Open air food markets around Montpellier

Places for community building and re-localisation of urban food systems or just ordinary shopping places?

An exploratory research in Geography

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**French open-air markets : a renewal**

- **1945-90’**: decline of farmers’ markets (FM) with the rise of large-scale retail stores, but open-air weekly food markets exist in all cities.
- **2000’s**: 7000 food markets in France in 2005
  - renewal and diversification: new forms of open-air food markets (FM, organic food, terroir products...)
- **Montpellier**: mostly a consumers’ perspective (Dury, 2008; Reboul et al. 2009)
An exploratory research in periurban localities around Montpellier

Objectives:

1. How to explain this renewal? Which factors can cause the growth/decline of markets? Difference between inner-cities and peri-urban localities?

2. Are markets places of reconnection between city and agriculture? How can they contribute to the re-localisation of urban food systems?
An exploratory research in periurban localities around Montpellier

Methodology:

• Cartography on 34 municipalities
• Observation + 169 quick surveys with sellers on 21 periurban markets
• 27 in-depth interviews with sellers, mayors, technical staff on 6 markets + with farmers’ & sellers’ representatives.
1. A growing number of open-air food markets around Montpellier

Factors of growth or decline of the markets?
New markets are created every year!
35 markets for 450,000 inhab.

21 periurban markets
200,000 inhab.

14 markets inside Montpellier city
250,000 inhab.

Creation of the market
- 40-70 years ago
- 30-40 years ago
- 10-30 years ago
- Less than 10 y.
- No market

Dynamic market
Fragile market
Former market
Market in project
Renewal of periurban markets

10 old markets
11 recent markets
11 municipalities without markets
2 markets in project

Creation of the market

- 40-70 years ago
- 30-40
- 10-30
- Less than 10
- No market

Dynamic market
Fragile market
Former market
Market in project
Factors of growth/decline?

- History: biggest markets are older
- Proximity to Montpellier
- Demographic threshold (> 6000 inhab.)

Size of the market (nb stalls)

Population (nb inhab.)
Factors of growth/decline?

- History: biggest markets are old
- Proximity to Montpellier
- Demographic threshold (> 6000 inhab.)
- Elderly people (> 25% older than 60)
- Wealthier population
A growing number of periurban markets since 20 years

• Especially in the municipalities directly bordering Montpellier, that have an older & wealthier population...

• But not all the markets are big or dynamic!
  – Weekends vs. week days
  – Diversity of products
  – Accessibility (parking)
  – Management/involvement of municipalities
Role of local authorities in this renewal

- Uneven involvement
- Promote the market as a place for **community building** / social cohesion
  
  « A village without market is dead »

- Organise activities (tasting, cultural events...)
- Foster dialogue with **local food stores** (often in decline).

« A meeting place between generations »
2. Places of reconnection between the city and the agriculture of its hinterland?

Contribution of markets to the re-localisation of urban food systems?
Producers are a (big) minority

Producers = 36% of the 169 sellers surveyed

(between 27% and 56% according to the market)
Origin of the 60 producers...depends on the product!

a potential food provisioning area for Montpellier?
Which connection btw city & agriculture?

• Markets are places where city dwellers meet producers
• An answer to citizens’ claim for local/regiona... producers!
• A place for profitable direct sale of farm products?
  but producers suffer from the lower prices of the resellers

• A starting point for local projects linking urban & farming actors

Innovations
Innovations around Montpellier

• Adaptation of rules to farmers’ needs in order to attract producers (seasonality, stall’s price, priority access...)
• Consumers’ education: farmers’ explanations, projects with schools
• More transparency about the origin of the products (labelling, charts: Chiffoleau et al., 2013).
• Participatory governance: market councils including consumers, resellers, producers in order to improve the management
Conclusions

• **Lack of knowledge/data** on open-air food markets: more producers than expected!
• Lack of **transparency & participation** in the management (top down without standards, choice of stalls, weak control of products)
• No **coordination** between municipalities
• **Uneven support /involvement of local authorities** in the market
• Markets are places of reconnection between city and agriculture but not always recognised /promoted as such.
• **Re-localisation of urban food systems**: markets + SFCs + food stores
Thank you for your attention!

Market in Montpellier, where your bus left this morning
En plus au cas où...
How it works? Who is involved?

Local elected officials
- Neighborhood committee
  - PROMOTE THE CREATION
- Manager (stalls)
- Local police (parking)
- State dept for fraud control

Market
- DECIDES
- SUPPORT INFLUENCE

Mayor

Local association promoting Farmers’ markets
- Local union of the retailers operating on markets
  - Chamber of Agriculture
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry


Literature on French open-air food markets

Before 2000: lack of research
- Economic geography focussing on the spatial distribution of retail facilities seldom deals with markets (Troin, 1982),
- Case studies on markets in big cities (Paris: Nordin, 1983; Roy, 1998; Lyon: Bléchet et al., 1985)

Since 2000: renewal
- AFN, short food supply chains (Chiffoleau, 2008)
- Spatial distribution (Poisson, 2010; Scheffer, 2013)
- Link with agriculture (Delfosse & Navarro, 2011; Arnal 2012)
- Montpellier: mostly a consumers’ perspective (Chafotte & Chiffoleau, 2007; Dury, 2008): 10% population buy fresh fruit/veg at a market (Reboul et al., 2009).

Gaps:
- factors of growth or decline of the markets? (Machell & Caraher, 2012)
- Difference between inner-cities and peri-urban localities?
- Contribution of markets to the re-localisation of urban food systems?