Plan Cabanes is, unlike the nearby Marché des Arceaux and Marché Paysan d'Antigone, neither expressly regional nor paysan in nature. Rather it caters to a predominantly lower-income, immigrant clientele seeking affordability, ethnic foods and services. Usually no more than ten vendors, the market is squeezed into the Place Salengro, a small parking-lot turned plaza hemmed in on two sides by gridlocked traffic. The day starts early, the vendors are there by 5:30am, tables hauled from trucks and assembled methodically to create large stalls, each carrying a selection of produce to rival the nearby grocery stores. The first shoppers arrive before 7am, and work begins in earnest. Selling, weighing, packaging, bargaining, leaning over the till for a few words with a dedicated client. A selection of fruit from Spain, Morocco and Argentina sit next to French onions and Languedoc melons. There are also larger boxes of peaches at discount prices. At the bakery stand: baguette and round Berber bread, then also bunches of mint that is wrapped in newspaper when sold. Of the ten stands at least five are produce vendors and competition is steep. Attracting a loyal clientele is crucial.
Illustration 19: Clothing stand, Marché du Plan Cabanes / Place Salengro.

The biggest rush is just before noon when the plaza becomes a cacophony of sounds and people. There are several sellers to each stand: some at the ready by the tills, others out front helping clients select. Crates are hauled out, the stalls replenished, a small mountain of boxes builds up behind the market. Cars jam the narrow streets, there is little parking. Shoppers are more purposeful in their stride now: they know what they want and expertly navigate the small space, baskets and trolleys bumping along. Amidst the hysteria, a small oasis of calm: the café is open, its square tables and chairs drawn out behind the stands, clients basking in the noontime sun, others shaded by trees or umbrellas. There are other cafes neighbouring the plaza but this is the only one mixed into the action. From the tables at the front row, you can reach out for a complementary melon sample. A hobble of rinds attest to this most delightful habit. It is the perfect vantage point, the front row of the café. You can quietly survey the market, vendors and clients enjoying the respite. At one time there was a fence and
terrace to mark the café’s limits, but with the advance of municipal construction those have been obliterated. The tables are now more mobile, and have been drawn in all directions: a patron takes his coffee and chair to sit next to the bread vendor. A table has inched its way to the middle of a walkway and needs to be retrieved by the harried waiter. Here, the espressos are served with a block of chocolate on the side and the cafe regulars are easy to spot. They have no need to order: a small coffee with milk arrives at my table just as I reach it, I have been spotted entering the market some minutes earlier. This little café is among the few establishments to definitively benefit from the displacement of the market: the Marché’s recent move to the Place Salengro has brought new clientele, making the restaurateurs’ venture financially viable. The vendors are not convinced, for them the forced relocation away from the large and busy Plan Cabanes plaza has brought a loss of revenue and a decline in businesses. Still they embrace the café, their difficulties are not a derivative of the owners’ fortunes.\textsuperscript{89} 

Illustration 20: Mint tea at the café, Marché du Plan Cabanes / Place Salengro.
There is mint tea, a large pot and glass tumblers at the ready. Cups are circulated
to the stalls; some vendors drop in and help themselves. The cafe is locally
supplied, in a manner of speaking. Not the same vision of ‘local’ that informs the
Marché Paysan d’Antigone, but one just as powerful. The restaurant’s colourful
dishes of French and Turkish food are sourced from the surrounding stands, and
the butchery across the road. The bread comes from the vendor in the market, so
do the sprigs of mint peeking out from the brass tea pots. The cafe owner or one
of the waiters walking out to take what they need, adding it to their running
credit. If your palate calls for something not on the menu, the neighbouring stall
will procure the vegetables and the fishmonger the rest. The fruit salad is fresh,
requests for cherries or an extra helping of apricots are welcome. You can point to
something you like, and watch as it makes the 20-meter journey to your table, via
the kitchen. The market feeds the café, and the café in turn feeds the vendors and
shoppers, who will probably take home the same produce and tea mint they have
consumed for lunch. A symbiotic relationship unique to this space, and one made
possible by the regularity of market sessions: the Marché du Plan Cabanes is
Montpellier’s sole outdoor daily market. The vendors are there every day, so are
the clients, which has allowed the café to build a dependable supply system and a
patronage it can rely on.

Just as the market reaches its most frenzied moment, it begins to shut down. By
noon vendors are clearing away unsold produce, then trucks are loaded, crates
collected and by 1:30pm the entire production of squashed tomatoes, metal
stands, shouting, eating, swearing, plastic bags and tills of change is wrapped up
and gone. Vendors know their paces during clean-up: from the sidelines it appears a finely-tuned act. First garbage is set to one side, then produce packed, once all crates are ready to be loaded the trucks pull in, the back-lift lowered and large pallets of goods hauled and arranged, the umbrellas taken down, cash locked up, tables dismantled, and goodbyes all around, until the next morning. Into the routine are sometimes added neighbouring vendors who, by finishing early or having smaller stands, jump in to cling-wrap boxes of fruit or untie the umbrella cords. The last part of the routine is to pick up your shopping: the bread set aside, the eggs or chicken, groceries. The vendors buy local too, there is a discount for co-workers.

Below the din of sales, another facet of market life: the Marché du Plan Cabanes is a meeting point for the city’s North African community. Groups of predominantly older men, small shopping parcels in hand, meet on the market grounds. They stand among the stalls, in threes or fours, adding Berber, Arabic and Turkish, among others, to the local soundscape. The meetings are sometimes fleeting, just a quick exchange of words, a handshake that acknowledges an acquaintance. At other times they last for several minutes or a half-hour. Some retreat to the cafes for a drink, many simply continue using the market space itself, meeting anew, speaking with vendors, the standing groups of three-or-four constantly shifting and changing. Like habitual café patrons, participants in these gatherings depend on the regularity of the market, and their own methodical usage of the site, to create chance meetings. There is delight in knowing a spontaneous conversation is at the ready. ’It’s been a while, how’s things in your
corner!” handshaking vigorously. Or better still, ‘how are you granddad?’, one elderly man to another, before breaking off into Arabic, with a grin. Yet this nuanced usage of the Place Salengro is possible only during market sessions. Once the beehive of activity packs up, the slowed movements of these social actors become conspicuous, suspicious even. They are seen to loiter, a position with legal consequences.

While the Marché du Plan Cabanes booms on they are shielded by the loud pursuits of exchange. It seems the market transforms this space into a site that is truly publicly accessible. In the mornings the Place Salengro is everyone’s plaza. No one is told to move along or signalled out for not belonging. There is allowance of diversity, a plethora of spatial practices under the umbrellas. Some social and economic, some mutedly illegal, all part of the delicate fabric that renders the market a civic site. If at the Marché Paysan d’Antigone civic citizenship is attained through the steady consumption of local goods, here the conditions of civic participation are more difficult to define. Purchasing is certainly still part of the equation, though economic prowess seems less relevant. Engaging through conversation signals involvement, so does sitting on the sidelines and watching, a regular presence, or listening to the political campaigners and taking a brochure. A leaflet reads: ‘end racism’. A vendor quips that at the Marché du Plan Cabanes all are welcome, ‘we don’t exclude, hey!’ Then laughter. A gentleman sitting next to me in the café makes this declaration: ‘its our place, no one can tell me to get out, we decide how its done’. He is adamant and bangs on the table to prove his point. Yet beyond the irregularly shaped Place
Salengro his ability to influence the flows of the market ends. The displacement of the Marché du Plan Cabanes by Montpellier’s City Hall indicates that local privileges do not always translate into broader civic capacity. That participants like their market and use it wholeheartedly has not prevented the profound disruption of relocation. A young man has wheeled his scooter into the plaza and parked by the rotisserie. Within minutes he is shaking hands and deep in conversation, and the gentleman no longer sitting next to me has left his table to join in a raucous debate.

