Foodscapes in Paris

Methodologies to capture practiced foodscapes

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Foodscapes in Paris -

Methodologies to capture practiced foodscapes

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Preface

The report in hand is the result from work conducted on a PhD- course in Paris, France. The focus point of the course was foodscapes and the report takes its departure in this.

The chosen language of the report is English. It became the obvious choice since the research mainly was conducted in English and due to the fact that the foodscape literature on which the report is built is in English.

Introduction - Field Trip in Paris

The following report encompasses two different main areas in Paris. The first example is the food market of Marché de Rungis (Rungis), situated in the outskirts of Paris. The second is an area situated in the centre of Paris around the 9th, 3rd and 10th arrondissement (arr.) The report is based on observations, pictures, audio recordings and interviews, and furthermore saturated with sensory perceptions and descriptions from the field. These descriptions and perceptions are used as examples and are accompanied with post-rationalizations and interpretations of the foodscapes based on the foodscapes literature.

Marché de Rungis

Rungis is situated just outside of Paris in close proximity to a main road, rail and air routes. It is a large area, over 200 hectares, where different pavilions sell different food and non-food products. Rungis hasn't always been placed in its current position, outside of Paris. The history of Rungis goes back to 1110 AD where a food market was established in Paris. It was known as "Les Halles" and since then it has evolved and been renovated many times by among others Emperor Napoleon I. In 1969 the food market officially opened in the landscape of Rungis (www.rungismarket.com). This report is based on a visit at Rungis in May 2011, four of the five different types of pavilions were visited: Fish and seafood, Meat, Dairy and delicatessen and finally the Fruit and vegetable pavilion. The only pavilion not visited was the Flower and plants pavilion, due to lack of relevance to the foodscapes perspective.

Photo of a picture of Les Halles, selling vegetables, hanging on the wall in a Greengrocer in Paris, May 12th. 2011. (Original date and year unknown)

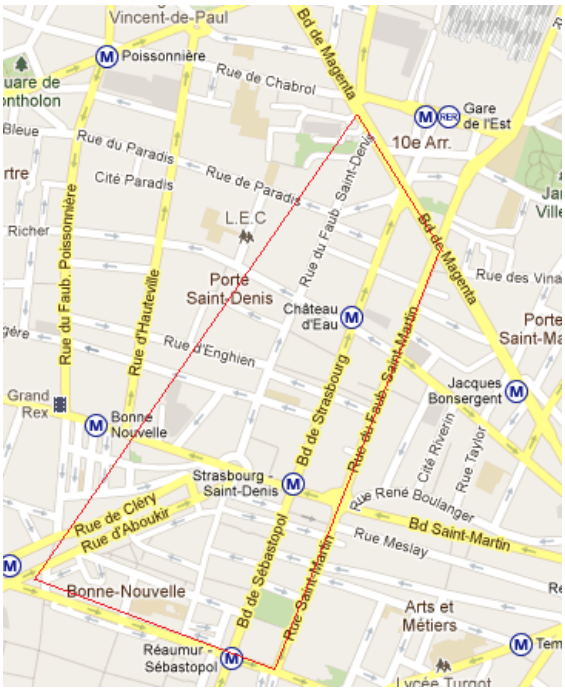
Photo of Rungis: Fruit and Vegetable pavilion, May 11th. 2011

The visit at Rungis was fully structured and prearranged, the tour round the pavilions were guided by an employed tour-guide.

Our tour round the premises of Rungis began in the middle of the night. When we visited the pavilions we followed our guide fairly close. We entered each pavilion with only little knowledge beforehand. Our main source of information was our guide who answered our questions willingly. On our tour around the pavilions we paid attention to our surroundings and interacted with the people working there whenever possible. By following this course of action we gained an overall impression of the everyday atmosphere and a glimpse of the working routines in Rungis. Thereby we gained an understanding on how the foodstuff, the people and surroundings by interaction created certain kinds of logics, displayed common-sense knowledge and playing different but important parts in the creation of the Rungis foodscapes.

A Middle-Eastern neighbourhood?