The broad sociability is all the more remarkable because the Place Salengro is poorly equipped for casual usage. There are no benches. There is no general seating area. No public toilets, though the cafés try to accommodate. Instead the gathering groups of threes-and-fours cleverly transform unsuspecting city fixtures into much needed social furniture. Especially attractive are the cement pylons lining the entry to the market. Installed by the municipality to prevent illegal roadside parking, in their second life they become seats. Elderly men, and some younger ones, can be seen teetering on these objects: forty-centimetres high, with a rough ten-centimetre diameter rounded top. But no one complains. Conveniently the cement pylons are grouped in threes-and-fours, and are usually well shaded. A recent newspaper article called these hardened traffic cones a ‘local speciality’, noting that while they are being removed in other parts of the city, at the Place Salengro and the now desolate Plan Cabanes they were being pointedly reintroduced. Perhaps they are being recycled, the author muses, part of the city’s green strategy. The large wooden crates used to transport produce
Illustration 21: Concrete traffic pylon, Marché du Plan Cabanes / Place Salengro.

are not overlooked. Stacked half a meter high they become benches. The vendors rarely complain. Sometimes the gawkers can be roped into helping move a few boxes. There are also raised sidewalks, and sometimes larger traffic barriers. A few stall holders bring their own stools, and regulars are occasionally seen sitting behind the counter quietly watching. A moment’s peace. I take advantage of the stools and crates as well. The lack of amenities stops no one.

Although small, the market has two sections. At the top, the north and north-west, are the fishmonger, rotisserie, bread stall, the olive vendors on weekends, a stall selling clothing and another with personal items, belts, batteries and shirts. Then towards the bottom, the south and east, are the grocers. There are normally five stands, facing each other, vying for clients. Four of the produce stalls have multiple tills with several attendants helping customers select, unloading vegetables, handing out samples, and weighing goods. The fifth and smallest stall
has only one till, and is operated by the two owners, with occasional help from a single assistant. Although during the week the market can be quiet, a slow drawl of shoppers making their way among the morning stands, on weekends the plaza is virtually impassable. Line-ups at the tills, commotion, for many vendors the Saturday and Sunday rush are crucial for the bottom line. Yet much has changed since the market’s relocation. ‘We are surviving but it’s not like before’, one vendor explains. ‘The regular clients are still here’, he continues, ‘but with the move we have lost many of the occasional shoppers, and that was good revenue’. What I see as long line-ups some vendors view as a truncation of previous experiences. There are issues of access as well. A client explains that the market used to be easier to get to, a bus stop right by the Plan Cabanes plaza. Even though the Place Salengro is only a few block away hauling groceries through the narrow streets is a challenge and she does not have a car. The inconvenience will be more pronounced in winter, the lack of parking compounding the problem for those willing to drive. Frustration permeates the market hubbub. Raising the spectre of relocation is difficult, even two years on the issue remains a tender point for vendors and shoppers.

The Marché du Plan Cabanes was formally established in 1947 as the economic and social focus of the Faubourg Figuerolles, a neighbourhood with a mixed population of agricultural labourers and landed residents. A research participant recalls trips to the market as a child, at a time when the Plan Cabanes attracted garden farmers, vintners, coal and wood vendors, and travelling salesmen. ‘They would pull up with carts and sell bunches of vegetables and small
baskets of fruit’, the raconteur reminisces, emphasizing that these were traditional vendors: mobile, circulating amongst several regional markets in the course of the month, arriving in the Plan Cabanes for the busy weekend shopping days when they would stretch into the surrounding streets with carts and buggies. By the 1960s and 1970s things were changing, the storyteller continues, when the big-box stores and supermarkets appeared the market hiccuped, and the farmers and buggies were gone quickly. The start of the 1980s found the Faubourg Figuerolles commercial district in decline.97 Yet the store closures, bankruptcies, retail and residential vacancies encouraged a change in neighbourhood dynamics. The appearance of the first halal butcheries, followed soon by cafes and barber shops, travel agencies and long-distance telephone centres are attributed by several research participants to the good economic opportunities in the area: ‘people bought out things that were closing’, one vendor explains, ‘everybody was leaving, but it’s a good spot’. Alongside the appearance of ethnic commerce Descombes-Vailhe notes an aesthetic re-imagining of the neighbourhood:98 stylized scripts for banners and signs, the use of decorative Moroccan tiles, an oasis atmosphere in restaurants created through images, photographs, and ornaments, and the use of Arabic notation on storefronts. In 2007 Marchandise counted 80 self-identified ethnic stores in the surroundings, a notable increase from the 37 recorded by Prat in 1997.99 And the market, a seller sighs, ‘was the centre of this whole neighbourhood, everything rotated around the market, you couldn’t not go there’, he insists. For Prat the Marché du Plan Cabanes “play[ed] the part of a secondary city-centre”,100 a sentiment relayed by research participants who equate trips going to the market with ‘going into town’.
Until the 2005 relocation to the Place Salengro the Marché du Plan Cabanes was amongst the city’s few outdoor markets to continuously occupy its original location. It is amongst the oldest in Montpellier and, estimates Descombes-Vailhe, the city’s most profitable outdoor market in the mid-1990s. Many vendors have known each other for years, some are second-generation stall holders. They have built careers in the Marché du Plan Cabanes and know the neighbourhood and their clientele well. The deep attachments to this historic trading space have made the battle over the market bitter and protracted. The Marché du Plan Cabanes’ relocation was initially billed as a provisional measure, a temporary shift to allow for the refurbishment of the aging plaza. The expectation, vendors indicate, was the market’s return to the Plan Cabanes at the completion of work. Yet several weeks after the transfer municipal officials hinted at the possibility of a permanent move, and in November 2006 City Council voted to definitively retain the market at the Place Salengro. The prospect of non-
return, vendors remember, was greeted with cool apprehension. ‘We trusted them’, one research participant explains, angry with both the circumstances and their own misplaced belief. ‘But if you look at the Plan Cabanes now’, another observer chimes in, ‘well there’s no outlets for electricity, no drains or water, they didn’t even plan for the things the market would need’. A sense of having been deceived simmers in adherents’ description of the process. They dismiss assertions that the market is better off in its new location, turn down claims made by proponents of the transfer that things are more manageable or quieter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time frame</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 March 2005</td>
<td>Work starts on the Plan Cabanes plaza, and the market moves to the Place Salengro.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 April 2005</td>
<td>Following the apparent success of the market’s relocation, the Municipal Commerce Attaché raises the idea of creating two markets: retaining the market in the Place Salengro and creating something new in the Plan Cabanes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 July 2005</td>
<td>Construction on the Plan Cabanes plaza begins, with a February 2006 end-date, at an estimated cost of 3€million.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 Dec 2005</td>
<td>Montpellier’s Mayor visits the market in the Place Salengro, raising the potential of non-return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2006</td>
<td>The Municipal Council vote to keep market at Place Salengro, creating a series of other markets at Plan Cabanes. Vendors learn of the decision through the Midi Libre newspaper. A petition in support of the market’s return to the Place Salengro is circulated through the neighbourhood. Total cost of renovations is around 4,700,000€.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 March 2006</td>
<td>The Mayor rescinds and votes to retain the market to the Place Salengro, suggesting that consultation on the decision will be organized with vendors and other stake-holders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 June 2006</td>
<td>Plan Cabanes plaza is inaugurated by the Mayor, who makes no announcement as to the market’s fate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Nov 2006</td>
<td>It is announced that the market will be permanently retained at the Place Salengro, and that a flower and art market will be installed at the Plan Cabanes plaza. The Municipal Commerce Attaché indicates that consultations have shown 65% support for non-return. The method and scope of consultation is not made clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 July 2007</td>
<td>Re-announcement of the decision to create three new markets at Plan Cabanes, with a September start date.</td>
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Table 1 Marché du Plan Cabanes Relocation Timeline.
Illustration 23: The empty Plan Cabanes plaza, looking towards the city-centre.

Illustration 24: The Plan Cabanes plaza, looking towards Cours Gambetta, with more concrete traffic pylons.

The struggle for the Marché du Plan Cabanes has been divisive, with opinions split in the Place Salengro and among local residents. Petitions and consultations have been organized with support garnered for both sides of the debate. ‘It’s never going to be over’, a vendor sighed when prompted to explain the current
mood within the market. A client is more direct, saying during an interview “they [vendors] are angry, you can feel the anger”. That the relocation hits at the heart of an important Maghrébin communitarian space makes discussion all the more tenuous. Vendors recognize the implication, some vocally accusing City Hall of racism and discrimination. Although the Marché du Plan Cabanes has been formally rechristened the Marché Salengro, after its new location, most participants continue to refer to the market simply as ‘the Plan Cabanes’. ‘It’s just out of habit’, a shopper explains. From the sidelines the steadfast refusal to accept the new name appeared more like a muted protest at the circumstances.\textsuperscript{103}

That a handful of research participants made pointed reference to the Marché Salengro, at times correcting my notation, distinguished them as proponents of relocation. Yet few were willing to openly discuss this more controversial viewpoint. Merchants privately admit that they are at a loss, still frustrated with a situation over which they sense having little control. Some feel their future uncertain, arguing that revenues have declined in the past year, making their survival questionable.\textsuperscript{104}

Illustration 25: Bread stand, Marché du Plan Cabanes.
When in July 2007 vendors learned, through the local newspaper, that municipal plans were afoot to install a rotation of three new markets in the renovated Plan Cabanes, few were surprised.\textsuperscript{105} ‘They’ll never pull it together’, one research participant mused, ‘look at how long it took to get the plaza even finished’. Others are more cynical, or simply disinterested. ‘We knew that was going to happen’, a café-goer comments off-handedly. The new trio – books and antiques, pottery, and flowers – were due to appear in the fall of 2007.\textsuperscript{106} These new markets, I argue, are qualitatively different than the old Marché du Plan Cabanes. They indicate a decisive push to change the meaning and usage of the plaza: a shift towards goods with a higher price point, a target clientele that would perhaps differ from the bargain-seeking shoppers of the Place Salengro, decorative items supplanting alimentary stands. Among the new stalls there may be less space for informal socializing, and the plaza is unlikely to regain the pedestrian frequency characteristic of the now relocated daily market. ‘Who’s going to buy those antiques?’, an observer in the Place Salengro questions, sweeping their arms out to take in the punters of the pared-down Marché du Plan Cabanes. There is an impression of ethnic commerce being subtly replaced by ‘quality’ artisan goods.

The notion of quality, as the previous chapter argues, is embedded in historical and social memory. If at the market certain goods are assigned higher economic value, it is due to a carefully articulated discourse that positions farmers as the unique purveyors of regional traditions and their clientele as educated citizen-shoppers. Yet the show of ‘culinary nationalism’\textsuperscript{107} at play in Montpellier’s premier organic and local markets is fraught with exclusivity. The emphasis on
quality has a downside: by elevating one mode of production, the discerning push for gastronomic excellence renders other variants less worthwhile. A material friction between items dubbed ‘quality’ and those dismissed as ‘the lesser rest’ is produced. Through the relocation of the Marché du Plan Cabanes in favour of antiques, books and flowers this friction is manifested as a competition for public space and prominence in the city. It is a case not only of displacement, but of direct replacement. In the surrounding discourse, the distinction between commercial vendors and paysan, and the importance of an educated clientele noted in Chapter II, re-emerge – but this time as evidence of the Marché du Plan Cabanes’ triviality.

Illustration 26: Stands, Place Salengro.

Illustration 27: Peaches.
For vendors and clients of the Marché du Plan Cabanes, the market’s reputation for cut-rate prices and wholesale bargains are a noteworthy benefit. One French shopper explains in an interview:

I like it [Marché du Plan Cabanes] for the prices, because it’s easy to buy there. If I buy fruits and vegetables for the family...I can get everything at Plan Cabanes for 15€.

Another client echoes the sentiment, calling the market the best deal in the city, and argues that even supermarkets would struggle to compete. ‘Plus’, the shopper continues, ‘it’s right here in the city-centre’. ‘Well these prices’, the vendor chuckles, ‘good luck finding them elsewhere, hey, we’re the best’. ‘We get the clients because we are decently priced’, a merchant explains. Then adds in: ‘we sell for big families, it’s got to be reasonable’. Merchants, especially those with alimentary stands, feel they provide a necessary service: ‘without cut-price goods, it would be difficult to make ends meet, especially in costly Montpellier’, a vendor emphasizes.

Illustration 28: Fish stand.
Yet what Marché du Plan Cabanes participants term affordability is pejoratively labelled ‘cheapness’ by critics. This categorization proves fundamentally at odds with terroir production. An outside observer, one who regularly participates in the city’s farmer’s and organic markets, argues in an interview:

[At the Marché du Plan Cabanes] people, they come because it’s cheap...they will get one salad, then go next door for the tomatoes, and then the apples because it’s cheaper. That’s what it’s like at Plan Cabanes. It’s more like a supermarket, it doesn’t have the spirit of a traditional market, it’s industrial.