Our field work was carried out in Arrondissements: 9th, 3rd & 10th the square that are outlined by the streets Boulevard de Sébastopol, Rue Réaumur, Rue Saint-Denis and Boulevard Saint Martin, and thereby cover streets situated in the 9th, 3rd and 10th arr. In practice the area researched focusing of foodscapes in main-streets, by- streets, passages and backyards. Even though the Middle-Eastern area was only supposed to be a part of the 9th and 3rd. arr. in Paris, in practice the geographical area was less obvious divided, meaning the research was also carried out in the 10th arr.



Google maps of the area in Paris.

Red lines marks the approximate boundaries of the researched area.

Thus there were Middle-Eastern shops, but also a larger variety of other ethnicities, e.g. there seemed to be just as many Indian, Pakistani food outlets as Middle-Eastern. In practice the researchers found a variety of ethnicities and no significant boundaries for the Middle-Eastern neighbourhood, and thus supporting Dolphijn's statement that foodscapes are borderless and inaccurate defined. (Dolphijn 2004)

Photo of Middle-Eastern eatery in Paris May 12th. 2011

Data Collection

The report is based on data from ethnographic research methods, using triangulation of observation and pictures; interviews and recordings; and field notes and reflections – all generated during the visits at Rungis and in Paris. The ability to secure such a variety in data outcome was made possible when three researchers visited the areas at the same time, which enabled distribution of data collection methods and varying focuses during the visits. It is very relevant to consider the time spent in the field, when analysing the data emerged from the field trip. Since foodscapes are ever changing (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993) and due to the fact that the areas were only researched a single day each, the empirical data value is limited and the changing process and the 'becoming' of a foodscape is beyond what the collected data reflects. In addition to this limitation, the limited time spend in the field restricted the depth by which the researcher's could engage or gain solid insider knowledge of the areas, e.g. to compare the area to other parts of Paris and thereby, perhaps, making the ethnic distinctiveness evident. The collected data is thus dominated by sensory impressions and momentary open-ended ethnographic interviews. (Angrosino 2007) The data was collected in a semi-structured manner (Krogstrup, Kristiansen 2009).

Ethics of data collection

During the data collection the researchers continuously interacted with the field in an ethically code of conduct, informing who, why we were there and what the pictures and recordings was meant for. When taking field notes they were obviously written down on-site, meaning it was easy to see that the researchers weren't regular people doing their groceries, or walking down the streets. When entering shops the employees was asked if it was all right to make observations, take pictures, recording etc. When taking pictures of people, they were asked if it was all right and afterwards shown the pictures– only a few did not approve. These images were immediately deleted in the presence of the people, and are not part of the collected data. An example of this was when one researcher took an overall picture of a street in the Middle Eastern neighbourhood. When taking the picture she noticed that a woman (a prostitute) tried to hide from the scenery. The researcher walked to the woman and together they deleted all the pictures in which the woman appeared. Another example is the small café where the researcher asked if she could take a picture and the man in the café turned to the camera and smiled with his few teeth. Approaching the field in this manner, the way the ethics of the research was carried out in practice gave a number of possibilities to talk with the people e.g. when showing them "their" picture it spinned off to be smaller conversations about food and eating, as we would make it explicit what we aimed to gain knowledge about in their neighbourhood/pavilion.

Usage of collected data

All together the data works as empirical examples in the analysis of the specific areas from a foodscape approach. Through analysing and giving examples on the interactions and discourses operating in the foodscape, the report aims at making the foodscape kaleidoscope more tangible.
The research in the two areas, was structured from a cross disciplinary interactionistic foodscapes perspective, focusing on data on predefined research subjects related to food: *food products, logistics, buyers, quality criteria, food-supply chain, food-places, supermarkets, places selling food, out-of-home eating, what catches the eye?, meal and eating habits, food traditions structures and rituals* etc. In other terms food related social and structural constructs. The report intends to capture the understandings, meanings and common-sense practices in foodscapes, it is not meant to be exhaustive narratives or truths of the foodscapes within the two areas, but to be considered to represent a *microcosm* of the urban society of Paris, providing momentary impressions from the days the data was collected. (Angrosino 2007). The report gives examples on how to combine ethnographic methods with a foodscape perspective. By using the collected data's illustrations and momentary impressions as

concrete examples linked to the foodscapes literature, the report aims at developing methods to capture foodscapes or to catalyse and contribute to the becoming of 'foodscapes methods'. Finally the report will test some of the theories on relations between food and identity, and apply them in a foodscape perspective.