By likening the Marché du Plan Cabanes’ function and meaning to that of a supermarket, the comment firmly dismisses the Plan Cabanes’s cultural and economic appeal. Supermarket goods, in the dialogue of quality food consumers, lack the authenticity, taste, and nutritional value of items at the farmer’s and organic market. Provisioned through long-distance supply chains, such items are viewed as inherently problematic: traceless, of questionable quality, suspect for their low prices, and dangerous at worst.\textsuperscript{109} The accusation of ‘cheapness’, when lumped together with comparisons to agro-industrial supermarket practices, speaks to consumer anxiety over food safety, harmful contamination, and the possibility of unwittingly ingesting hazardous organisms.\textsuperscript{110} The geographic and personal distance between growers and consumers, it is assumed, hides the ghastly conditions through which discount items are produced. ‘Cheap food’, Nerlich reminds, has been blamed for the rise of debilitating food-related health scares:\textsuperscript{111} broiler chickens linked to salmonella,\textsuperscript{112} the appearance of mad-cow disease (BSE) in supermarket meat,\textsuperscript{113} the rise of foot-and-mouth disease in
England, fertilizer-tainted imported fruits, and growing anxiety over the safety of genetically-modified (GMO) crops. Cheap food is fast-food hamburgers, greasy chips, frozen dinners, and microwave lunches, blamed for the obesity-epidemic and rise in childhood diabetes. If commercial foodways are implicated as perilous, then local, natural, slow-food is imagined as the panacea.

In this respect Montpellier’s farmer’s and organic markets are presented as a counterpoint to the industrial fodder available in wholesaler supplied supermarkets. Farmers repeatedly differentiate themselves from resellers, emphasizing their expert knowledge and direct experience of agriculture as evidence of an enhanced reliability. If local is the solution, then the Marché du Plan Cabanes is cast as part of the problem. The Moroccan melons, Argentinean pomelo and Thai ginger on offer amongst the large stalls in the Place Salengro connect the market to the oft-vilified international supply chains. The accusation of ‘cheapness’ hits at the perceived inadequacies of the Marché du Plan Cabanes. It is also a nuanced judgement of the market’s clientele. A shopper who buys at both the Marché des Arceaux and Plan Cabanes discusses their varied market experiences during an interview:

It’s clear that a kilo of tomatoes at 0.50€ at Plan Cabanes, we can find. Here [Marché des Arceaux], never. It’s not the same tomato. It’s not the same taste, and the same use. When I make a coulis of tomato for friends and we’re 10 people I buy [at Plan Cabanes]. I buy three kilos it costs me 1.50€...Here, it’s a shame to cook the tomatoes. You eat them raw. Also, here, a lot of people pay attention to their eating habits...The clients at [Arceaux] pay attention to their diet. They have a budget for their diet. They buy everything, not just vegetables, they get their fish and meats,
organic bread, poultry next to that. They eat very well and very healthy. Plan Cabanes people buy to feed themselves because it’s their first necessity. Because it’s more working class people...It’s after all people who live in housing estates, who have the minimum to live. And for them its not quality, they are going to buy tomatoes at 0.50€/kilo because it’s the cheapest vegetable and not because for dietary equilibrium you have to eat tomatoes. It’s because it’s cheapest and in a salad it’s going to feed everyone....The people who come here [Arceaux] they decide to eat tomatoes, a tomato salad for lunch... for enjoyment. It’s not the same type of purchase.

The valuation of small-scale paysan produce, Chapter II argues, is the ambit of an educated, cultured clientele. Conversely, the patronage of ‘cheap’ markets is linked with an absence of such sensitivities. Not only is it a question of discount tomatoes being a different kind of purchase, but also a purchase carried out by a different quality of shopper. Cheapness is essentialized, becoming a personal attribute as much as a food-safety concern.

The outdoor food market, Pradelle reminds, is “a collective ceremony” whereby a variety of local and regional actors “play at being nothing more than [...] Comtadine”. As fellow shopper-citizens, they meet for this customary activity in a designated public space, momentarily removing themselves from the realities of their regular, urban lives. The market is a performance, one in which economic exchange or a real concern for procuring foodstuff takes a secondary role to that of cultural and gastronomic entertainment. Through regulation, signage, displays, and vendor dress the marché is identified as unique. Provençal-themed tablecloths at the Marché des Arceaux and straw hats at the Marché Paysan d’Antigone celebrate links to southern heritage and Languedoc traditions. Although many clients of these two markets admit, when prompted, that they
also shop in suburban big-box stores there is a sense among shoppers that one form of consumerism has little to do with the other. At the supermarket shoppers fully expect to encounter commercially produced, internationally supplied foods. Even among the discerning stalls of the Marché Paysan d’Antigone, one occasionally hears discussion of particularly good discounts at nearby superstores, with prompts to hurry before the particular item sells out. Markets on the other hand are expected to provide a more personal, friendly, and local experience. Here it is not a question of convenience, but rather of intentionally going out of your way, taking your time to select produce, speak with farmers, and carry large baskets of food home. The accusation of ‘cheapness’ levied at the Marché du Plan Cabanes stems not from a dislike of cut-rate bargains per-say, but rather their intrusion into a space ostensibly understood as one of cultural rather than commercial circulation.

Illustration 29: Produce stand, Marché du Plan Cabanes / Place Salengro.
‘The whole thing seems murky’, one non-participant commented on the Plan Cabanes. There was a general discomfort in talking about the space, with research participants who do not frequent the market sometimes perturbed that I would inquire about the Marché du Plan Cabanes, or that I could find something interesting to research there. Subtly a wider list of complaints emerged, the presence of ‘cheap’ foods being one attribute among many to distinguish this market as not ‘traditional’. ‘There are security problems there’, I was warned by a research contributor in the Marché des Arceaux, who through their gestures and expressions indicated a profound dislike of the space. On several occasions the Plan Cabanes was described as ‘particular’ to the city, that it wasn’t a ‘real’ or a ‘regular’ market. Pejoratively labelled a ‘bazaar’, some relayed an ambivalence not only towards the market, but the collection of vendors and shoppers it attracted. It’s an ‘Arab market’ a shopper in the farmer’s market described, explaining with a shrug that they don’t go there. Some were unaware of its recent relocation, the affairs of the Plan Cabanes not within their scope of interest. The area was likened to a Marrakech souk, a terminology that Descombes-Vailhe traces to a regional newspaper article dismissively labelling the Marché du Plan Cabanes and surroundings as the ‘Arab souks of Montpellier’. While many patrons of the Place Salengro view their market as open to anyone and everyone, the comments of non-participants suggest that many Montpelliérains would prefer to keep an arm’s-length distance. One research participant, an artisan in the Arceaux market, directly explains her sense of the Marché du Plan Cabanes’ divergence from traditions:
And it’s also like this [non-traditional] because there are a lot of Maghrébin who have stalls, people from the Maghreb region, and so it’s not the French market culture. They have a market culture, but like in the provinces. You can bargain there...you can, which [in other markets] you would never do....it’s cultural. It’s two different cultures.

The sense of cultural distinction is twofold: in part, it is the already noted absence of paysan values. More forcefully it is a difference of ethnic-cultures. This latter is a powerful challenge, an indictment that is mired not only in the politics of the Marché du Plan Cabanes’ relocation, but in wider discourses on immigration, integration, and (non)assimilation.