An Approach to Capture Foodscapes

The foodscapes approach in both data collection and throughout the report is applied as perspectives given from a couple of complementary foodscapes understandings, operating in a cross disciplinary foodscapes framework. Applying geographical, physical settings and contexts (Winson 2004)(Morgan, Sonnino 2010)(Burgoine et al. 2009) with the multiplicity of interactions between objects and subjects in foodscapes (Adema 2007)(Dolphijn 2004). The data collection primarily focused on the geographical and ethnical influences on physical foodscapes e.g. places, ethnicity and spatiality. Whilst the analysis and discussions of the generated data is applied in an interactionistic framework studying the *multiplicity* of interactions creating foodscapes e.g. focusing on common-sense, when meanings and understandings are constructed and negotiated in food related interactions between people and environments. (Krogstrup, Kristiansen 2009)

An example of this was when observing that the fruit and vegetables pavilion at Rungis and a greengrocer in the 10th arr. both arranged and displayed the foods neatly in patterned colours, in squares almost as chess boards, the researchers wondered about this arrangement was due to certain rules. Trying to uncover this arrangement the greengrocer was interviewed, and questioned why they did this – he had difficulties to make the rules explicit, and told that they had just always done like that - thereby indicated that when arranging the fruits he relied more on common-sense knowledge than on explicit rules.

These situations, where the interactions for example in the constellation between people and food were implicit, caught the researchers attention, trying to reveal if the interactions might be telling more about the foodscapes than the immediate objective observation or statement of fact. Here: that the fruits and vegetables were neatly arranged by colours.

Photo to the left: Fruit and vegetable pavilion at Rungis, May 11t^h. 2011.

Photo below: Green grocer in Paris, May 12^th. 2011

Notice the similar colour arrangement

The research tries to uncover the foodscapes as a gateway into the realm of understandings taking place between humans (eaters), foods (eaten or representation) and places (geographical, cultural or spatial).

This common-sense focus is investigated from a foodscape approach using interactionistic methodologies, where the common-sense is thought to be relational phenomena's of the contexts and its various actors. (Järvinen, Mik-Meyer 2005) By focusing on common-sense knowledge related to food practices and interactions taking place within the fields' foodscapes, trying to uncover the discourses and social constructs. (Mudry 2010) (Fangen 2004) (Krogstrup, Kristiansen 2009) A look into the anthropological codes of food, shows that food can be understood as a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour – food sums up and transmits a situation. (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993) This is in line with the interactionistic methodology applied in this report's foodscapes approach, with the purpose to uncover some of the integral interrelationship surrounding food, meals and consumption.

As Dolphijn states:

"*The event is never constructed from several or multiple elements, but always from a multiplicity of matters that move together in a continuous flow. Matters manipulate one another, play with one another, are always caught up in processes of change, are always in the process of redefining the event.*" (Dolphijn 2004)

Dolphijn notices that the *matters* e.g. the event of eating is relational, the single food items, the geographical spot where the meal is eaten or the specific man/woman eating are never on their own – they are a continuous flow of *interactions* with one another and these interactions defines the foodscape. By focusing on the interactions the report uncover parts of the becoming of foodscapes in Paris, the interactions are parts of the foodscapes but only the sum of interactions creates foodscapes. The foodscape is not made up by single items in a calculation e.g.: Setting + People + Food = Foodscape.