France, Weil reminds, has a long history of immigrant-reception: the arrival of Portuguese, Italian and Spanish migrants in the early parts of the 20th century were followed, into the 1960s and 1970s, by an influx of Eastern European exiles and Vietnamese refugees. With the end of the Algerian Wars of Independence and the launch of foreign labour recruitment schemes in support of France’s mid-20th century economic boom, migrant trajectories were established with the countries of the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa. Yet a shift to non-European migration precipitated a crisis of social identity: as temporary labourers settled permanently in France, sponsoring their families through reunification programs and gaining citizenship, the distinction between ‘foreigners’ and ‘locals’ blurred. The meshing of French and North African traditions - unease with the colonial on the continent as Silverman remarks - has produced anxieties over seemingly insurmountable religious, linguistic, and socio-economic differences. The rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s far-right Front National party on
an anti-immigration platform is for Hargreaves an indication of deepening fears, with Le Pen’s prominent showing in the 2002 Presidential elections attesting to his popular support.\textsuperscript{125} For Tribalat et al., the disproportionately high rate of unemployment among youth of an immigrant background is the product of institutional discrimination,\textsuperscript{126} while Kédadouche bitterly concedes that “the social escalator is unfortunately out of order with respect to Beurs”.\textsuperscript{127} Maghrébin immigrants and their descendants, Khellil argues “are often viewed, not for who they are, but for what they seem to be, with all that the history of colonisation has carried as prejudices”.\textsuperscript{128}

Illustration 30: Stores surrounding the Plan Cabanes plaza, on Cours Gambetta.

Charges that the Marché du Plan Cabanes is a “different culture” are steeped in political and popular discourse that posits immigrant groups as an ethnic ‘other’ within French society. There is a banalization of xenophobic sentiment: by combining references to the ‘Arab’ Plan Cabanes with bodily gestures of dismissal (grimace, hand-flick, sneer), critics label the market as non-French and conveyed
an ambivalence towards its function in the city. The label ‘Arab’, as ‘souk’ and ‘bazaar’, functioning as a nuanced social code of demarcation which listeners are expected to comprehend. Even for commentators who have limited personal experience or statedly do not use the plaza, the Plan Cabanes is synonymous with an immigrant alterity: its reputation evidently precedes a visit. Rhetoric of ‘different cultures’ leaves little space for a hybrid French-Maghrebin identity. The outdoor food market, which in Chapter II emerged as a site of civic citizenship and belonging is here, instead, dissected as a contested space of socially questionable consumption.

These tensions are played out on the market grounds themselves, participants aware of their complex status, at times embodying and viscerally challenging categorization. In one instance, the contentious term ‘racaille’ spurred a discussion between two regulars: Jamel, a market assistant who identifies at times as French and in other instances as Algeria, and Christine, a French shopper with a long family history in the region. Used by Nicolas Sarkozy to describe rioting youth during the 2005 suburban uprising, ‘racaille’ has powerful connotations in French. At its most basic it translates as ‘scum’ or ‘rabble’. As Minister of the Interior, Sarkozy’s use of the term in October 2005 proved inflammatory: calling for city-streets to be pressure-hosed clean of scum, Sarkozy’s application of ‘racaille’ to visible minority youth re-imagined the word in potently racialised and derogatory terms. The introduction of the term in the Marché du Plan Cabanes, on the heels of Sarkozy’s 2007 Presidential election, is revealing:
Christine, mid-morning, market moderately busy. Then Jamel came by, and they started to banter. Christine asked with a nod, had he shaved that day. No, he replied, he was Arab. Then he continued, smirking, pointing to himself with both hands, “I am racaille”. Christine yelped and shook her arms above her head. A quick exchange took place, Christine challenging, Jamel replying and always coming back to the same point. With his arms spread out, turning left and then right as if to present himself to the market, he reaffirmed, “I am racaille”. Christine said that Jamel didn’t know what ‘racaille’ meant. He retorted that it was not in the dictionary. Christine asked him to spell ‘racaille’. With his hands on his waist, pouting, and leaning towards her, he spelled the word phonetically, sounding something like ‘rak-kai’. Now Christine smirked and corrected him, spelling it out in full. She intimated that he couldn’t find it in the dictionary because he couldn’t spell it. As Christine and Jamel wound down their duel, a vendor at the top of the market called out to Jamel, inviting him to have a coffee. He jumped to face them, spread out his arms again, and yelled loudly enough for them to hear him: what, me, an Arab, have coffee with you? He walked over, and the banter seemed to continue.

Anti-immigration rhetoric is personalized and resituated in the ‘Arab’ market. The question of how to spell ‘racaille’ – if it is listed in the dictionary – is particularly powerful. The Sarkozian meaning drawn on by Jamel is fundamentally different than the traditional rendition. To spell the word correctly would make little difference, the link between ‘Arab’ and ‘racaille’ is colloquial, it cannot be looked up in a standard glossary. Jamel at once performs ascribed stereotypes of ‘Arab-immigrant’ and rejects them. His sarcastic manner and overly-gregarious bodily gestures make the exchange one of spectacle, the word is mocked, its potency reduced through jest and repetition. The taboo of ‘racaille’ is challenged, and the speaker takes control of an imposed label. Yet at the same time, Jamal re-enforced the racialization of the term: by correlating ‘Arab’ and ‘racaille’ he reproduces the stigma ascribed the word during the 2005 suburban riots. He situates himself in a political discourse that categorically separates the
‘delinquent-immigrant’ from the rest of French society. Jamel embodies ‘racaille’, he purposefully becomes the very thing Sarkozy wished to pressure-hose from city-streets. He is conscious of the potency of his actions, effectively using the market stage to verbalize a sense of injustice.

This exchange speaks to a struggle of identity. Although references to ‘racaille’ immediately ties the dialogue to politicized national discourses, its situation in the Marché du Plan Cabanes also link it to more local processes. The market’s fate, vendors repeated, is intrinsically tied to ethnic identity. The shift to the Place Salengro occurred, one seller opposed to the relocation explained in an interview:

Because they [municipality] want to avoid an obvious grouping of Maghrébin in the neighbourhood.

‘The market was ‘swept’ over to the Place Salengro’, a vendor states. Metaphors of being pushed aside or of being moved-on through the relocation were repeated often. In the usage of the term ‘racaille’ Silverstein and Tetreault find reverberations of colonialist discourse:132 echoes, Haddad and Balz affirm, of the mission-civilisatrice that sought to sanitize cities in North Africa and Indochina.133 The implication is that suburban social-housing districts need to be cleansed of unsavoury elements before re-integration into modern France. The play on ‘racaille’ by participants in the Marché du Plan Cabanes is perhaps also a response to more local calls for the Plan Cabanes plaza to be, in effect, cleaned-up. In a Midi Libre newspaper article, a spokesperson for a local Faubourg Figuerolles neighbourhood council states:
It [pre-2005 Plan Cabanes] was no longer a neighbourhood market. Some were stocking goods in garages. There were cars parked in every direction, blocking the parking lots. In terms of hygiene it was intolerable....We will not support such filth, we will not support a market like it was before. The plaza will be magnificent [after renovations] and if the market comes back, we want it in writing that the municipality will carefully manage it.¹³⁴

Cited in the same newspaper article are the comments of a market-participant in support of the relocation to the Place Salengro. They explain their divisive stance:

The market is smaller [in the Place Salengro] and so it’s easier to manage. At the Plan Cabanes it was no longer feasible. More and more it resembled a bazaar. There were illegal vendors and dereliction. At the end of the market session there was garbage everywhere, it was impossible to control.¹³⁵

The loathe of chaos – of car and goods, but also garbage and dirt – betrays a fear of incontrollable public space. The speaker’s demand for municipal intervention to restore order implies that market vendors and shoppers cannot be trusted to maintain the newly renovated plaza. Misgivings are justified through reference to hygiene: the Marché du Plan Cabanes is singled-out as being outside the norms. It is an active “hygiene mission”, to borrow the terminology of Friedberg,¹³⁶ even though bales of empty boxes and refuse pile up around most city markets, including the nearby Marché des Arceaux. Accusations that goods are mishandled (stocked in garages) suggest fears for food safety and purity. The presence of such vast quantities as to necessitate mass stocking furtively hint at the market’s wholesale and discount status. Describing the market as ‘easier to manage’ in the Place Salengro, the second commentator affirms the efficacy of relocation as a tool for disrupting unseemly bazaar-like commerce. A return to the Plan Cabanes plaza would, for the first critic, necessitate the market’s
reincarnation as a traditional ‘neighbourhood’ venture: cleansed not only of excess garbage, but also the practices and function distinguishing this space from others in the city-centre.

Into the fray come the comments of Montpellier Mayor Hélène Mandroux, the key decision maker in the municipal relocation process. Her statements to local newspapers and at public events have, frustratingly, failed to provide a clear explanation for the necessity of market transfer. Instead, a series of off-hand comments have raised suspicions of a deliberate process to unseat the North African market. Mandroux’s most controversial remarks have centred on the question of tree-shading for produce stands: the Plan Cabanes plaza, she has asserted, is too sunny for vegetables and fish, while the Place Salengro with its large trees is seen as better suited to a market.\(^{137}\) The relocation is explained as an improved client experience through tree-shading, a sentiment that vendors have been quick to rebuke as arbitrary and ill-devised. It is difficult to generalize from press statements, or make conclusions based on a few Mayoral remarks. The inability to interview city officials or access formal documents related to the Marché du Plan Cabanes’ transfer, a problem detailed in Chapter I, have stunted my ability to fully explore the political process informing Mandroux’s comments. Yet her remarks on tree-shading and subsequent defence of those comments to the \textit{Midi Libre} are, I believe, relevant. Mandroux states:

\begin{quote}
It all started because of a poorly interpreted quote. In a remark I said that I would rather buy produce in the shade than in the sun. It was a common sense reflection but the imbeciles have turned it into twaddle and are making me out to be a racist.\(^{138}\)
\end{quote}
Among the ‘imbeciles’ raising the spectre of racist discrimination were market vendors and shoppers, who responded with the creation of a Marché du Plan Cabanes Association aimed to “defend merchants and fight against discrimination”. The Association, vendors explained in the summer of 2007, arose from a sense of profound frustration: an inability to engage city officials or communicate their concerns to the Mayor. Criticism that the market was too sunny in the Plan Cabanes or that it lacked hygiene are met with disdain and absolute fury even a year after Mandroux’s remarks. During a morning of fieldwork Justin, a vendor opposed to the relocation, explained his take on the debacle:

I was standing in front of the till when Justin asked how things were going. I was frustrated, I admitted, because I couldn’t get a hold of any formal documents on the Plan Cabanes. Justin sneered, then with a roll of the eyes asked if I was surprised. The Mayor and the market don’t get along, he said. Ok, Justin went on, sometimes things got loud and there were a few illegal stands in the Plan Cabanes. But still, he shook his head and raised his arms in defeat, then stepped from behind the counter to join me on the customer side of the till, and leaned in to explain: the Mayor has a problem with the market because there are too many Arabs. The stuff about having big trees over the market was wishy-washy bullshit, he heatedly replied. The vendors’ Association had circulated a petition in the market and the neighbourhood, getting hundreds of signatures supporting a return to the Plan Cabanes plaza, Justin said, and the Mayor hadn’t even bothered to respond. They had submitted the petition to City Hall and not even a letter of reply, nothing, Justin rolled his eyes again. They had even proposed getting matching umbrellas, and putting table cloths on the stands, and having matching stands so that it all looked nice if they got back to the Plan Cabanes. Then he shook his shoulders, as if to say that he was giving up, and ducked back behind the till to take care of the next client.

The unanswered petition is a point of particular contention: ‘a disgrace’, one angered vendor stated. ‘We don’t exist for City Hall’, a stall assistant argued.
‘They’re trying to eliminate us with the relocations’, a seller bluntly said, ‘we’re just going to die off, basically this market is going to be done soon’. The suggestion of matching provençal-style umbrellas and stands – a reference to similar practices at the Marché Paysan d’Antigone and the Marché des Arceaux – is evoked as evidence of a willingness to appease critics by transforming market practices. ‘All for naught’, explains a vendor, the market’s transfer has been made permanent and merchants have suffered. ‘The beehive has been ruptured’, a Moroccan merchant explained over coffee at the local café. The market is the centre of the neighbourhood, he articulated, ‘if you take it away it’s like stealing the queen bee from her hive. Everything falls apart, the community is hit, and who’s going to the pottery market anyway’, he muses.

Illustration 31: Refrigeration trucks, Place Salengro.

The Marché du Plan Cabanes’ relocation is divisive and unsettling, yet it is not without precedent. In the mid-1980s Marseille undertook a similar project:
transferring a central flea market, one dubbed ‘ethnic’, to a private lot in the city’s suburbs.\textsuperscript{142} The relocation, Mazzella and Roudil suggest, was part of:

\begin{quote}
\hspace{1em} a politics of urban rehabilitation, where the market had to participate in the symbolic re-evaluation of a city centre blighted with a negative image (unsafe, ‘Maghrébin ghetto’, instability, lack of order).\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

Montpellier’s own central flea-market met a similar fate in 1985 when, through a city-wide referendum, residents voted on its transfer to the social housing district of Mosson.\textsuperscript{144} In the flea-market’s place, below the city’s aqueduct, now stretches the high-end Marché des Arceaux. The Marché du Plan Cabanes itself has, according to Descombes-Vailhe, already been primed for similar municipal intervention: public works along Cours Gambetta in the 1990s have seen the widening of the road at the expense of the plaza, traffic and people barriers introduced, and shrubbery planted alongside low-walls to visually divide the Plan Cabanes from the surrounding neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{145} The area, explains Prat, is popularly stigmatized as a “wanton space to visit infrequently”,\textsuperscript{146} a site of illegality, dubious commerce and insecurity. It is seen to exist beyond a “cultural frontier”,\textsuperscript{147} Descombes-Vailhe notes, the Boulevard Jeu de Paume to the east acting as border to the historic city-centre. If, as Prat argues in 1995, there is an ongoing desire to “socially normalise”\textsuperscript{148} the district through disruptions to pedestrian, commercial and vendor circulation, then the Marché du Plan Cabanes’ relocation is perhaps only the most recent step along that route. An inability to access archival records related to the Plan Cabanes can permit only cursory assumptions on the political resolutions underlying this process. Instead, the deliberate push to clean-up the disparate Marché du Plan Cabanes is
evidenced in the experiences of vendors and shoppers, a discourse of cultural
difference, and a distinct impression of North African commerce being moved
aside in favour of more traditional ventures.
Conclusion

The outdoor food market, Pradelle suggests, is a site where one “goes as a citizen of a public community”.\textsuperscript{149} For shoppers at the Marché des Arceaux and Marché Paysan d'Antigone, participating in market life brings a budding sense of belonging. By consuming terroir goods and paysan traditions, shoppers are able to embody regional culinary and social identities. They become Montpelliérain, defined through their practices as expert cultural citizens, capable of valuing quality foods and the lifestyle they inform. Yet the exclusivity of French culinary nationalism means that negotiating belonging through cultural consumption is not open to all market goers. At the relocated Marché du Plan Cabanes diverse forms of commerce mark the space as marginal. Rather than being validated as cultural and civic citizens, participants at the Marché du Plan Cabanes are displaced within the city. The site is imagined as one of illegality, foreignness and cheap consumption, undesirable within the logic of terroir practices. Depicted as unhygienic, lacking neighbourhood spirit, untraditional and approximated to a supermarket, it is forcefully distinguished from the type of commerce valued by socially empowered shoppers.