"Again, it is never a sum of its parts; it is in the sum itself that the parts are created!" (Dolphijn 2004)

To illustrate this; when we went for lunch at Le Napoleon, a café on the outskirt of the marked area; the fact that food was served outside, the tables standing close as a long joined table, the menu and food served, the eaters presence etc. - these factors is no foodscape in its units. But when being interlinked and connected in their relational networks through *multiplicity interactions* a foodscape was created. Among others because of the atmosphere the long table created making the eaters feel a sense of community, almost as eating together even though you didn't had any relations in advance to the meal. A common foodscape became as a result of sitting close to one another. But also because of the eaters dining and drinking at the café, they created an atmosphere, which was reinforced by the multiplicity that made up the foodscape. Thus it is impossible to point out ONE certain unit, e.g the long table, the people, the sunny afternoon or the beer itself can't create the foodscape as it is, but the sum of the multiplicity of *matters* makes the researchers recognise it as a foodscape.

Photo of the Café Le Napoleon May 12th. 2011

The foodscape of Café Le Napoleon was created due to the multiplicity of "matters" present.

At Rungis the same multiplicity occurred in the Dairy and Delicatessen pavilion that seemed very relaxed and comfortable. There was a special "feel good" atmosphere, which was manifested by, a man who can be described as a character on a bike playing music, cheese taste samples, wooden boxes with dairy products, decorated cheese crusts, posters and pictures, the business names signs spelled in neon, altogether leaving the surroundings in a good ambience. But it is not in the Diary and Delicatessen pavilion itself a foodscape is created. The atmosphere of the dairy and cheese pavilion affected the researchers by associating the foods in the pavilion with more happiness and feeling more pleasurable than in the other pavilions – meaning the sum of interactions - the foodscape affected the researchers and their individual food discourses. It was exactly due to the contrast in surroundings: the high focus on hygiene in the other pavilions, the coldness in the meat and fish pavilions, the neatness in the fruit, that the causality of the Diary and Delicatessen, illuminated itself. Represented both by the bike, the music the somehow more 'messy' way of arranging and displaying the 'foodstuff', the contradiction emerged, drawing the researchers attention to food discourses stereotypes and food-shaped identity. In this

Photo from the Dairy and Delicatessen pavilion at Rungis May 11th. 2011

A biking, music playing man.

(Audio file 1 – Dairy pavilion music and sounds)

Photos from the Dairy and Delicatessen pavilion at Rungis May 11th. 2011

Colourful decorated and carved cheese crusts.

way the pavilion both illuminated how an overall food discourse on cheese is drawn into an engross market and become noticeable when observing the displaying of the food and how the pavilion both by contrast, by the arranging and displaying, by the sum of all that parts, plays a part in (re)creating that specific discourse.

The semi-structured methodology allowed the collection of data to be characterised by a somewhat explorative approach that gave room for an intuitive direction within the given frame of research subjects. (Angrosino 2007) After distributing main data responsibilities, the researchers allowed the field, the foodscapes and the people they met, lead their way of interest. In the Carcass pavilion at Rungis the interactions between the suppliers, buyers and the tour-guide caught the researchers attention, even though it was out of the concrete food-agenda, the field notes and recordings suddenly focused on atmosphere and not only on date of killing or origin of the cow. The atmosphere was experienced as so pleasant and light, in a tone of friendliness between suppliers and buyers that it sounded like they had known each other for years - almost like a family. Their voice in the conversations was often teasing (Audio file 2 – friendly tone, almost like family.) It might have seemed extra obvious in the carcass pavilion due to the contrasting context, of rawness, brutality, and blood, the white walls, steel and metal.

Photo from the Carcass Meat pavilion at Rungis May 11th. 2011

The physical environment was dominated by steel, metal, white walls, blood and of course carved meet.

The interviews are characterised by being ethnographic interviews, letting the researchers flow naturally with the conversation and also following the digressions that showed to give original questions, forcing the researchers out of the otherwise biased inquiry. (Angrosino 2007)
Another example on this was experienced when interviewing a man from Bangladesh in the 3rd. arr., asking him about his eating habits – the conversation ended up him talking about how much alcohol French people drink. In that way the semi-structured method spinned off into new areas of attention, that further on during the visits was used as new topics in the observations and the 'on the spot' ethnographic interviews and conversations.

Practiced Foodscapes & Identity

Focusing on the striking characteristics in the interactions of the researched foodscapes, the researchers identified contrasting and consisting conditions, and from these analysing the motives and backgrounds of these understandings of foods and meals. One of the experiences of contrast was on the handling of meat products. At Rungis the meat was handled with respect focusing on quality, quality, quality – the foodstuffs were praised by the people working there. Whilst in the 3rd arr. when observing a truck driver delivering meat to a restaurant, the handling didn't seem as respectful when carrying the meat from the truck to the restaurant. When he saw the researchers showing interest in his activities and taking pictures, he got extremely mad and yelled. Due to ethics the researchers figured it was correct to delete the pictures, since it might catch him in doing something wrong. To Danish standards it didn't seem like the truck was qualified to transportation of raw meat.

Photo from the Carcass Meat pavilion at Rungis May 11th. 2011

Some of the meat products had won quality prices and were prominent displayed.

An example of consisting characteristics is the tendency to speak with other guests at cafés and restaurants. During the coffee break all of the researchers was approached by a man sitting at the table next to them, he was keen to tell about himself, where he came from, why he was there, how his eating habits were and what view he had on French drinking and eating habits in general.

Photo at café in Paris May 12th. 2011

The "eaters" next to the researchers immediately contacted the researchers and the conversation kept going until the researchers left.

At the lunch café Le Napoleon, the foodscapes multiple factors made it feel like you were eating with the other guests, and it felt naturally to talk to the other who was eating there. At some point, after a brief conversation the guests sitting at the table next to the researchers even tasted the researcher's food, doing that, without seeking permission became a very good example on how to 'act out' the familiar atmosphere. And the interactions between the eaters round the table gave a mutual common-sense understanding that was part of the foundations of this specific foodscape experience.

The habitual common-sense e.g. on contrasting or consisting conditions is negotiated between people when they interact with food, meals or surroundings in their daily practicing of foodscapes.
Taking a point of departure in the nutritional discourse, Mudry illustrates how coding and systems defines normativity and stereotypes through health impacts in foodscapes (Mudry 2010). An illustrative point was when the researchers had lunch at Le Napoleon. A couple, Victor and Leo[1], sat right next to us at the café. As mentioned earlier, the foodscape there somehow gave more the impression that we actually dined with them, more than just sitting next to strangers. Therefore, it felt quite natural to take up a conversation on eating habits. Victor in particular had a tendency to focus more on what people in general and Leo in particular shouldn't eat to stay healthy: *"I've told Leo he shouldn't eat all those crappy foods, like burgers, french fries and such – he is already fat*". He had a

[1] The report will due to ethics not mention the couple's real names, it is chosen to call them Victor and Leo instead.

clear tendency to reproduce a discourse of nutritional guidelines with prohibitions, you shouldn't smoke etc. In this way he presented a stereotype of what people are supposed to eat recording healthy guidelines, and though he didn't really tell about his own eating habits, by sitting there having lunch with him, he reproduced a somehow other stereotypic about being gay, working with fashion and being on a diet. What he said and what he did was in sharp contrast, why his practiced and stereotyped foodscapes became subject for further inquiries during the ethnographic interview. The researchers experienced differences in the practiced foodscape among others is: *the differences in what people say, what people say they do, and what people do*. (Davis 2009) These practices or codings around foodscapes are examples on how to analyse to what extend the foodscapes seem to influence people's identity and vice versa. (Fischler 1988)

The interactions in the foodscapes sketch some of the culturally marked behaviour of eating out: *you are what you eat, you are where you eat and you are because you eat out*. (Davis 2009)
Focusing on *what you* eat the data from Rungis is used to describe how the culture and behaviour was interwoven with quality, quality, quality - directly linked to the identity of the people working and their interactions with, customers, tour guide, and the researchers. The Rungis business foundation can also be seen as predictor of a common identity around quality and trust, with smaller separate agendas from each pavilion – e.g. hygiene or taste.
The data from the 3rd, 9th and 10th arr. also gives examples on how the act of eating out, can be considered an exercise in the performance of identity. When trying to uncover how stereotyping self-images of eating and identity is linked and how the act of eating is practised through a number of markers e.g*.: class, ethnicity, power, sophistication and taste - wrapped up in just about every aspect of the dining experience: where you go, what you order, how much you drink, how you behave, and how you tip.* (pg. 294) (Davis 2009).

Le Grand Finale

In many ways our lunch at Le Napoleon gave illustrative examples to our focus points both from the course, the field trip to Rungis and the 'Middle Eastern' fieldtrip. Sitting at the outskirt of the area and in terms of time, the outskirt of our fieldwork, we were to observe and taking on many of our focus points in the conversation that occurred at the long table, the couple sitting next to us 'acting out' on eating out, the lunch sort of framed itself as 'the grand finale'.

One of our focus points was on French food discursively constructed as quality, quality, quality. Both at the Rungis, and in the ph.d. course literature, and by taking on conversations with other students and professor Claude Fischler when visiting the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences in Paris it came quite obvious that the stereotype of French food and eating very well still could be synonymous with quality. Food in this sense becomes a way of describing both the citizens and the citizenship, which is very well captured in Dolphins' term 'state food' (Dolphijn, 2004). In that sense the story of the food becomes synonymous with the story of the country and that story is reproduced in interaction *"between the tourist and the traditional restaurants"* (Dolphijn, 2004). Being French, eating French thereby is established as focusing on quality. This major focus point on quality became quite obvious in the comparison to other countries' food stories.

As Victor explains:

> *"[Germany]…has the lowest food prices in Europe as Germans don't spend money on food, and it's not for nothing we have supermarkets chains like Aldi and Lidl, that are really putting pressure on every farmer, every company that is producing food […] Germans don't spend money on food, French people do"*

And here, his partner Leo interrupts him:

> *"Excuse me, sometime you don't, sometime you buy food in a discount. Me, I always buy my food of nice shops, veal, I love. Good food, and I always buy what is quality, not the quantity but the quality […] The Germans love the quantity not the quality […] The Germans want to pay 1 euro for chicken and a place to pay 10 euro for one chicken is living in the grass and* cock-*a-doodle-doo and then, you know? "*

The above transcribed statements function in somehow contrast to the way in which the two men performed the 'eating out'. In our field notes all three of us noted that the amount of beer the couple consumed over the brief lunch we had was quite large. This made a distinctive contrast to the statement the man from Bangladesh mentioned, that the drinking habits and the food habits of the French are connected through an overall focus on quality, controlled enjoyment and absolutely not on quantity. The couple sitting at Le Napoleon arguing for quality, quality, quality kind of displayed another way of practising both eating and drinking – which in some way relied more on quantity, lots of beers and fast

food. When it came to actually eating Leo started his lunch by taking chips from the researcher's plate and feeding them to Victor. When it finally came down to the two of them ordering food Leo ordered a burger with chips for them to share.
The focus then slipped from the controlled quality lunch to the fast, the beer and the party in the sun.

Photo at Café Le Napoleon, May 12th. 2011. Victor and Leo sharing a burger for Lunch

In this way, Victor being from Germany and Leo being from Guadeloupe gave a very distinct example on how the stereotypes of state food at the same time functions as a way to understand national affiliation but in practices are regarded more as a discursive construction of 'being French' than a guideline on what an how to eat – and in this example drink. Given more time it would have been quite interesting to investigate how the different discursive formations, e.g. being gay, on holiday, eating out and interacting, would be drawn upon when trying to make different standpoint stand clear.

So - at the outskirt of the report it would be fair to pay attention and give some reflections on what knowledge can be gained in a foodscape perspective, giving the time and the methods. As we present trough out the report doing observations and fieldwork in this brief manner can very well function as a way to create empiric examples on how to capture aspects regarding the interaction of food, people and spatiality. It can be seen as means to developing and testing various methods that aims to capture aspects regarding the becoming, the negotiation and the 'practising' of a foodscape. Finally a specific knowledge outcome that caught the three researcher's attentions was the fact that both the fieldtrip to Rungis, the ME neighbourhood and the other course activities gave evidence to the statement that:

"….social-cultural boundaries so rarely match precise geographic boundaries…"
(Leeds-Hurwitz 1993)

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