The Marché du Plan Cabanes’ socio-cultural difference is built in contrast to the ideology informing the function of the Marché des Arceaux and Marché Paysan d’Antigone. The farmer’s and organic markets are seen by participants to embody
French norms and traditions; they fulfil a desire to root identity in the distinct agricultural and gastronomic practices of the Languedoc region. The North African market, meanwhile, performs outside these expectations by presenting affordability, communitarian cohesion and ethnic foods and services for shoppers crowding the small Place Salengro. Neither market form is inherently bad or good, users in each value the experience.

Yet there is a difference in political and economic power between the North African market and the farmer’s and organic market. While users of the Marché des Arceaux and Marché Paysan d’Antigone are able to publicly validate their activity, and thus legitimate their markets’ use of public space, those active in the Marché du Plan Cabanès are encumbered in their attempts. The benefits expressed by Marché du Plan Cabanès participants – sociability, affordability, belonging – are not recognized beyond the Place Salengro and surrounding Faubourg Figuerolles. They are instead derided by critics as non-traditional and undesirable. Plan Cabanès participants, I have argued, are unable to define the terms of their civic and social participation. While the importance of terroir production is presupposed by farmers, organic vendors, and their clients, market-goers in the Marché du Plan Cabanes are forced to publicly prove their value in the face of municipal displacement. The experience of market participation is not equal in the three sites considered.

That Montpellier’s City Hall seems to be working to dislodge the Marché du Plan Cabanes suggests that rhetoric of ‘cultural difference’ goes beyond the colloquial
and may have legal and political implications. My assertions in this respect are based on a limited case study: the inability to interview city officials, while in itself perhaps indicative of municipal unease with Marché du Plan Cabanes politics, mean that conclusions are one-sided. This thesis does not capture the viewpoint of Montpellier's Mayor or the councillors involved in deliberations on the market’s future. Yet it does something I believe to be just as relevant: detailed ethnographic work allows for a nuanced understanding of the difficult negotiations surrounding cultural and ethnic identity in France.

The Marché du Plan Cabanes’ displacement speaks, I believe, to deeper processes of social and spatial discrimination. Social imaginaries of the unwelcome Maghrébin immigrant are reproduced, and users of the Marché du Plan Cabanes are depicted as being outside French cultural norms. Social and civic belonging, negotiated through economic and cultural consumption in the Marché Paysan d'Antigone and Marché des Arceaux, are in the Marché du Plan Cabanes denied. Punters in the Place Salengro cannot buy into a local French identity; acts of exchange instead functioning to distinguish participants as an unstable social ‘other’. The rhetoric of ingrained cultural difference, of ‘racaille’ and ‘Arab souks’, is embodied by Plan Cabanes participants and the market shown as incapable of integrating varied urban practices. Public space – the space of the marché – is ascribed a singular, desirable, cultural identity. It would appear that markets can function as spaces of civic and cultural participation only when the community in question has already established its legitimacy.
Footnotes

Introduction

3 Agence Nationale pour la Création et le Développement des Nouvelles Entreprises, *Commerce ambulant NAF 52.6D et 52.6E* (APCE, 1999), 8.

Prelude: Three markets, one morning, two purchases


On being a ‘fly on the wall’: positionality, subjectivity and ethnographic research

11 Ibid., 85.

John Michael Roberts and Teela Sanders, “Before, during and after: Realism, reflexivity and ethnography,” *The Sociological Review* 52, no. 2 (205), 294-313, would further argue that the choice of research area and topic is itself already closely tied to the personal biography of the researcher, and so relations between the researcher and participants is inherently personal.

A department and a region are administrative units. Within the French state system, the hierarchy of administrative units is: national, regional, departmental, municipal, city districts. With respect to Montpellier this would mean: France > Languedoc-Roussillon > Hérault > Montpellier > (city districts).


For instance, the Montpellier Tourist Office website: http://www.ot-montpellier.fr/


Institut national de la statistique et des études économique (INSEE), *Travail-emploi: Taux de chômage localisés trimestriels*, 15 June 2008 <http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp>. In the same period the unemployment rate for France was 7.4%.


Système d’Information Géographique de la Délégation Interministérielle à la Ville, ZUS: Gély-Figuerolles, 20 August 2008 <http://sig.ville.gouv.fr/Tableaux/9105030/>. Note the prohibition of statistics based on ethnic identifiers, among others, was passed in law in 1978 (INSEE #78-17, January 6, 1978). The only categories of migrants that can be identified are: foreigners arriving from EU countries, and foreigners arriving from non-EU countries.


Translate as: ‘a man trying to pick-up a girl’.

Translate as: ‘flirtatious young girl’.

Translate as: ‘flirtatious young girl’.
For further discussion on this aspect of fieldwork, see: Elisabeth Hicks, *Ambassadors of the Alba'yzin: Moroccan vendors of La Calderería in Granada, Spain* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia, 2008): 50.


Cultivating identity: *paysan* expertise, regional production and the space of the market


The Marché du Plan Cabanes differs in this respect, and that difference forms the basis for the subsequent chapter.


Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, “A cultural field in the making,” in *French food on the table, on the page, and in French culture*, eds. Lawrence Schehr and Allen Weiss (New York: Routledge. 2001), 204.


Idib., 172.

67 For more on Camembert see the AOC Camembert website: http://www.camembert-aoc.org/


74 On the arrest for explosives see: “Le viticulteur arrêté fabriquait des explosifs.” *Midi Libre*, July 2008, A2. The youth of the much maligned banlieue are evidently not the only perpetrators of violent protests, burnings, and property destruction.

75 For more on Languedoc-Roussillon wines see: www.languedoc-wines.com.


Contesting cultural identities in public space: a North African market reordered

Pradelle makes a similar assertion with respect to provençal market vendors who downplay the competitiveness of market life. See: Michèle de la Pradelle, Market day in Provence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 20.


Phrases in double-quotations (“ ”) indicate an interview excerpt. Those in single-quotations (‘ ’) indicate phrases recorded in the course of ethnographic fieldwork, and are indirect quotations.

“Les bornes en granit sont de retour,” Midi Libre, 16 April 2006, 8.

Vendors were generally unable to provide an estimate on the number of daily clients. Some suggested close to 1,000. Most found the question amusing, indicating that the number of clients is irrelevant as long as they take in a reasonable profit. A seller noted that they would rather have one client spend 10€, than 10 clients spend 1€ each. They indicated that weekends were the busiest times, and their financial survival depended on the taking of those two days.

Phrases in double-quotations (“ ”) indicate an interview excerpt. Those in single-quotations (‘ ’) indicate phrases recorded in the course of ethnographic fieldwork, and are indirect quotations.


On initial suggestions of permanent retention in the Place Salengro: “Place Salengro, le marché a trouvé le succès,” Midi Libre, 17 April 2005, 10. On City Hall’s formal decision to retain the market at the Place Salengro: “Plan Cabanes: et maintenant?,” Midi Libre, 8 November 2006, 9.

In keeps with the majority of research participants I too refer to the market at the Marché du Plan Cabanes, despite the official re-naming and location change. To call the market ‘Marché Salengro’ seemed a particularly strong political statement, and in my choice of naming I likely positioned myself with opponents of the relocation. There are indications that naming practices have since changed, the Midi Libre local newspaper continues to make references to the Plan Cabanes market, but has also embraced the Marché Salengro. Some friends and contacts in Montpellier have also shifted to Marché Salengro, although I am not sure how the name-change is seen more broadly.

Since the completion of fieldwork at least one long-time vendor has left the market. The market cafe has also changed hands.


Of the three proposed markets, only the books & antiques appears to have been definitively introduced: antique vendors spread through the Plan Cabanes plaza every Wednesday from 9am to 5pm. I have been unable to find information on the proposed flowers market or the artisan market, although each continues to be mentioned in newspaper articles and occasionally appears in municipal publications as an ongoing proposal.


An allusion to an earlier conversation where vendors described their clientele as students, singles, and large immigrant households. Phrases in double-quotations (“ ”) indicate an interview excerpt. Those in single-quotations (‘ ’) indicate phrases recorded in the course of ethnographic fieldwork, and are indirect quotations.


119 A coulis is a thick sauce made from strained vegetables, used with meat dishes, or fruit as accompaniment to dessert.

120 Michèle de la Pradelle, Market day in Provence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 20.; A comtadine is a resident of the Comtat Venaissin (comtat meaning ‘county’ in Occitan), a historic region surrounding the southern city of Carpentras, where Pradelle carried out market research.


123 As the French mid-century economic boom wound down in the 1970s, France instituted a ‘zero-immigration’ policy. Family reunification and movement from EU countries has continued, labour migration has, however, been limited. For more, see: Maxim Silverman. Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France. London: Routledge, 1992.

124 Maxim Silverman, Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France (London: Routledge, 1992), 111.; There is a considerable body of


See: Michèle Tribalat, Jean-Pierre Garson, Yann Moulier-Boutang, and Roxane Silberman. *Cent ans d’immigration, étrangers d’hier, français d’aujourd’hui*. Paris: Institut National d’Études Démographiques, 1991.; The study carried out by Tribalat et al. is a rare foray into demographics, providing one of the few attempts to trace the meaning and impact of immigration in France.

Zaïr Kédadouche, *La France et les Beurs* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 2002), 46.; *Beur* is a French ‘verlan’ slang word, whereby word phonetics are reversed: *Beur* is the ‘verlan’ of *Arabe*, usually used in reference to the descendants of North African immigrants.


Name and identifying characteristics have been changed.

The 2005 riots were sparked by a confrontation between police and minority youth: on October 27th, two youth aged 15 and 17 were electrocuted to death while hiding from police in a power transformer station outside Paris. The incident sparked accusations of police indifference and racial profiling, with youth taking to the streets after dark to violently protest their marginalization in French society. Civil unrest saw protesters clash with French security forces, cars and buildings burnt, state buildings and stores vandalized. The riots which began in the marginalized Parisan *banlieues* of Seine-Saint-Denis, Essonne, and Val-de-Marne, ultimately spread to dozens of cities and suburbs, reaching their pinnacle on November 7th when 1,408 vehicles were burned, 34 policemen injured, and 395 individuals arrested. Sarkozy’s *racaille* comment came at the height of tensions, and seemed to reaffirm the rioters’ sense of profound marginalization. The riots and Sarkozy’s inflammatory vocabulary are examined in greater detail by: Yvonne Haddad and Michael J. Balz. “The October riots in France: A failed immigration policy of the empire strikes back?” *International Migration* 44, no. 2(2006): 22-34.; Susan Ossman and Susan Terrio. “The French riots: questioning spaces of surveillance and sovereignty.” *International Migration* 44, no. 2(2006) 5-21.; Paul Silverstein and Chantal Tetreault. 2006 “Postcolonial Urban Apartheid.” *Items & Issues* 5, no. 4(2006):8-15.


Yvonne Haddad and Michael J. Balz. “The October riots in France: A failed immigration policy of the empire strikes back?” *International Migration* 44, no. 2(2006): 26.; There is a further link made by Dikeç and also by Silverstein: some social housing districts within France are labelled as ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles) – a designation labelling the area as requiring further municipal and state intervention. Asserting that many ZUS areas have a high proportion of North African migrants, Silverstein suggests that ZUS are designed to disrupt ethnic community dynamics,


135 Ibid., 9.


138 Ibid., 10.

139 “400 signatures pour un retour du marché,” Midi Libre, 21 April 2006, 8.

140 Name and identifying characteristics have been changed. During the course of fieldwork Justin repeatedly emphasized his sympathies for the North African vendors, and for his own situation, in the market, yet he purposely (it seemed) did not discuss his personal or national background.

141 The Midi Libre also makes note of the petition, saying that there were 400 signatures. Some vendors told me that they had collected upwards of 1,000. Midi Libre: “400 signatures pour un retour du marché,” Midi Libre, 21 April 2006, 8.


143 Ibid., 67.

144 “Referendum transfer du Marché des Puces,” Montpellier municipal archives, 430W 34 – I3.


146 Alain Prat, Le Plan Cabanes (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 1994), 12.


Conclusion

Agence Nationale pour la Création et le Développement des Nouvelles Entreprises, *Commerce ambulant NAF 52.6D et 52.6E* (APCE, 1999), 8.
Bell, David and Gill Valentine. * Consuming geographies: We are where we eat.* London: Routledge, 1997.


Haddad, Yvonne and Michael J. Balz. “The October riots in France: A failed immigration policy of the empire strikes back?” International Migration


“Place Salengro, le marché a trouvé le succès.” *Midi Libre*, 17 april 2005, 10.
Ville de Montpellier Direction de la Réglementation Publique: Service des
Appendix 1: Certificate of BREB approval

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Geraldine Pratt
INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT: UBC/Arts/Geography
UBC BREB NUMBER: H07-00683

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

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Other locations where the research will be conducted:
Research will be conducted in fruit and vegetable markets in Montpellier, France.

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):
N/A

SPONSORING AGENCIES:
N/A

PROJECT TITLE:
Food Culture and Social Distinction: Urban Food Markets in France

CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: June 14, 2008

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:

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The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Arminee Kazanjian, Associate Chair
Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair