Barcelona's Public Market System: Bridging the Gap Between the Global and the Local

Larissa Hernandez

University of San Francisco, larissaherdez@gmail.com

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Barcelona’s Public Market System: Bridging the Gap Between the Global and the Local

Larissa Hernandez
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Rue Ziegler, Advisor
Abstract

The unique public markets of Barcelona are poised for a thriving future based on their theoretical and empirical grounding and commitment to both global influences as well as the local traditions of trade and consumption. This global/local balance keeps the markets relevant to contemporary consumers and allows them to have a well-rounded experience as they shop. In this paper, I trace the history and previous incarnations of public markets through the Greeks, Romans and Arabs, as well as consider the European situation and its fluctuations over the centuries. I then uncover the debate surrounding globalization, its influence on the food system, and the technological and anthropological perspectives that inform future trajectories. Thereafter, I analyze the role of globalization manifested through the goals of the IMMB and their current tactics, including creating supermarkets within the markets and creating and participating in international organizations. Similarly, I then examine the role of the IMMB and the community, primarily through the role of the products, the vendors, the consumers, and the markets social contributions. By probing the layers of the market system, it is possible to fully comprehend the drastic influence they have on the citizens, the city of Barcelona, as well as the other various cities and countries involved with the markets, thus understanding the importance of why concentrating on the markets today will help to ensure the dynamism of food consumption as well as a healthy city overall—economically, culturally, and socially—will continue to thrive into the future.

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**Introduction**

The forty-three public markets that are sprinkled through the city of Barcelona, Spain form a system of markets un-paralled in the contemporary world. There is at least one market in every neighborhood in the city and 65% of the citizens use the markets to do their shopping. The first time I walked into a covered food market in Barcelona, I was mesmerized by the sheer number of colorful raw products on display and the hum of customers and vendors throughout the marketplace. It was a pivotal moment because, coming from the US there is no current equivalent; I had never seen food sold in such a candid manner. As I explored the stalls selling everything from cured ham to eggplant, I noted that the food is displayed to maximize accessibility—customers can see and ask all about the food they are buying—and the vendor, as the person who sourced the food, is acknowledged as being knowledgeable and professional. This was a way of selling food that I had never seen before and it was immediately intriguing to me.

Thus began my exploration into how and what makes the market system in Barcelona so dynamic: how does it so successfully bridge the gap between traditional or antique ways of selling food, responding to contemporary needs and concerns? Why do the citizens keep coming back?

The answer lies precisely in the word: bridge. The markets are the bridge between the old ways of food vending with the new. In other words, if life used to be hyper-local, and now it is hyper-global, the markets have been able to retain or absorb the best from each perspective to create an astonishingly vibrant market system. The markets are intent on staying relevant and convenient, and for that they must look beyond the borders of their city and country. The goal is
to continue to be able to provide the citizens with products that promote accessible and healthy lifestyles, and to meet this goal, they must be open to applying the best ideas from all systems. Thus, the Barcelona market system utilizes the global food system, as needed, in order to support the historical local food system.

This study comes at a pivotal moment within the global food system. The increasing interconnectedness of states and countries has helped spur multinational corporations to seek control over global food markets. These agribusiness monopolies are altering the face of food consumption worldwide; not only are they de-constructing the farmer to consumer relationship in the global North, they are instigating the disintegration of food traditions in the global South. The important connections between producers, distributors, and consumers has been devalued, while threatening the very way of life of farmers, by concentrating on monocropping, patenting seeds, introducing GMO (genetically modified organism) crops, and implementing free-trade agreements, denying farmers and consumers autonomy within the food system as a result.

Agribusiness’ worldwide influence is creating a food system model that denies diversity for farmers and consumers. This study reveals the current debate within the global food system, and puts forth the Barcelona market system as an alternate to highly globalized, or highly localized food systems.

Barcelona’s market system is aware of the current trends surrounding the industrialization of the food industry and wish to incorporate it to a certain extent within the markets. They are also highly conscious of the importance of the connections between the city and the countryside, and seek to continue and enhance the relationships between farmers, distributors, and consumers. The markets strive to provide an alternative food distribution model that satiates the various players within the food system.
In this paper, I argue that, with the current trend in globalization, the markets are embracing the qualities that they find necessary to adapt to the times. By so doing, they are also embracing the traditional pathways of the local food system in order to support both growers and vendors, while looking to exceed the expectations and needs of their urban customers. I demonstrate this by dividing the paper into three main sections. First, I introduce and explore the current debates on globalization, and why this pertinent and pressing debate eventually influences trends in food production and distribution. I cover the two opposing theories that address the way to meet global food demand—either through a technological fix, or an anthropological fix—as I believe that the Barcelona market system can be interpreted through both categories. Second, I describe the role of the government in Barcelona and how it has been the force behind the salvation, restoration, and revitalization of the markets by integrating both global and local tactics: the various top-down strategies applied and set in place by the managers of the markets are ensuring the markets’ future. Third, I discuss globalization and its impact on the community and how and why the various players are involved. Finally, I emphasize that the municipal government is reaching out globally in order to integrate the markets to a certain extent within the wider globalized market systems, in an effort to support the local vendors and the citizens of Barcelona. It is in this context that the public markets should be understood: they are always changing and in flux, never static, and always reacting to the social change and the needs of the consumers. Due to this commitment, Barcelona’s markets will continue to provide a critical focus in the urban life of Barcelona’s citizens.
Figure 1: *Santa Caterina* market

Figure 2: Food products displayed by vendor within the public markets
Methods

During the summer of 2011 I conducted field research in Barcelona, Spain. During my three month stay I was able to triangulate three main investigatory methods in order to more fully understand the Barcelona markets system. First, literature and document analysis allowed me to examine printed and online written resources. Second, interviews with key informants within the Institute of Municipal Markets of Barcelona (IMMB) added a crucial human element and allowed a visceral connection to the markets. Third, participant observation, incorporating myself into the markets by buying, questioning, and observing the daily processes of the markets helped to create a dynamic understanding of the Barcelona markets. Through this conjunction of primary and secondary resources I sought to cohesively analyze the network of markets in Barcelona.

Document Analysis

I began my work with an internship at the Institute of Municipal Markets of Barcelona (the IMMB), a branch of the municipal government, through which I was able to glean important information from the interactions, projects, and pace of the institution. While there I was allowed access to many internal documents, as well as the archives of published and public documents as well. Additionally, the plethora of pdf documents posted online as well as the stores of valuable vintage pamphlets and spiral bound notebooks archived at the Biblioteca de Catalunya [Library of Catalunya] and inaccessible elsewhere provided much material to sift through. My primary and secondary sources began to present common themes. Coding, marking, and compiling the central themes helped to connect my data with an overarching theoretical construct.
Interviews

After compiling a series of questions and developing a comprehensive questionnaire, I conducted four interviews with key informants employed by the IMMB. They included three women and one man working respectively as heads of departments (two informants), one office assistant, and one contracted worker. I asked open ended questions, and with their permission, taped the interviews. They were conducted in Spanish and ranged from one hour and fifteen minutes to almost three hours. I then transcribed the interviews word for word and coded them for similar themes. (Unfortunately, one of the interviews was mostly unintelligible due to the background noise.) Although much of the information from the interviews revealed substantial overlap with the information gleaned from the document analysis, it was fruitful to obtain complementary anecdotes and personal stories from these current staff members. They also helped to better understand and refine my original assumptions about the markets and Barcelona’s market system.

Participant Observation

In the final weeks of my visit, I was able to spend a substantial amount of time both observing and shopping in the markets. I observed first-hand the effects of the IMMB’s policies and interventions and was able to view the interactions between vendor and customers. Most importantly for me, I was also able to anonymously participate in the system by becoming a customer, thus gaining experience, asking informal questions, and discovering some basic intricacies of the markets. Additionally, as I was present beyond my formal internship during the month of August and into early September, I was able to see the transformation process that
occurs when the majority of the stall owners close for vacation. This was one of the most fulfilling methods of the experience and helped me to understand the importance of the markets and why it is necessary to keep them relevant to today’s consumers.

By combining these three complementary methodological approaches, it was possible to analyze the markets in various ways; while one method can provide interesting information and insights, having three main modes of investigation helped me to understand the markets in a more full-bodied and comprehensive way.

Note: All translations from Catalan and Spanish, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.
Part I- The Globalization Debate

In the last 100 years it has become easier and easier to communicate with others who are physically far away or in remote places, and as a result the world seems to be shrinking. This smaller world has enabled a multitude of transactions to take place, in terms of trade, politics, and culture, which otherwise would have been impossible. Most importantly a debate has arisen concerning globalization and its future trajectory. In what ways will it influence our future world? Is globalization and its consequences a blessing or a curse? It is within this hotly debated issue that I examine the Barcelona markets and seek to uncover their empirical role within this often theoretical debate. Understanding and analyzing the debate on globalization is crucial to revealing the methods of preservation and promotion used by the branch of the government that manages the Barcelona markets, as well as the effects on the communities that the markets supply.

In this section I will first define globalization and provide a brief summary of the positive and negative aspects of globalization needed to understand the ongoing debate. Secondly, I place the context of the market system within this debate by analyzing the role of globalization on the food industry, most specifically through convenience goods. Thirdly, I draw on the theories of Warren Belasco (Food: The Key Concepts), who describes two possible scenarios for the future trajectory of the global food system, either through a technological fix or through an anthropological fix. Finally, in order to ground Belasco’s theories, I employ the opposing perspectives of British economist Paul Collier (technological fix) and Indian activist Vandana Shiva (anthropological fix) regarding the future of food and the food industry. These two authors highlight how globalization has influenced food in the last decades and how they would promote modifications of the current systems.
I then describe three key anti-globalization movements that help to frame the attitudes of consumers that then, in turn, influence the priorities of the markets: slow food, food sovereignty, and localism. In later chapters I argue that the city’s market system straddles the extreme perspectives, the global versus the local, and by so doing, advances their goals of continuing to thrive by providing access to healthy food for Barcelona neighborhoods now and in the future. Globalization is here to stay; however, this does not imply that the food system must inevitably become as completely commercialized and depersonalized as the current trajectory suggests—the markets can celebrate globalization by offering many types of foods and becoming involved in available international trade and organizations, while at the same time supporting local farmers and vendors and their more traditional way of life as it had developed locally.

**Globalization: History, Background and the Debate**

Globalization results from the interconnectedness of different cultures and changing contemporary economies. According to Lui Hebron and John F. Stack Jr.,

It is critical to emphasize that globalization is a multilayered process. It involves more than one of two dimensions of “say” economics or culture. It is also an historical process driven by the diffusion of science, knowledge, and technological applications and innovations over time. The exchange of goods, the development of trade routes, migration of peoples, the spread of information are all part and parcel of the historical process of globalization. The Internet, instantaneous 24-hour news stations, interconnected financial markets, the spread of communications and transportation systems, unprecedented integration of economic activities and the rise of increasingly important nonstate, transnational actors appear to differ in kind rather than simply by degree from earlier processes of globalization (Hebron and Stack, 2).

They uncover the complex role of globalization, and how it has evolved over centuries (think Christopher Columbus and the 15th century races to claim far-off lands and resources), the pace and scale of globalization today is greater than ever. Current globalization is focused around the
high usage of new technologies, such as transportation and communication and dictates much of our contemporary lives. Additionally, it is based on the amazing speed at which events and communication now occur, in turn allowing the flourishing of global markets and financial systems. In other words, it is much easier today to trade goods and services as well as finances and investments across borders than it had been in earlier times. Finally, due to the increased flow of goods, finances etc., the role of the state has become diminished because it can no longer dictate the terms of the interactions that occur between states or people. This is exemplified through the existence of MNCs or multinational corporations (Hebron and Stack, 3). Being cognizant of these three characteristics helps us to understand the path of globalization in the world today and how and why its proponents and critics have such opposing perspectives. Understanding the opposing arguments is pivotal to understanding the positives and negatives for whether or not the markets should become involved in a globalized food system.

Positive Aspects of Globalization: The Supporters

Supporters of globalization believe that opening up markets to liberalized trade will in turn help the flow of information and communication between countries and thus will improve many people’s lives. 1980s Western governments, spearheaded by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of the UK and US President Ronald Reagan, followed a neo-liberal perspective and disassembled trade barriers in order to facilitate the flow of trade and thus capital worldwide. By the 1990s these decisions, linked with the massive technological advancements explained earlier, had helped to connect companies worldwide, enabling greater and timelier capital flows. Supporters believe liberalized trade has the possibility to “raise the living standards via global production and consumerism; to bolster fundamental freedoms via the spread of democratic norms and institutions; and to decrease social strife via the development of global cosmopolitan
communities based on the acceptance of common, unifying cultural norms and values” (Hebron and Stack, 6). Specializing jobs and allowing each country to focus on what it does best will thus open up more avenues for trade, proponents believe, and contend that this formula will help to raise the standard of living of the entire global population. By providing less developed countries with the opportunity to produce or extract specific goods and sell them to consumers in more industrialized countries rather than just to local markets, they are able to increase revenues; thus, those producing countries benefit more and, in turn, are able to spend more on technologies and amenities from higher income nations, helping to raise the standard for all.

There is no doubt that these liberal policies helped to spur the global network of trade that now exists. It especially affected the global food system, instigating the trade of foodstuffs worldwide, pushing farmers to grow for export rather than for their nuclear communities. It is within this global food system that the Barcelona food markets are intertwining themselves in and are not attempting to quell. The Barcelona markets however, create a balance between the global system, based on these liberal policies, and the local, based on the traditional forms of food distribution and consumption, which ultimately is the key to their success. It is thus important to understand the steps that ultimately involved the markets in global trade and the positives and negatives within this international perspective.

**Negative Aspects of Globalization: The Opposition**

People who oppose globalization believe that it is eroding traditional cultures and allowing wealthy corporations free reign to exploit countries and their resources for their own private gain. These theorists envision a much darker process of global command and control of resources, reduced human achievement, and an increasing gulf between rich elites and exploited masses throughout the
world. The erosion of state sovereignty is a central concern as omnipotent international organizations increasingly dictate the rules and relationships of the new global economy, in which intergovernmental organizations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), and transnational/multinational corporations reign supreme (Hebron and Stack, 9).

Therefore, while globalizing the market economy made many countries and corporations wealthy, it had negative impacts on others and proved that the distribution of the wealth that is possible to make in a barrier-free trade economy does not reach everyone. A globalizing economy also causes unemployment in lower wage jobs that had been outsourced abroad, which negatively impacts local economies. The people and countries that are unstable are often not helped by the influence of globalization on their societies (Das, 33). Ellwood argues that while globalization is, in theory, positive for everyone and will ultimately bring the world prosperity and a greater sense of interconnectedness, the reality is much harsher. “Gaps between rich and poor are widening, decision-making power is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, local cultures are wiped out, biological diversity is destroyed, regional tensions are increasing and the environment is nearing the point of collapse…we have a global economic system that feeds on itself while marginalizing the fundamental human needs of people and communities” (Ellwood, 11). The important difference to note between the two arguments is that the former concentrates on economic prosperity and how through wealth anything is possible and the standard of living will increase; whereas the latter takes a more holistic view to include other issues besides the economy, such as local cultures and the environment.

These are thus two very different viewpoints concerning the influence of globalization on the world, but notwithstanding theoretical constructs, it is clear that globalization does have an empirical influence on the world not only through policies but also through the influence on people’s attitudes and their choices in daily life. It is indisputable that globalization has greatly
influenced the food industry, not only in terms of trans-national corporations that ship food worldwide and thus alter local consumer’s purchasing and eating habits, but also in terms of the new convenience that globalization has brought to purchasing and packaging. Globalization has made the process of food preparation much easier—for some it has even become a semi-mindless chore—and in the following section I will outline the role of convenience in the food industry and how that has influenced consumption habits worldwide as well as what it has meant more specifically for the changes to, and modernization of, the Barcelona markets.

**Globalization and the Food Industry**

**Convenience**

The food industry that exists today is a highly interconnected and worldwide web that allows goods to be shipped between nations, and for the most part, it follows the optimistic ideals of the globalized system—economic prosperity through expanded trade. Abundance and variety are norms for industrialized countries. Food is often bought at supermarkets and pre-packaged or bagged for the consumer’s convenience. According to Warren Belasco, this is all based on the human quest for “progress”; if our hunting and gathering is done for us and all we need to do is pay for it, then it is theoretically possible for humanity to take on other more important tasks and use our time efficiently. “In this frame, the modern food industry takes on the familiar mantle of the humble servant making life convenient for the master, only now the master is the ordinary citizen, not the decadent aristocrat” (Belasco, 59). Convenience is the end goal of the food industry, but by creating such packaged and perfect looking foods, the consumer becomes very disconnected from the original product. If it looks attractive, quality is often assumed. However,
there is very little transparency within the food industry; not only do we not oftentimes know where or from whom the food we put in our bodies comes, but how—or even if—the food is inspected, regulated, distributed and controlled is also basically unknown (Belasco, 59).

The globalization of the food industry has allowed the large companies to grow larger and larger, maximizing profits and market shares creating monopolies that remain unaccountable to consumers as a result of the laissez-faire policies of globalization. By creating processed food that so divorced from the elemental understanding of what food really is or looks like, “chain stores and restaurants [become]—elaborate institutional arrangements designed to maximize convenience, economies of scale, and profits, while minimizing interactions, competition, and consumer consciousness” (Belasco, 61). In other words, the industrialized and globalized food industry has removed the human connection under the guise of enhanced convenience, and has largely evaded regulatory oversight.

The effects of convenience foods, however, can be quite detrimental. Its impacts are felt not only on our health, but on the environment as well as on the people and economies of other countries, resulting in their reduced ability to produce food for themselves because they find themselves in competition with aggressive, savvy, and strategic multimillion dollar food industries. Although Barcelona’s public markets do not sell such processed, mass produced foods as described here, they are not ignoring this change in shoppers’ habits, and many vendors are now selling pre-cooked dishes to entice the consumers with convenience. The difference here is that while the Barcelona market vendors understand the faster pace of daily life and the need to have access to conveniences in food purchasing and preparation, the food is still controlled by the individual vendors who are accountable for food safety and quality. Globalization and the demand for greater “convenience” has penetrated the Barcelona markets, and both the local
government and community are reacting and responding to it in various ways (to be explained further in part III and IV); the markets are not impervious to these food trends but have developed their own paths to be successful vis a vis the wider system. The negative impacts of the global food industry however, must be addressed when talking about convenience foods because the goal to maximize corporate profit means that the consumer and the environment are the losers.

**Costs of Global Food Industry**

There are enormous unintended consequences associated with convenience foods. These costs, include, but are not confined to: the de-localization of food leading to a lack of producer and distributor accountability, loss of arable and bio-diverse land for farming partially due to land stealing by large monopolies, degradation of food sovereignty or healthy and culturally appropriate sustainable foods, a lack of connection between people and the food that they consume due to increased packaged/convenience goods, a nutrition transition to increasingly processed foods resulting in a rise in obesity and type two diabetes as well as other health side-effects both short and long term, exploited low-wage workers and a polluted, degraded environment, costs which are ignored by the global food industry. The consumer often assumes that it is the responsibility of the producer to market healthy foods, but with convenience food products, quality is sacrificed for quantity and food manufacturers take no further interest in their product once it is sold.

The de-localization of food production has created many negative changes in people’s diets and lifestyles. De-localization refers to the increasing amount of daily food imported from other cities and countries through commercial routes. While this often means that there is more
diversity and quantity of foods, the food is not supporting the local food infrastructure. In other words, the de-localization of foods helps further rely on the technology and communications of the global system, creating very little sovereignty or accountability within the local system (The Barcelona markets have evaded this issue by not entirely de-localizing their food system, and strive to link the global, or de-localized system, with their local system.) (Pelto and Pelto, 507-8).

It has also created a general dependence of people on this system, creating a network of unsustainable populations, each relying on one another for survival. This lack of accountability and dependence on the global food system brought on by the flow of convenience and packaged foods has also led to dire health consequences as well as environmental stresses, an issue too large to be addressed here.

Food-borne illness is a direct and visible result that comes from lack of corporate responsibility for its food products, itself due to how the food chain has been organized and globalized. “Intimate threats such as food poisoning are directly linked to the length and complexity of the food chain, so even if we start with our own stomachs, the local quickly becomes global” (Belasco, 84). The food produced in an industrialized way is much more susceptible to food-borne microbes, creating health issues that may be chronic (emerge in the long-term) or acute (emerge in the short term). Either way, the burden of the cost of the unhealthy industrialized food can be hugely burdensome to a society financially—in terms of health care costs—as well as emotionally. Yet these expenses are never computed as part of the true cost of convenience foods.¹

¹ Although there is no concrete figure that estimates the social costs of food-borne illnesses to the community, Nestle did acknowledge its importance. “Whatever the correct figure may be, it surely underestimates the costs to the victims in pain and inconvenience; to taxpayers in medical treatment for the indigent, higher health insurance premiums, public health surveillance systems, and investigations of outbreaks (estimated at US$200,000 each); and
Another cost of convenience foods can be seen in the worldwide nutrition transition in large part due to increased urbanization. The rise of the urban center pushes workers off the land into the cities (decreasing diverse food producers), creating a nutrition transition towards high fat diets and cheap vegetable oils. Although the tendency towards sweets and fats is innately human, when readily and excessively available the health consequences can be dire (Drewnowski and Popkin, 41). Urban lifestyles increase the reliance of eating processed convenience foods which contain heavy amounts of fats and oils that are often disguised within the various food items through misleading labels. Reduced physical activity for urban versus rural workers only adds to the detrimental health related outcomes of consuming increased amounts of convenience foods.

In order to reduce these kinds of health problems, more responsibility needs to be taken by the food industry; proponents suggest the food producers allocate some of their profits to improving the living/growing situations for the animals/vegetables as well as conditions for the workers who care for and harvest them. The issue lies in the nutrition and safety of the food versus the price of food, and currently safety and good nutrition are sacrificed for cost. The environment also suffers greatly as a result of the industrialized food system. Water shortages, soil degradation, crop and pest resistance to herbicides and insecticides, and monocultures all have serious adverse effects on the local ecology. These impacts are beyond the scope of this paper, it is clear they are very important subjects that need to be addressed when discussing convenience foods. The complex consequences for human welfare will become increasingly prominent issues for the future.
The Barcelona public markets avoid the impersonality and de-localizing effects by cultivating the trust of the consumer by establishing responsibility for all links in the process of delivering food. The community perceives that markets are providing healthier and better quality food, and they understand the interconnections between grower, vendor, and consumer, avoiding pre-packaged convenience foods. In the following paragraph I discuss the two theories presented by Belasco to help analyze the dueling perspectives on the food industry; they will in turn give context to analyzing the different tactics of the Barcelona markets and how they balance the global and local perspectives in order to be successful.

**Theory: The Debate**

*Technological Fix*

Taking into account the high amounts of external costs to the health of people and the environment caused by the current practices in the global food industry, futurists are developing scenarios to help guide the changes that must occur to improve human health and environment degradation. There are two main scenarios, as put forth by Belasco, the so-called technological fix and the anthropological fix. They differ on how to deal with the upcoming crises but have the same goals—to produce sufficient healthy food that is widely and easily accessible for the growing world population. Proponents of the technological fix believe that the intelligence of humankind will enable us to devise and implement new technologies that will help us escape from the problems caused by the globalization of the food industry. “Infinite needs can be met by

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2 According to Jonathan A. Foley, “Recent studies suggest that production would need to roughly double to keep pace with projected demands from population growth, dietary changes (especially meat consumption), and increasing bioenergy use, unless there are dramatic changes in agricultural consumption patterns” (Foley).
humanity’s infinite creativity, especially if we let markets work. Given the right economic incentives, there will always be someone who will figure out how to produce more food” (Belasco, 115), and “Anything can and will be fixed through innovation because ‘nature’ is not our ally in this fight to produce more, so it must be fought and dominated at every turn” (Belasco, 115). With that perspective, the technological fix does not focus on earth’s diminishing resources, but on scientific ingenuity to feed ourselves. It proposes that we will accomplish these far-reaching innovations through large-scale farming in order to reap larger profits which can in turn be put towards agricultural research and development.

The most promising areas of the technological fix are based on genetic engineering, microtechnology, and nanotechnology. “Armed with their new ‘smart’ tools, scientists will overcome, and perhaps undo environmental damages wrought by earlier generations. For example, plants can be redesigned to resist the new diseases fostered by industrial monoculture and even to flourish in salinized soils, overgrazed deserts, deforested jungles, polluted air, or eroded plains” (Belasco, 116). In addition, animals can be engineered to eat less and resist disease, and even humans will be able to consume foods engineered to have medicines and nutrients in them (Belasco, 118). Proponents of the technological fix believe that humans have the capability to overcome all of these road blocks.

**Anthropological Fix**

Proponents of the anthropological fix theorize a less expansive and glamorous approach to feeding future populations: instead of using new technology to create more, we should realize that we need less. In other words, the anthropological fix is based on changing peoples’ values. “For guidance and inspiration it looks to traditional wisdom, not modernist bravura” (Belasco,
188). It seeks to hark back to the time before industrialization and scientific technology became a part of producing food; it is a desire to reconnect with nature rather than to distance itself from it. The anthropological approach argues that people can and will change but also realizes that food is not solely a commodity and that in order for us and the planet to remain healthy, we must begin to eat lower on the food chain. The anthropological fix is grounded in a sense of communal—indeed, global—responsibility, and understanding that the food chain is finite and a closed link, people will have to accept food that may not be as physically attractive, nor as convenient, and emphasize the consuming of food that is seasonal and is grown nearby. The payoff, it theorizes, is higher quality food, increased food safety, greater trust in producers, and a healthier planet.

In return for giving up the unlimited options of the modern market, we will get food that may be fresher, healthier, and safer. Since food will not have to travel thousands of miles from farm to fork, it will retain more of its original taste, appearance, and nutrients. Energy costs will be reduced, and regional farm communities will be revived, with a resultant rebirth of the agrarian values though to be lost in the urban-industrial age...if your farmer, baker, or butcher knows you, she is less likely to poison or cheat you. And if you know your farmer you are more likely to be sympathetic to the environmental, labor, and economic challenges of food production. This reduction in “distancing” will thus reduce the alienation, ignorance, and blame shifting fostered by the global food chain (Belasco, 122).

This scenario realizes the importance of food in people’s lives and seeks to challenge the existing trajectory of the global food industry. It embraces the “true costs” of food for the farmers, consumers, and the environment by educating people about the state of the planet and acknowledging a sense of responsibility.

These two scenarios outline the theoretical background and ideology of the two schools of thought concerning food and the current food industry. From opposite ends of the spectrum they help us to realize the impact that globalization has had with regard to feeding ourselves, and
gives us an opportunity to evaluate future possibilities. It is now crucial to understand these two theories in concrete terms: economist Paul Collier, an advocate for the technological fix, believes that in order to feed the world changes must be made, and those changes must rely on agribusiness and genetic technology. Vandana Shiva feels that industrialized production is destroying future possibilities for humanity and planet survival. She is a proponent for the anthropological approach which relies on traditional small-scale agricultural practices. Through analyzing these two authors and their distinct viewpoints, it will be possible to assess the influence of globalization on the food industry and understand what needs to be done next. I will later argue that the market system as such in Barcelona provides the perfect bridge between these two extreme viewpoints and offers the most practical and realistic system for the production and distribution of healthy and environmentally sustainable food.

The Debate: Argued by Collier

Commercial/Bigger Farms

Paul Collier, an economist at Oxford University, in 2010 wrote the book, *The Plundered Planet*, in which he explores how to manage nature in order to ensure global prosperity. Chapter Ten, “Nature and Hunger,” suggests ways in which the global population must change the current approach to food production, otherwise the world will go hungry with the increasing population, diminishing resources and environmental concerns. He believes that there are three main issues (I will address the first two pertinent ones here) that keep food production at its current pace, and if these issues are not tackled, vast numbers of the world’s population will starve. In his view, these problems stem from “the romantics,” people who believe in holism,
self-sufficiency, and small-scale farming, and their influence on policy and the public. He believes that this approach will skew the world towards famine. In order to avoid this he suggests three solutions: create bigger farms, legalize and embrace GMO (genetically modified organism) foods, and find fuel from something other than grains. Idealized farm life and organic products, he argues, is simply a “luxury brand,” and it makes more sense to create large scale farms both because the average farmer does not want to be an entrepreneur but also because “[t]echnology is constantly evolving; investment is lumpy; consumer food fashions are fast-changing and met by integrated marketing chains; and regulatory standards are rising toward the Holy Grail of traceability of produce back to source. All these modern developments are better suited to large, commercial organizations” (Collier, 213). Not only can large farms take on these fads in the global market, but due to their size they have more financial stability and can thus afford to buy necessary farming inputs (Collier, 217).

Collier also believes that by creating large commercial farms, innovation and improvements to farming will increase as a result of two factors. Firstly, research stations can be established to target changing needs, and secondly, it is easier and more likely for commercial agriculture farms to communicate about innovations and make the appropriate changes (Collier, 214-15). In addition, because he believes that “large farms are the supermarkets of agriculture,” they are essential because food is no longer produced for the local, but rather for the global, and only large farms can meet this level of demand (Collier, 217). All of these arguments for large scale commercial farming fall under the technological fix for the future; he believes in increasing the amount of cultivated land and doing so on an industrial scale as the only way to get more food into the global food supply.
**GM Foods**

The other issue that Collier sees as a hindrance to the technological fix is the attitude of “the romantics” against GM (genetically modified) crops. Europe and much of Africa have banned GM crops and he sees three main adverse results—it slows food production, impedes funding for future research, and has impeded Africa’s “biological revolution,” the result of the continent’s acquiescence to the European ban in order to keep the Euro market. Africa needs GM, he argues (Collier, 221). Collier perceives this loss as a waste of technology and production and believes that a paranoid European population whose resistance to GM crops he sees as archaic and unrealistic, provoked this reaction. He puts part of the blame on the UK’s Prince Charles, a proponent of organic agriculture. “His [Prince Charles’] views on GM reflect his broader opposition to scientific-commercial agriculture. His vision is, of course, appealing to those of us hemmed into modern industrial life. But watching the aristocracy farm in imitation of the ways of a bygone rural society, another image crept into my mind: that of Marie Antoinette playing at being a dairy maid in Versailles. It soothes the soul, but does not feed the stomach” (Collier, 221). GM crops have been available worldwide since 1996 and cover approximately 300 million acres. By not participating in this technology, Collier believes the world is worse off because technology is the only element that would help suppress global food prices by keeping enough food on the market (Collier, 220).

Collier’s main goal is to keep enough food within the global food chain so that prices will be kept down for the “bottom billion,” the one billion people of the world for whom daily living and finding sufficient and healthy food is a hardship. He argues that technology, global food production, and international trade is the answer and anything less than that will not be enough. The “soul soothing” organic agriculture is a luxury food item, he claims, and it is attracting
converts to this “unrealistic love-affair with peasant agriculture” which results in those converts restricting commercial agriculture and GM research and development.

**Analysis**

Collier is thinking in broad strokes—he does not provide sufficient evidence that the technological fix should be the solution and that small-scale farming is not helpful to people and communities. He knows that hungry people exist in the world and calculates that if more food is able to be produced through the aid of technology and the global food system, then that will solve the issue. He does not address (or possibly does not understand) the full implications of creating large commercial farms that serve to force out rural/subsistence farmers, or the lack of scientific studies on GM foods and how they affect our bodies and the planet. Collier believes that technology and human innovation will be what will save the world from starvation and collapse. His perspective seems to be the dominant ideology, and as a result, the global food monopolies continue to thrive. Supermarket chains and interconnected/international food trade are no doubt here for the long-term, so for that reason, it is important that the Barcelona public markets strive to be a part of the global system, but in a more human-centric way, resisting its troublesome elements through commitments to local communities and consumers, and thus responding to the influence of the anthropological fix as well. In opposition to Collier’s argument, Vandana Shiva takes a very different perspective towards food production and distribution and how globalization affects the future of food.
The Debate: Argued by Shiva

On the other side of the debate, Vandana Shiva, environmental activist, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and Indian physicist, explores the “Hijacking of the Global Food Supply” in her book *Stolen Harvest*. Unlike Collier, she believes that commercial/industrial agriculture has turned into monopoly businesses and cannot help feed the world; at the same time she believes that agribusiness is destroying livelihoods, cultures, and freedoms. These corporations, she claims are “stealing nature’s harvest” through genetic engineering and patenting seeds and are destroying rural/subsistence farmers from being as independent and self-sufficient as they have for centuries. She believes in the anthropological fix for the future of the world’s food supply: she does not see the biocentric model as a “luxury,” and she believes that giving power back to the farmer is the best way to ensure sufficient food. The culprit in this case is the globalized food industry, she argues: “Hidden behind complex free-trade treaties are innovative ways to steal nature’s harvest, the harvest of the seed, and the harvest of nutrition” (Shiva, 6). She believes that it is this corporate intervention that is destroying livelihoods. I will now outline Shiva’s argument against monoculture and GMO’s, opinions in stark contrast to those of Collier.

*Biodiversity*

Shiva, true to the anthropological fix perspective, believes that biodiversity and smaller farms/many farmers are the answer to global food issues. The mono-cropping and the commercial/industrial farms of which Collier favors are what Shiva is working against, because she views all the processes of food as interconnected. Of the approximately 300,000 species of plants that exist, 10 to 50,000 of them are edible today, and only four species—rice, corn, wheat, and soy—nurture the majority of the world (Shiva, 79). Variety, however, provides the true
cornerstone for innovation on the farm: it allows farmers to interact with different kinds of species, and cross breed according to the characteristics desired. Elaborate scientific research facilities are not needed, she believes, and communication and information sharing will occur between farmers, not between commercial food conglomerates. Monocultures, are the gateway to most of the problems with the food industry today.

Industrial agriculture promotes the use of monocultures because of its need for centralized control over the production and distribution of food. In this way, monocultures and corporate monopolies reinforce each other. Today, three processes are intensifying monopoly control over seed, the first link in the food chain: economic concentration, patents and intellectual property rights, and genetic engineering (Shiva, 80-1).

Contrary to Collier, she believes that large commercial farms that produce one kind of crop are destroying not only the centuries of hard work by farmers but also their futures. Rather than focusing on their local consumers, those industrial farms are concentrating outward, towards the global economy and the global food system, a chain that, the longer it gets, the more disenfranchised and powerless the farmer, the actual food producer, becomes. Monoculture farming is favored by large corporations such as Monsanto and Cargill, which are driven by the ‘business’ part of agri-business, and thus try to patent new strains, keeping any new knowledge for themselves and suing those who might infringe. In contrasts, in a more traditional farm, the farmers themselves would create new variants and then would share that knowledge; the example Shiva uses is the Basmati rice strain. Corporate farms such as Monsanto have even created terminator seeds, seeds that cannot reproduce forcing farmers to buy seeds year after year from suppliers rather than using last year’s crop to help seed the crop for the next year. It is this

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3 Complaining against these large monoculture monopolies, African governments wrote statements in disagreement: “We do not believe that such companies or gene technologies will help our farmers to produce the food that is needed in the 21st century. On the contrary, we think they will destroy the diversity, the local knowledge, and the sustainable agriculture system that our farmers have developed for millennia and that they will thus undermine our
manipulation of the natural process of food production that Shiva is arguing against, especially when it comes to genetically modified crops.

Anti-GM

Shiva believes that genetic engineering and GM crops are one of the most damaging ways to keep the world population fed. The main arguments for the existence of GM crops are that they can feed the world, have lower herbicide and pesticide usage, and are safe. Shiva’s research contradicts these assumptions. First, biotech industries claim that they can “feed the world” but, according to Clive James, biotech industry consultant, “transgenic crops are not engineered for higher yields. Fifty-four percent of the increase in transgenic crops is for those engineered for herbicide resistance, or rather, the increased use of herbicides, not increased food” (Shiva, 103). According to her calculations, only approximately 65 percent of GM crops are food. In addition, anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s studies on 22 farming systems discovered that the best way to increase production is to create a closed-circle system, where biodiversity and labor input are the key ingredients, not engineering and pesticides (Shiva, 99).

Proponents of GM crops also tout the assumption that they require fewer chemicals. However, “evidence is already available that rather than controlling weeds, pests, and diseases, genetic engineering increases chemical use and can create superweeds, superpests, and superviruses” (Shiva, 98), because although the plants that are selected for growing are herbicide/pesticide resistant, they still require application of chemicals to kill whatever pests are menacing, and over time the crops become resistant, and more intensive application of chemicals is continuously needed. Dousing our crops in chemicals may pose serious risks to the health of
our bodies, to the workers that care for the crops, and to the environment as well. Because GM is a relatively new product (1996, according to Collier), there have still been very few studies on their safety. Those that have occurred were mostly done by visual observation as there is an extreme lack of transparency by these corporations. In addition, Shiva claims that,

> Upon consumption, the genetically engineered DNA of these foods can break down and enter the bloodstream. It has long been assumed that the human gut is full of enzymes that can rapidly digest DNA. But in a study designed to test the survival of viral DNA in the gut, mice were fed DNA from a bacterial virus, and large fragments were found to survive the passage through the gut and to enter the bloodstream. Further studies indicate that the ingested DNA can end up in the spleen and liver cells as well as in white blood cells (Shiva, 102-3).

Therefore, unlike the assumptions concerning the enhanced crop yields and relative harmlessness of GM crops that Collier believes can help to increase production and aid Africa and all parts of the developing world, Shiva presents many cautionary documents about how little we know and thus how little we should trust GM crops and the corporations that engineer them for sale. Instead, Shiva follows the anthropological fix for the future food system and relies on tradition and holism to solve the world’s food production issues.

**Analysis**

By promoting local agricultural development and supporting rural and small farms, Shiva aligns herself against the impact of globalization on the food system. She might view the Barcelona public markets as dabbling to too great an extent in the international realm and by doing so not concentrating enough on their own communities. Because some of the renovated markets welcome supermarkets that offer globalized and processed, she might challenge these innovations and emphasize the localism in past markets and how that should be prioritized and continued. However, I believe that it is detrimental to take such hard-lined and unwavering
perspectives on the ever-changing food industry; the markets are a constantly evolving enterprise and must adapt in order to avoid becoming obsolete. While they still strongly support the local, as promoted by Shiva, they also communicate and trade internationally, as proposed by Collier, and, I believe the balance between these two extreme points of view has created a successful formula.

In response to the integration of food systems worldwide, many anti-globalization movements have sprouted. They are important to address because they contextualize the markets and their understanding and reinforcement of the different perspectives and alternatives to global food. Although slow food and food sovereignty movements frame the markets’ perspective, I believe localism is the primary anti-globalization movement that manifests in the markets; localism concentrates on the preservation of community, a strong component of the Barcelona markets’ agenda.

Responses and Movements Against the Globalization of Food

As a result of the takeover of the globalized food system, there have been strong responses by people concerned primarily about slow food, food sovereignty, and the importance of localism and community. While Collier is so concerned with feeding the world, he forgets to take into consideration all of the side effects that creating and emphasizing a solely globalized food system can create or exacerbate. In this section I put forth the concepts and issues concerning slow food, food sovereignty and localism; although I believe that only the last issue, localism, is clearly apparent within the context of the Barcelona markets, it is important to understand the others as important context in the reactions to the globalization of food. While the
Barcelona markets do not reject globalization, most of their reasons for participating in the global food supply, are to continue to support the health of the city residents and their neighborhoods. Following the anthropological fix and Shiva’s point of view, the following three issues are some of the most fundamental to understand in order to view the trajectory of the movement against the globalization of food.

Slow Food Movement

The Slow Food Movement, established in 1989 by the Italian Carlo Petrini, seeks to “help people grow, produce, and consume the right kind of food” (Kummer, 22). It strives to support people who are preserving the tastes and traditions of the local area in which they live; “people who are betting on themselves and their ability to overcome the obstacles of the modern world, so that they can grow and share the food of a land to which they feel passionately connected” (Kummer, 16). It is based in the appreciation of pleasure, and that food can create happiness, community, and better lives. Chapters are established locally in towns and cities, headed by a leader who joins interested parties together; “The job of the chapter is to encourage the maintenance of local food and wine traditions; to safeguard the local agricultural patrimony against environmental degradations; to help consumers find good food and wine at a reasonable price; and to research and promote gastronomic pleasure with a ‘smiling, tolerant style’” (Kummer, 23). This movement began in response to the globalization of food and the introduction of McDonalds in Italian cities, and it embodies the direct challenge to fast, packaged, and industrial foods (Kummer 20-1). While the Barcelona markets and its consumers help to support these ideals, it is not guaranteed that the foods for sale there are all local (this will be expanded upon later in the paper), but it does help to support the previous consumption and buying traditions of the locale as well as supporting the community growth and individual
businesses instead of supporting the growth of international conglomerates. Therefore, while the influence and appeal exists for this kind of local food involvement, the markets do not, and most likely cannot, uphold all of its goals.

**Food Sovereignty**

The food sovereignty movement was established in 1993 in Belgium by the agrarian advocacy group Via Campesina which strives to give power back to local farmers and consumers in order that this will, in turn, create a healthier community and allow people the right to feed themselves. Schanbacher explains: “This movement advocates and embodies a local-, family-, and community-based ethic that stresses the values of sustainability, interdependence, environmental protections, and local protection for local consumption. To a certain extent these values are increasingly at odds with an industrialized, corporate-driven rationale of individual autonomy, profiteering, and unfettered consumption” (Schanbacher, x). It embraces the human element in the creation and consumption of food. In this view, the only way to continue to feed the poor and hungry is not to industrialize, but rather to give power to the locals in order for them to be able to grow and eat their own local foods, following their local and national traditions. By fostering small scale sustainable production farming, these farmers are able to retain their own healthy and culturally appropriate food, and need not rely on the global food system and convenience or packaged foods to stay nourished and healthy. Small scale farms also help to maintain close connections between consumers and producers/distributors, further cultivating consumers’ health and experience. As explained earlier, a cost of the globalized food system is the displacement of these kinds of small farms creating unintended consequences such as de-localization, consumption of convenience foods which can in turn create dire health (and environmental) issues. Organizations such as Via Campesina are fundamental for uniting
disenfranchised farmers and are fighting back against global food systems and making their cause known. It is based in the protection of local farmers within their nation and their food, while the Slow Food movement concentrates more on the pleasures of food and supporting the traditions and land that produce that food.

By continuing to contribute money and workers to the restoration and management of the markets, the municipal government of Barcelona is trying to ensure that the food sovereignty of the local foods and traditions that pertain to consumption are not lost. The markets still provide an enormous amount of local and nationally derived foods, and thus are supporting the ‘local, family, and [the] community’, but are also cognizant of modern trends and the need to incorporate themselves into that niche as well. They, in other words, cannot and do not wish to become elite or specialized markets for the wealthy; they wish to support all economic levels of the local communities by providing good foodstuffs. This also enables many entrepreneurs to run their own business, something that would not exist otherwise. Therefore, they are striving to support the ideals of food sovereignty as much as possible while remaining realistic and tuned to their target communities.

Local Food as a Social Movement

Although this is not as defined a movement as the other two noted above, the emphasis and enthusiasm for local foods can create a sense of collective identity among members of a community. Starr, quoting Melucci states, “Collective identity involves ‘making emotional investments, which enable individuals to recognize themselves in each other’” (Starr, 482). He is thus describing an internal connection that people have with their close community and their need and want to support the people within that circle. In the context of local foods, once people
began to realize their connection to the way food reached them and who got it to them had diminished so significantly, many understood that in order to personalize the consumer, food connection, they needed to support the community of people involved in that food chain. By buying better products this in turn supports the vendors and farmers, and finally reflects on and affects the consumer by providing healthier and more accessible products. Starr explains:

The ‘we’ of the local food movement had two moments of recognition; on a national level an identity appeared in the struggle for appropriate federal organic standards that challenged “regulatory occupation” of its ideas. Without unifying, it then transformed, using ideas developed through dense but disconnected networks to move to a new analysis, a new “goal”: accountable, verifiable, safe food, in which the farmers retain agronomic authority and economic benefit. The “means” utilized changed from “symbol schemes” and “certification” to interpersonal trust and farm visits. Meanwhile, the “environment” in which this all was to take place was refined; personal relations between consumers (and their children) and farmers became the context for food purchases. The second moment of recognition is less easily pinned down in time (and varied regionally), but it took shape through the emergence of a new kind of quality food, which carried specific values, relationships, and methods. Its means were constraints: seasonality, regionality, accomplished by close attachments to specific markets and farmers. Its values have shifted from predictability and standardization to historicity, diversity, and meaning (Starr, 482).

It is, in short, an effort by people to connect to their food by meeting and learning to have confidence in the people who sell it and/or produce it, and, through these connections, they thus gain something more from the experience because they are contributing to the “we” of their collective identity. These are the aspects that the Barcelona markets support most specifically. The government strives to maintain the community by keeping the markets alive and thriving, and they are able to do so because the individual members of the community support the markets because of their products, vendors, and the importance of the relationships and trust they have built with the vendors. Therefore, while there is a top-down approach to stimulate the markets by the government that often must be supported and maintained by connecting internationally, there is also a bottom-up mentality of the individual consumers that stems from the collective identity in the neighborhoods and the wish to support the local market.
The markets combine all of these movements’ ideals and solidify them into one cohesive and functioning network of food sellers. While many of the concepts of localism, community building, and preservation of traditions are indeed a fundamental aspect of the markets, these are not sufficient for complete sustainability. Because the public markets are serving 60-65 million people yearly, the vendors must offer products that compare favorably with what the supermarkets offer, and thus are a viable alternative for food shopping for many citizens. Again, it is a delicate balance: by supporting the local as well as the global, yet by not committing to any extreme ideologies, they are able to transform themselves and be as successful in this era as they were in the last, and hopefully will also be in the future. In the following section I provide the necessary background to give the reader a context for the analysis of the Barcelona market system.
Part II-Historical Context

Global Context

At the most basic level, markets throughout history have simply been a means of facilitating nourishment of the population, a process that each individual must go through daily in order to survive. However, they are of course more than that, providing social interactions as well as a perspective on the lives of the members of the culture that buy at that market—for in many ways food is a reflection of the people that eat it. The choices individuals make as well as the choices that they are able to make about what they eat, depends, in part, on the origins of the produce consumed. The market is the representation of all of these elements.

they allow us to recognize a way of life and form of social and economic organization common to the peoples who live there…[markets] reveal themselves to us as transmitters of cultures and know-how of proven efficacy; they act as forums for communications and the interchange of impressions and sensations and are places in which social sensibilities and a diversity of cultures are expressed and mixed. Places where, in short, behavioral formulae—not merely commercial in nature, but also social, political, juridical and ideological—take form and manifest themselves in all their strength (Claret, 207).

Markets are often a microcosm of the daily lives and traditions of the local people, they serve as a place for citizens to convene and socialize as well as fulfilling their shopping needs in a forum that supports the identity of the consumer. It is within this context of nutrition and social interactions that markets stand today as they have for hundreds of years.

In this section I will elaborate on the history of urban food market, following them from the Greeks, Romans, and Arabs, to Europe (Great Britain and France specifically) during the early 20th century, and finally moving on specifically to Spain and Barcelona. I will then briefly describe the basic physical and functional layout of markets. It is crucial to situate the current market system within the context of its history; not only are many of the markets historical, but
their lineage and ongoing use helps to emphasize their importance within communities and neighborhoods. An examination of its history provides insight into the impact and dynamism of the market system.

**Greeks**

The word *market* originally comes from the Latin word *mercatus*, meaning “the place or...the form of contact between the people who buy and the people who sell” (Contreras, 211). Although the origin of the market is not concretely known, there were likely two types of markets that were first used as centers of commerce. According to Contreras, the first kind originated outside the city and thus was more connected with goods from outside its borders, such as sheep and goat herders. The second type made its home within city limits, and thus the products through those markets were connected with food products raised locally. The markets of today seem to be a combination of these two forerunners. Markets were also originally often seasonal, depending on the harvest of perishable foods, and could be dictated by the location of the herders and pastors (Contreras, 211). Some of the original markets, or *agoras*, began in Athens, Greece and took place within the plazas and main squares; they consisted primarily of food that had been previously cooked: it was a place for the citizens to convene and eat. “The agora-type market was originally a place where the population gathered to eat. Fresh milk, eggs, vegetables, fish and meat were sold, and frequently the food was already prepared. In general, the products on sale came from nearby areas, and in farming societies it was the women who took charge of bringing the goods to market” (Contreras, 212). After the Mycenae era (1900-1100 BCE), it was not uncommon for kiosks to set up on the edge or periphery of city plazas to sell their goods. The stores were visible and accessible to all city dwellers and it became a norm for many to go to these plazas to purchase the produce they needed. “Since classical Greece the
market has played a key role in urban economy, characterized by the need for the guarantee of supplies and necessary raw materials at a good price for all members of society” (Contreras, 212). The central plaza has thus been a meeting place and a resource for people to interact economically and socially for hundreds of years.

In many cases the original uses for marketplaces and plazas were not just meeting places for the population, but were also temple squares. The link between religion and markets has been continued over time, as religious events often gave people centers or community spaces, and thus the jump from a religious space to a public space was minimal. “The earliest records show that aside from being devoted to religion, the temple area also functioned as a kind of market place…on market day temporary stalls and stands were set up in the centre. With the growing economy and commerce the functions of the Agora were further expanded and the place came to represent the most important element if the city” (Sepic, 242). The religious centers became synonymous with meeting places, and later market places, and over time became the first place to have permanent, and covered, locations. This place was called the stoa, and provided shelter from the elements for the buyers and sellers of the era. “With time, the Agora was enclosed and separated from the city by a long colonnaded portico” (Sepic, 242). Over the years, visually and architecturally, the agoras would change shape and style, but would always remain as centers of commerce and trade, of food and other items. These traditions and ways of exchange were executed by many other cultures with similar ways of life and have continued as the basis for the markets that exist today.
Romans

The Roman equivalent of the marketplace was called a forum. It began as a place of shelter for merchants who traveled from place to place. They were able to hawk their wares in these places as well as feed and rest themselves and their horses. Over time, the forum transformed into a permanent market, or many markets that were located close together and all called various names; in larger towns the name of the market reflected what was sold there (Contreras, 212). “So, in Rome there is the Forum Boarum (Butchers Square), the Forum Holitorum (Green Square), the Forum Vinarium (Wine Square), and the Forum Pistorum (Corn Square)” (Sepic, 243). Around this time, the fish and meat square also became known as the macellum, becoming the first general all food market of the time. While the exact date of the first macellum is unknown, there was a fire in 179 BCE that destroyed the building where it was housed, allowing us to extrapolate from that historical event (Izquierdo, 7). The influence of the Romans and their traditions was spread due to their conquests, and it is a culture whose traditions can still be seen today in situ, especially as pertains to food distribution.
Arabs

Antique Arabia was the crossroads for many different types of commercial exchanges such as fairs, urban and rural souks that have been maintained and have evolved over time. The original type of market place in Arabia was a fair that occurred either monthly or annually and was filled mostly with exotic products brought from distances away: it was not a local or daily market. “During the pre-Islamic period, this practice was very common throughout the Arabian Peninsula, and formed the base of their political organization and wealth” (Jah, 222). No doubt it was these larger fairs that stimulated the locals into organizing their own market systems, referred to as souks. At their peak in the 9th century, souks in urban settings were permanently organized along the streets. “In Muslim souks the stands are arranged along the narrow streets according to trade as well as the products (fruits, spices, milk and cheese and so forth), giving each little souk a specific identity within the urban market” (Jah, 224). The streets were often named by the names of the souks that had been there.

Figure 4: Gabes Market, Tunisia
As with the Greek markets, there was much prepared food that was available for consumption; mirkas (lamb sausage) and harissa (meat and wheat soup), cakes and fritters, were some of the common foods. Where people eat, they also tend to congregate; therefore the urban souks also became points for meeting and socializing, a place for social relations to occur. According to Jah, the squares where many of the souks were located were also used as cultural points for the public; poets, storytellers, acrobats, and astrologers all convened there for public entertainment (Jah, 224). The souks thus served a double purpose in Arabia as well, they provided the public with food, both fresh and pre-prepared, and they also served as points of social and cultural interest, places where people could convene for pleasure and business, giving the city organization and points of focus for the citizens. This dual purpose remains a crucial element in the markets of today.

Europe and the Onset of Modernity

Markets in European cities began to appear at the beginning of the 19th century and became more common around the middle of the century, but their true golden age came around the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. They helped to signify the transformation to modernity and capitalism through the innovation and business possibilities that accompanied them. At the time, “They came to be one of the clearest manifestations of municipal pride, of architectural innovation, urban renovation and new forms of commercialism in the capitalist city” “Llegaron a convertirse en una de las más claras manifestaciones del orgullo municipal, de la innovación arquitectónica, de la renovación urbana y de las nuevas formas comerciales de la ciudad capitalista” (Gúardia and Oyón, 11). They helped to fuel the cities that were to evolve and form the way that
communities within the cities were shaped: socially, as a focal point for citizens, as well as economically, providing jobs and economic possibilities for many others. Physically the markets helped to alter the ways that cities were constructed, making avenues and squares in line with the creation of the markets. Gúardia and Oyón elaborate:

From an urban perspective, the covered market of this time came to be the intermediary step between the plaza—or the plazas—of the open air market, the authentic heart of the preindustrial city, and the actual commercial zones or pedestrian or modern commercial centers of the periphery; that is to say, the transition between the sociability of the street and an environment equipped in the interior with these [modern] devices.

Desde el punto de vista urbano, el Mercado cubierto de esta época vino a ser el paso intermedio entre la plaza—o las plazas—de mercado al aire libre, auténtico corazón de la ciudad preindustrial, y las actuales zonas comerciales o peatonales o los modernos centros comerciales de la periferia; es decir, la transición entre una sociabilidad de calle y una ambientalmente acondicionada en el interior de estos artefactos (Gúardia and Oyón, 11-2).

These markets reshaped the way that cities were perceived and gave the population a sense of community and pride. As the above authors noted, it also gave the city a heart, and I would go so far to say that it helped give each community a sense of identification with their local neighborhood. Gúardia and Oyón put it succinctly by saying that even the word market itself invokes many different “possibilities for analysis,” calling it an “observatorio privilegiado” or privileged observatory, because through the context of the market it is possible to observe the...
architecture of the time (analyzing modernity as well as technology), the city (through the government involvement and the physical construction of the city), and finally the society (by viewing the social and economic interactions that stem from the existence of the market and how it helps to create human relationships). The personality and the significance of the markets have changed little over the years, although the forerunners for these buildings originated most significantly in Great Britain and France, neighboring countries to Spain.

**Great Britain**

The cities within Great Britain were at the forefront of constructing enclosed markets in the early years of their existence. Markets were initially covered in an effort to clean and straighten up the dirty parts of the city, making everything more transparent and comfortably accessible.

The markets were enclosed to free up the streets and the plazas from the invasion of the buyers and sellers, to eliminate obstacles for passing and looking, in agreement with the ideal of transparency. Within the new covered markets, the stalls were organized, facilitating circulation, and [the markets] guaranteed hygienic conditions and looked for, in certain ways, the ideal of transparency and control at a glance.

*Se encerraron así los mercados para liberar las calles y las plazas de la invasión de compradores y vendedores, para eliminar obstáculos al paso y a la mirada de acuerdo con ese ideal de transparencia. Dentro de los nuevos mercados cubiertos se ordenaron los puestos, se facilitó la circulación, se garantizaron las condiciones higiénicas y se buscó en cierto modo ese ideal de transparencia a la mirada y al control* (Gúardia and Oyón, 19-20).

It was an impetus to begin to modernize the city. England embraced this philosophy and between 1751 and 1800 they constructed 11% of their markets. But the next hundred years saw even more remarkable growth: during the construction boom between 1801 and 1900 430 of the approximately 530 markets in the country were built, or 81.2% (the majority of the markets are no longer extant, or the buildings have been transformed for other uses). From then on the construction frenzy abated and between 1901 and 1950 only about 7.8% of the city’s markets
were erected. Many of these markets were conceived for mixed use, in other words, not just allotted to food, but to other items as well. Many also were used primarily as wholesale markets. The main style of architecture for these markets was designed by Charles Fowler around the 1830s (before Fowler the architecture varied more). France was not far behind in the race to create their own market system.

![Figure 6: Covent Garden Market, London. The architect was Charles Fowler.](image)

**France**

France, too, created a large network of markets that supported the citizens’ needs. Between 1801 and 1851 the French took on 253 market projects, including both the repair/restoration of old markets or the creation of new ones, in the process changing the face of 122 cities across the country (Gúardia and Oyón, 24). These markets, unlike those in England, served as both wholesale as well as retail citizen markets, making their influence a bit more hands-on. Around 1850, the designer Baltard presented a new type of market, made of glass and
iron, and began construction on the most famous example, the no longer extant Parisian market, Les Halles. The prototype for this market quickly became popular and, thanks to the help of a book called the Monographie des Halles Centrales in 1863, transported the style all over Europe. Many of the markets in Barcelona today display the influence of this wrought-iron design from this time period in France. The purpose of these markets was to create a light and unencumbered feeling: “beneath the transparency of the glass and the metal roof, circulation became the principal theme: the market should be and should ‘represent,’ above all, a circulatory flow” “bajo la transparencia del vidrio y de la cubierta metálica, la circulación se convirtió en el tema principal: el mercado debía ser y ‘representar’ ante todo la fluidez circulatoria” (Gúardia and Oyón, 42). The emphasis on architecture and art in and on the market buildings helped to validate the marketplace as a legitimate forum for business; it was no longer viewed as a cloistered, dingy, and undesirable place, but rather, with the use of these new materials and concepts for food presentation and selling, the market came to be perceived as an integral part to the new age of modernity.
Local Context

Spain’s Exception to the Decline of Market Systems

The beginning of the 20th century, with the coming of the modern industrialized world as we understand it today, brought the first wave of the decline of the market system and the beginning of its obsolescence. After 1920 Great Britain did not construct any new markets, and France, distracted by its expenditures for and losses from World War I, was not economically capable of funding and renovating their existing markets (Gúardia and Oyón, 57). The decline was mainly due to the ways that food distribution started to change. “The main reason for the decline [of the markets] resulted from the revolution in the distribution of food as large wholesale seller broke the old chains of direct relationships and local character between producer and vendor that had prevailed in the agricultural production and food distribution models in the markets of the 19th Century” “La razón principal del declive residió en la revolución en la distribución de los alimentos que supuso dominación de la cadena de distribución por grandes mayoristas que rompieron la antigua relación directa y de carácter local entre productor y vendedor que imperaba en el modelo de producción agrícola y distribución de alimentos de los mercados del siglo XIX” (Gúardia and Oyón, 56). Thus, the way that food came to be both produced and distributed helped to speed up the decline of the markets.

After World War II, there were many factors that contributed to the second phase of their continuing decline. The market structures themselves were in dire need of renovations that the cities could not provide, but also the character of the urban areas were radically changed with the introduction of motor vehicles and, concomitantly, the movement of many city-dwellers to the suburbs. More than anything however, the introduction of supermarkets and their practices of self-service changed the way in which people bought, and the manner in which they interacted with the people that sold them food. It became a quick interaction among strangers that in many
places is still the norm today. “The final demolition of Les Halles in 1971 (as well as the debate over the Covent Garden) was the most dramatic and visible moment in the process of destruction and abandonment, the episode that had the most international reverberation and awakened the [public] conscience to the necessity to conserve the structures of the 19th Century” “La demolición final de Les Halles en 1971 (también el debate sobre Covent Garden) fue el momento más dramático y más visible de este proceso de destrucciones y abandono, el episodio que tuvo mayor repercusión internacional y despertó la conciencia sobre la necesidad de conservar las estructuras del siglo XIX” (Guàrdia and Oyón, 63). This was the most decisive blow to the remaining markets, but also helped to serve as a catalyst for future conservation. Spain, however, (along with some of the formerly Soviet countries), due to their differing historical circumstances, managed to evade these causes for decline and enabled the market system to flourish for a fourth stage.

![Figure 9: Dates of construction on markets](image)
Barcelona and Its Market System

The tragic Spanish Civil War ended in 1939, but the period of relative chaos and instability that had characterized the years of active warfare continued. The new government attempted to manage the markets but it miscalculated the economics and thus controlled the markets excessively; until the Plan de Estabilización de 1959, the country was in a state of relative economic deadlock. Some years before the plan was established however, the country had begun to target the market system in an effort to improve its trade and fiscal conditions and, in this case, began to construct and renovate the markets of their cities. On July 26, 1956 Barcelona instigated the most active period for the construction of markets in its history. The city government declared its wish to have every citizen have access to a neighborhood market within one kilometer (6/10 mile) of their homes (Gúardia, Oyón, and Fava, 291). Thus between 1957 and 1977, 18 markets were constructed to supply the citizens with fresh food. In 1971, Mercabarna, the wholesale market, was established in Barcelona in order to supply this new boom of neighborhood markets. Before the end of the war there had existed 16 municipal markets. After the war and up until 2009, 27 more were constructed (Gúardia, Oyón, and Fava, 289). Today the city boasts 39 food markets and four special, non-food markets. Following the 1956 decision to bring markets closer to its citizens, Barcelona has created its own fourth stage in the history of its market system.
After the death of Francisco Franco, who reigned from 1939-1975, the country returned to a state of crisis, financially and governmentally. Mercabarna was running a deficit and there was general instability and economic recession (Provansal, 218). There was also a shift towards the new technologies and production and distribution tactics that had impacted Great Britain and France years earlier. However, after the many years of repression and destruction of many of its cultural markers, it was decided that the markets were an integral way to provide the citizens high quality food as well as be “authentic urban commerce,” and as such could thus be strong points of access for the community. In 1984 PECAB, or the Plan Especial de Equipamiento Comercial Alimentario de Barcelona, was born from the decision concerning the importance of markets; this organization took over the management of the municipal markets and their areas of influence. It oversaw new construction and rehabilitation of markets and thus helped to turn around the crisis that had impacted the markets in earlier years (Guàrdia, Oyón, and Fava, 294 and 21). In 1991, the government decided that the public market system had become too
complex to manage without dedicated staff and programming, and created the IMMB, the
Institut Municipal de Mercats de Barcelona as a branch of the municipal government to oversee
all of the working markets in Barcelona. This remains the institution that manages the markets
today.

Physical and Functional Context

Historical Architecture

The onset of the modernizing and changing world in the 1830s and ‘40s was an impetus for
new construction and beautification of the city. The architecture of the markets helped to further
Spain’s objective to establish a more contemporary city and was developed in three main phases.
The first architectural phase occurred between 1840 and 1874 and used “traditional” materials
that were readily available at the time. “This gave way to a pioneering stage in which the new
[kinds of] materials were incorporated, in a partial and modest way, into structures that combined
wood, stone, and iron,…or in completely metal buildings of small scale that were strictly
utilitarian but that were, in many cases, not realized” “Ello dio lugar a una etapa pionera en la que el
nuevo material se incorporó, de una manera parcial y modesta, en estructuras que combinaban madera, piedra y
hierro [como el mercado de Trascorrales en Oviedo (1862-1867)] o en edificios completamente metálicos de
pequeña envergadura y carácter estrictamente utilitario que quedaron, en la mayoría de casos, en proyectos no
realizados…” (Castañer, 234). This kind of market style was a prelude to the second phase of
markets that came under a more direct European influence. Between 1875 and 1890, there was a
boom in the construction of markets, specifically referencing the modernist (art nouveau) style of
Victor Baltard and the markets he had designed in Paris. According to Castañer, this type of
architecture, made from wrought-iron steel, was structured to be “strictly functional” (235). El
Born (1873-1876) and Sant Antoni (1882) are specific examples of this type still extant in Barcelona.

The third stage occurred between 1890 and 1930. By then Spain had put behind it the wrought-iron markets and had begun to focus on building with the new material: steel. This metal enabled the structures to be more structurally advanced and stylistically different due to the relatively easy communication between artists and architects. A Catalan example of this market is Sabadell (1927-1930). In addition, it is important to note that the construction of the materials for these markets was undertaken by Spanish companies, both large and small. Therefore, in contrast to the construction of the railroad where all of the money went to foreign businesses, with these new markets the contracts remained with Spanish companies so that the government’s money was able to remain and thus recirculate in the Spanish economy (Castañer, 241). Each wave of architectural construction contributed to the diverse collection of market styles that Spain and Barcelona boasts, most of which are still visible today.
Contemporary Market Structure

Because the markets were constructed during different periods and have existed for decades, there are various architectural styles that can be seen on the outside of each building, but the formula within is very similar. Upon walking through the front doors of the markets, the customer is immediately struck by the cornucopia of products available. Vendors pile up their products in their kiosks in front of them and occasionally, depending on the product, behind and on the sides as well. Each vendor buys the produce/product that they sell, whether from Mercabarna, or from a local farmer, and transport all perishables daily to their stall. There are loading docks in many of the markets (both the older, un-renovated markets and those that have been modernized) that are located beneath the markets; many of these have refrigerators and places to store the product. While some of the vendors go to the wholesale markets themselves, every day, others have their orders delivered directly to them. The vendors stand behind the goods carefully and delicately organized in front of them and tend to their customers; when the customer asks for an item, the vendor chooses the best one available and also consults the buyer to confirm choices. Although that is the norm, certain vendors prefer to have the buyer pick out their own products, especially for fruit or vegetables. Buyers, of course, can also specify which cut or item they wish to buy, and the vendors will package it for them. Typically, the costs are
displayed per kilo, and thus the price is determined by weighing the item; the bag of the purchased item is handed over and money is exchanged. Although use of credit cards is now an option in many stalls, the majority of transactions still occur using cash.

Figure 13: Customer observing and choosing goods

Stalls are often side by side and across from one another (often selling different items), but there are situations that differ, such as the *Fort Pienc* market, shaped in a half-moon so that all the stalls are side by side, or the *Boqueria* market, where the fish vendors in the center are positioned in a circle. The beauty of the markets is that there are many stalls available to choose from for each kind of product, giving people options of places to buy (although, as will be explained later, many people are committed to one stall or vendor for life). The many stalls are privately owned and run (and pay a “renters fee” to the government—the “owner” of the market—for the space) and thus the vendors retain freedom for the products they wish to sell, and are also able to change what they are selling at any time, even daily if they so wish. Within the markets, the system is highly organized due to years of experience in determining what
works best, and the offerings have reached a level of excellence in quality and variety that the consumer sees and appreciates; it is this kind of quality of trust that keeps the consumers returning.

It is within this context that the Barcelona markets remain, managed by the IMMB since 1991. In order to understand the important transformations that the markets are undergoing right now, it is vital to take into account the historical context for the markets, from the Greeks and their agoras to the modern markets in Great Britain, and finally to the construction booms in Barcelona that resulted from political factors. This historical narrative helps to set the stage for the current debate of the influence of globalization within the market system and, I believe, drives home why the municipal government and residents think that the market system in Barcelona should be nurtured and sustained. In the following sections, I outline how the balance between globalization and localism is maintained, both by the government and the community, in the Barcelona market system.
Part III-Barcelona’s Response to Globalization: Government and its History and Actions

With increasingly interconnected, urbanizing societies it became a necessity for the government to be able to provide food to its citizens: each city’s overall health and existence—both communally and individually—was reliant on it. Since the late 1700s, the government has had control over the public market buildings, land, and management of the organizational infrastructure. After that date, although there have been rocky patches, the markets have continued to thrive and provide an important service to the population. Within this context the city government has continued to support this local form of food distribution while it has, at the same time, increasingly incorporated the rest of the world’s food system into its own. The government is therefore, at one time, the safeguard of the Catalan Barcelona market system, while also enabling and even promoting its integration into a larger global society.

In this chapter I analyze, from this top-down perspective, the role of the government in the Barcelona market system, through the creation of the IMMB and its subsequent contributions through its “Barcelona Market Model.” This model focuses on the importance of the market remodel, the government studies of the markets and its relations to its citizens, and finally its international connections. The Institut is able to fully support its own city and its citizens through the continuation of the markets while at the same time exporting its successes in a way that helps to support and create recognition for market systems around the world. The markets continue to thrive, I would argue, because they are straddling both the local and the international: the IMMB concentrates on sustaining their markets and continuing to provide the citizens of Barcelona with these services and, in order to do so, they must continually update and maintain their contemporary relevance, in contrast to such other market systems in the world, especially those in Great Britain and France. Barcelona’s contemporary market system has come to be unique in
this world, and as a result the government is intent on its preservation by whatever means possible: while creating an image and model for export, Barcelona is ensuring its own sovereignty.

**Institute of Municipal Markets of Barcelona**

The IMMB, or Institute of Municipal Markets of Barcelona, is an autonomous arm of the Barcelona Government that directly manages the thirty-nine food markets and four special non-food markets within the city of Barcelona. It was created in April, 1991, and its autonomy from the Barcelona government enables it to be a small and agile organization, run in an efficient, timely, and cordial manner. Many people are on the Institut’s team, including administrators and hands-on advisors. They help to organize the directors of each market, who are, in turn, divided into three areas that facilitate organization. The directors work for the paradistas, or stall purveyors, who then run their own businesses and pay trimester installments to the Institut for the use of this public land. The Institut believes in a healthy city, and in order for that to occur they must be able to ensure good quality, and accessible food that the population of the city can rely on. They also help to keep the city healthy economically: by supporting and enabling vendors to sell in regulated and protected places, this in turn draws people to the locale, thus helping to support the small shops nearby. Additionally, the markets, run by the Institut, help to keep the city healthy culturally: by creating a space where human interaction can occur—it is a place to see and be seen—while reinforcing the history of the location and reinforcing a cohesive identity of the province by providing the food that has been sold there for hundreds of years. It is also important to note that the Institut, while reinforcing the history and sovereignty of the Catalan/Barcelonan food markets, is also combining the international and external with the local by providing newer exotic food items (some of which may be out of season) as well as, in some
markets, incorporating supermarkets within them to draw in those members of the public that would prefer that kind of experience. The goal of the IMMB is thus to keep markets a stable and important part of the lives of the citizens, physically, economically and culturally.

Renovation and Modernization

*Barcelona Markets Model*

The many renovations that the IMMB has overseen since the early 90s, has helped to lift the perception and utility of the markets allowing them to compete on a contemporary level. The
The modernizing and remodeling of these markets was thus a conscious decision to re-embrace the local and support the community—and this decision was made from the standpoint of the government. Thus the government’s involvement and support of the markets is crucial. According to Genis Arnas, the Head of Services at the IMMB, last term’s government underwrote 70-80% (125 million Euros) of the total cost of the current renovations that are...
occurring. The rest of the costs are fronted by the stall owners because they understand that their eventual return to a beautifully remodeled market will far outweigh their initial contribution. People value the markets continued success; they help to keep various facets of the neighborhood alive, and when the market is suffering the neighborhood is not usually thriving either. Therefore, by restoring these buildings not only are the locations beautified, but the community’s health is revived as well.

The main theoretical pillar of the Barcelona markets model is based on this idea, that the renovations that are occurring help to engender a solid community: “The definition of the Barcelona Markets Model is not an invention from the laboratory, it is not a brand created in an office: it is a reality that occurs because of events that validate the actions. It is based on a city model that is dense, compact, cohesive and participatory and believes that the markets are an economic motor and agent of urban development.” “La definicio del model Barcelona no és un invent de laboratory, no és una marca creada en un despatx: és una realitat que s’està imposant per la via dels fets i que s’ha validat amb les darreres actuacions. Està bastat en una proposta de ciutat densa, compacta, cohesionada i participativa i pensa en el mercat com a motor econòmic i agent de desenvolupament urbà” (Tolrà, 163).

Approaching the markets with this mentality is the reason the renovations are taken so seriously. There are three crucial elements within the restoration process instigated and managed by the government that are helping the markets to succeed in this increasingly globalized world: the commercial mix, the updated services, and the infrastructure alterations.

**Commercial Mix**

The renovated markets are reorganizing internally by creating new “commercial mixes”. Historically, there were many little kiosks selling very few items, and they were all packed in next to each other—chaotic but intimate. In the renovated markets, grandmas selling just lemons
and garlic can no longer be found. Instead, there are larger stations that offer more products and reorganize the existing kiosks to not be in direct competition with one another—so that there is variation within a row of stalls. Additionally, and very significantly, within this new commercial mix, renovated markets are expanding and including elements that could be considered in direct competition with the public market ideal, such as large, modern supermarkets. “Self-service supermarkets, always seen as an adversary, are ending up as an amicable business venture spurred by the markets as a capable engine. The markets that incorporate supermarkets multiply their number of clients, attracted by the possibility for one-stop shopping.” “L’autoservei, que s’havia vist sempre com un adversary, ha acabat esdevenint un soci amigable que impulse el mercat com si fos una potent locomotora. Els mercats que incorporen autoservi multipliquen el seu nombre de clients, atrets per la possibilitat de fer la comre en un sol acte” (Tolrà, 164). Instead of fighting the supermarkets, the traditional markets have instead incorporated them into the building, allowing people to get their fresh, quality food, but also buy their cleaning supplies, beer, and diapers, things that are not typically available in the market. Costa puts it succinctly:

It is not competition, it complementarity. The markets sell fresh, individual, and the supermarkets sell packaged and not usually individually…Therefore, it is not competition when people go to the market here, they also enter into the supermarket to buy items for cleaning, packaged items, cans, but they will then enter the markets to buy fresh fruit, fish [etc], and it is a combination.

No es competencia, es complementariedad. Porque el mercado vende fresco, a granel, y el supermercado vende envasado y no a granel normalmente...Por lo tanto no es competencia, cuando aquí la gente va al mercado, entran en el supermercado, compran las cosas para la limpieza, las temas envasadas, las latas, pero luego salen al mercado para comprar la fruta fresca, el pescado y es combinación.
The key is to have the market provide what the supermarket cannot handle as well and vice versa. Initially, of course, there was much doubt, but after the first few such combination markets were constructed and were successful more were sought after, because it was acknowledged that they are not in direct competition—there is nothing in the supermarket that is sold individually and one cannot select one’s own “fresh” items at the supermarket. In addition to the supermarkets some of the public markets have also added hair salons, hardware stores, electronic stores, libraries, wineries, and other stores within to make it a more attractive commercial center while at the same time providing the quality and service that is expected of the food markets. This is a direct example of the influence of globalization. However, in this case, by not being in direct competition with the public markets, it is actually helping to sustain them and make them relevant, allowing continued access to fresh food for the citizens.

Contemporary Services

The markets, each at a different pace, and to different extents, are adding additional services to help bring the markets up to date, while at the same time meeting the expectations of the consumer. Services such as home delivery for purchased products, club cards, promotional
days, and even buying food on the internet are some of the more basic changes that help to keep the market in pace and competitive. One of the new developments that is most obviously a result of social and technological changes is the altering of the hours of operation. Previously, when women were not yet a part of the contemporary workforce, they would often go to the market early in the morning to get the freshest food and get their shopping done. Now, more and more, the markets are open later and stay open in the afternoons because now women tend to work the same kinds of schedules as the men. Armas elaborates:

The market in some manner is a reflection of the society in which we live in Barcelona, much more open and much more heterogeneous…The market is changing too, always introducing more prepared products because people have less time to cook. The market is a reflection of the buying habits of the people…who are getting used to buying lettuce that we have cleaned and cut, and thus you go to the market and you can find that bag of lettuce already prepared, already cleaned, sectioned and ready to serve in a salad. The market, in a way, is adapting the business to changes that will help society.

El mercado de alguna forma es el reflejo de esta sociedad que vivimos en Barcelona mucho más abierta y mucho más heterogénea…El mercado también va cambiando, cada vez va introduciendo más producto preparado porque la gente tiene menos tiempo para cocinar. El mercado también refleja un consumo en que cada vez la gente…que está acostumbrado a comprar un lechuga que hemos limpiado y hemos troceado pues vas a mercado y puedes encontrar la bolsa de lechuga ya preparada, ya limpia, troceada, y servir para hacer la ensalada. El mercado de una forma va adaptando también su negocio a este cambio que asiste la sociedad.

Figure 17: Flyer indicating markets presence on the internet
The markets, under the direction of the IMMB, are altering their previous habits to fit the times, in order to still be relevant in this more fast-paced and integrated society. With women in the workforce it is not possible to function as before; the markets that have integrated themselves into this new schedule are more successful. According to Arnas, the afternoons represent one third of total daily sales in those markets that have adjusted their schedules, proving that these sorts of modernizations can be quite helpful. The workforce has been altered to fit the new way of life, and the food supplier must also adapt in order to survive. The qualities of the market—not only the food quality but its contributions to quality of life—seem to have remained the same with these changes, they are just reconfiguring so as not to retain market share. Globalization has changed global working trends, and the markets are simply adapting in order to continue to serve their communities.

**Infrastructure Changes**

During the process of remodeling the markets, the physical infrastructure of the market is often being changed as well. Some markets have or will be adding third levels to accommodate easier and more fluid access for distribution trucks, as well as parking structures and elevators for customers, and larger refrigerated rooms to help to organize and keep the surrounding areas clean. Perhaps most importantly however, many of the markets are beginning to become environmentally conscious. Distinct containers to help separate the different types of waste produced by the markets have been installed in these new underground spaces. “The organic leftovers are separated from the rest at the origin, at the market, and they send it to the waste area to be converted into compost. The obtained compost is of great quality, the markets are the best client of the Barcelona waste system, that transform the organic materials into something that the
farmers can use, closing the circle of food production” “Els residus organics se separen de la resta en origen, al mercat, i s'envien a la deixalleria per ser convertits en compost. El compost que s'obté és de gran pusa, i els mercats són, de fet, el millor client de les deixalleries barcelonines que transformen l’orgànica en quelcom els pagesos poden usar, tancant així el cercle de la producció alimentària” (Tolrà, 211-12). The markets also efficiently recycle the cardboard, plastic, glass, and even the ice. These kinds of recycling contributions from such large food distributors make a huge difference in the amount they are saving from the trash.  

Additionally, the markets are supportive of renewable energy, most commonly solar power.

In line with these objectives, the IMMB is systematically installing solar energy systems in all of the markets that are being remodeled as well as the ones whose structures permit. Thus, in May 2007, in agreement with the Earth Foundation, solar panels were installed on the Carmel Market, a pioneering initiative that permits neighbors and vendors to invest in these energies. It has the potential for 43.7 kw/h and the estimated production amount is 52,000 kw/h per year (Barcelona Markets Network, July 2011).

Figure 18: Infrastructure construction showing various levels
Figure 19: Solar panels on top of markets

4 “La campanya del 2008 va comportar la reducció d’un 54% dels impropris presents en la recollida de la fracció orgànica, la recollida selectiva de 203 tones de cartró, la reducció de la generació de fracció orgànica en un 29% i de la fracció de rebutjat en un 43%. Seguint aquest procés, durant l’any 2009 es va dura terme la implantació definitiva d’aquest model de gestió per a la serparació correcta dels residus en tots els mercats municipals...” (Mercats de Barcelona: Activitats 2009, 41)
Many other markets are in the process of adding panels on to their rooftops; the only exceptions are the *Llibertat* and *Sant Antoni* markets, as they are antique buildings and have roofs made out of ceramic or metal to which panels cannot be attached. Thus, through this remodeling process, it is quite clear that the markets intend not only to move towards the new era of technology and interconnectedness with the global society, but are also committed to doing so in as ecologically and environmentally friendly a way as possible. For this reason, the Barcelona market system has also become a valuable trailblazer in the remodeling or conservation process that many cities’ markets are currently undergoing.

**International Connections**

In an effort to both conserve and promote the existence and organization of the markets worldwide, the Barcelona markets system, run by the IMMB, is a part of three major international organizations. *MedEmporion, Emporion*, and the World Union of Wholesale Markets (or WUWM) are three separate organizations whose objective is to share information and solutions about public markets. Additionally, they create international recognition for their goals by bringing attention to the markets, and thus help to support and obtain funding for markets worldwide. By establishing these kinds of partnering organizations, these markets are creating a niche for themselves; by becoming more known internationally, they are able to solidify and promote their own existence as a result of being forced to define themselves and their goals as institutions. Through these organizations, each market promotes its own agendas, while as a group, they attain more visibility within the international community. Such
partnerships help to stave off homogenization as a result of the larger global food system, while also creating a resource for traditional markets worldwide.

**MedEmporion**

Project *MedEmporion* is made up of four cities around the Mediterranean Sea—Barcelona, Torino, Marseille, and Genoa—each which is striving to utilize each other as resources for solutions to better manage and promote their markets. By binding their markets together the cities were able to secure funding from the European Union to help support, manage and promote each market system. The goals are as follows:

- Identification of communal potential and values of the markets in the Mediterranean as key elements in local commerce and link to the population.
  - Promotion of local foods and promotion of the relationship between the fields and the city; sustainability, slow food, and food sovereignty.
  - Betterment of the social responsibility of the markets in their natural scope.
  - Creation of a euro-Mediterranean network in order to exchange good practices.

Identificació dels potencials comuns i valors dels mercats de la zona mediterrània com elements clau en el comerç de proximitat i l’articulació de les poblacions.

-Promoció dels aliments locals i promoció de la relació entre el camp i la ciutat: sostenibilitat, slow food, sobirania alimentària.

-Millora de la responsabilitat social de mercats en el seu àmbit natural.

-Creació d’una xarxa euro mediterrània per intercanviar bones practiques (Millorant Els Mercats en L’Àrea Mediterrània, 2).

Figure 20: Meeting between the international market organizations
In order to achieve these goals the markets are employing various activities to further understand and promote the market systems. Studies such as the “Global Study on Mediterranean Markets” as well as the “Study on the Origin of Local Market Products” are two projects currently underway that have focused on issues that are of most concern to the population. They have also initiated “Pilot Projects,” each different according to the needs and concerns of each city: Genoa is constructing a wine museum next to the market, Torino is creating a touristic visit of the market and its surroundings, Marseille is organizing a new farmers market, and Barcelona is renovating their educational projects for various age groups. Finally, every year, each city hosts a market festival that helps to bring awareness to its citizens of the importance of the markets through food, activities, and events. By connecting to these different markets it has become possible to share information and to grow as a result. Armas explains, “curiously, we have realized, through these organizations that group together markets on a European level or an international level, that besides the differences between the countries and the cities, there are more elements in common than we imagined. That the market plays a similar role in the majority of cities and countries is very interesting, is it not?”

These partnerships, which have elucidated the similar objectives and trajectories of each city among these three countries, have helped to secure funding such as occurred with the European Union while bringing to light the importance of food in communities like these. The 2010 UNESCO inscription of Mediterranean food as a unique patrimony listed as an Intangible
cultural Heritage of Humanity,\(^5\) for example, might not have been possible without the self-promotion and exportation that is possible with international organizations such as these.

*Mercat de Mercats*

While being a part of international organizations is helpful for external funding and recognition, cities such as Barcelona are also using it to emphasize the importance of the local food system. *Mercat de Mercats* is the annual festival that Barcelona puts on thanks to the *MedEmporion* project. Their four main goals are clearly designed to promote healthy, local, sustainable food and communal interaction within the region: a) To promote Barcelona’s markets, b) To contribute to boost Catalonia’s food-farming industry, c) To communicate the Barcelona Markets Model, and d) To educate about eating healthy and emphasizing the Mediterranean diet\(^6\) (Mercat de Mercats, 5).

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\(^5\) As noted in UNESCO’s website, “The Mediterranean diet constitutes a set of skills, knowledge, practices and traditions ranging from the landscape to the table, including the crops, harvesting, fishing, conservation, processing, preparation, and, particularly, consumption of food. For further information see UNESCO’s website http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00394.

\(^6\) The official stated objectives of the festival are as follows: “a) To promote Barcelona’s markets: Defend and promote their economic and commercial relevance, their social, touristic and urban regeneration dimension. b) Contribute to boost Catalonia’s food-farming industry: Bringing producers and consumers together and highlighting the added value of local produce. c) Communicating the Barcelona Markets model: An international model with an efficient organisation system and an important market modernization and refurbishment process. It promotes the search for more competitive municipal and commercial equipment, modern installations and more services for the public. d) Educational dimension: An ideal platform from which to spread the markets’ values: healthy eating and a special emphasis on the Mediterranean diet and gastronomy, high quality produce, good service, trader professionalism and sustainability” (Mercat de Mercats, 5).
During the first annual festival in 2010, there were 180,000 visitors, 150,000 of whom bought directly from the stalls; in 2011, the number increased to 230,000 visitors. 36 of the stalls in 2010 emphasized “local and quality” “proximitat i qualitat” offering Catalan produce and products, twelve stalls were staffed by farmers offering their products, and twelve were stalls from the partner cities of Genoa, Torino, and Marseille, offering their traditional goods as part of the MedEmporion project (when each of these cities host their own festivals, Barcelona has representatives that attend those as well). The rest of the stalls were from various markets around the city. The specialty stalls included Catalan cava (champagne), olive oil, beer, and the like. Therefore, although mostly funded through this international organization, this fair directly benefits the gastronomy of Catalan products and cuisine; by embracing and promoting itself and its gastronomic cultures and traditions internationally, the city of Barcelona is able to emphasize their sovereignty over their food and promote it to its own population, and children, as well.

Global Funding for Local Children

One of the most compelling examples of the fusion of the global and local perspectives of the IMMB is their use of their ties to these international organization ties and the money received from them to support and teach various age groups of children in the Barcelona neighborhoods about their local markets and their products. The Barcelona markets are heavily involved with other cities and their market systems, sharing information, techniques, and problem-solving. With the weight and prominence of four grand market systems under MedEmporion, they were able, as a group, to garner funding from the European Union. While other cities put their money towards pilot projects focused on more tourist-centered ventures as wine museums, the Barcelona government decided to return the money to its local citizens by revamping immersion and education programs for children. They set up four programs each for targeted age groups of
6-9, 10-12, 13-14, and 15-16 years old, with each becoming increasingly more difficult and involved. The programs educate the youngsters about food and the importance of eating well and supporting community vendors at the same time that they also help to familiarize the children to the markets and make them accustomed and comfortable there, thus helping to create the next generation of customers. Additionally, these programs help to provide knowledge to parents through their children about the markets as they share their program experiences with them.

![Figure 23: IMMB poster showing children participating in the markets](image)

Such programs exemplify the importance of being globally connected while at the same time, supporting the local community. By reaching out and controlling how certain aspects of globalization are incorporated within their programming, the markets retain their autonomy and priorities and, as this example proves, can further the education and health of their local citizens.

**Emporion**

Preceding the *MedEmporion* project was the *Emporion* project. Started in Barcelona, in 1996, it brings together the best food and traditional markets of Europe including the *Mercat de la Boqueria* in Barcelona, *Központi Vásárcsarnok* market hall in Budapest, Borough Market in London, Lyon Market in Lyon, France, and the *Porta Palazzo* market in Torino. Their aim, like that of *MedEmporion*, is to continue to promote local market systems and continue to make them
applicable and valued today, and to “defend and strengthen” the European market system as a whole. “The objective of the network is threefold: to exchange the most successful practices in the management and commercial promotion of each market, defining quality models, and uniting behind community occasions to defend the traditional food markets, especially in the face of the threat of large commercial stores.” “L’objectiu de la xarxa és triple: intercanviar les pràctiques de més èxit en la gestió y promoció comercial a cada mercat, definir models de qualitat i unir-se devant les instàncies communitàries per defensar el mercat tradicional d’alimentació, en especial devant l’amenaça que suposen les grans superfícies comercials” (Tolrà, 167). By reaching out to other markets in similar situations, recognition, funding, and projects can be established and the markets have a better chance of preserving what they feel is most important: quality food and community building. In 2008, other markets in Lisbon, Portugal; Thessalonica, Greece; Helsinki, Finland; and Stockholm, Sweden joined with Emporion, showing their support and widening the scope of exchange and importance of the European market (Els Mercats de Barcelona 2008, 51).

The larger these organizations grow, the more the message of the importance of local markets can gain visibility; almost paradoxically, the markets are using these international forums and interchanges to keep their local markets relevant and essential to their communities. By harnessing the international perspective, these cities and countries are able to sustain and help their local market systems thrive—they have one eye on the world and one eye on their city, and are succeeding as a result.

7 -To join the forces of Europe’s best markets, and promote their market model. –To represent European markets in front of the European Institutions, signifying markets’ importance as circuits of distribution in order to ensure their future. –To facilitate multilateral relationships, good practice exchange, resource building and training. –To forge alliances with cities and countries that face similar challenges. –To demonstrate that modern methods and technology can be used in order to preserve this valuable European tradition. –To expand and incorporate additional European markets into the Association (Emporion, Online).
World Union of Wholesale Markets

In the wake of the increasing internationalization and globalization of the food industry, public markets have been binding together in order to create a stronger and more effective group to share problems and brainstorm about solutions, and to support market objectives of quality and community. One of the older organizations, the World Union of Wholesale Markets, or WUWM, recently opened their doors to retail markets as well. It was founded in 2001 and is comprised of markets from 38 countries worldwide. “since 2008, [WUWM widened its scope] for those retail markets that have an interest in sharing experiences and defending the traditional food markets in relation to the community authorities” “des de l’any 2008 per aquells mercats minoristes que tenen interess en compartir experiències i defensar els mercats tradicionals d’alimentació en relació a les autoritats comunitàries” (Els Mercats de Barcelona 2008, 50). By opening up the organization to retail as well as wholesale markets, this organization is emphasizing that any kind of market that has the same goals, quality and community, will thus help to strengthen and solidify the goals. The values, described eloquently by Marc Speilrein of France, honorary WUWM President and Chairman from 2002-2004, are expressed in this way: “We consider that food distribution is not a business run exclusively by economic considerations. Essential to human life, food distribution must comply with several social and ethical goals” (WUWM, online). Members of this organization believe that there is more to food then straight business and straight nutrition, and with the help of this community of markets, their perspective and goals are further recognized. Again, by reaching out to organizations in the Mediterranean and worldwide, the Barcelona market system is helping to create its own network within these markets, one that acknowledges its uniqueness and helps to support its local goals as well. There are upsides to becoming a part of the globalized world, and finding organizations sharing similar perspectives and objectives
can be very helpful in raising awareness and concretizing their objectives. At the same time, by joining these organizations, it further solidifies the market (or in this case all 41 markets in Barcelona) in the local environment. Despite all its outside connections and international reach, the main goal of these markets it to support their citizens, and thrive.

The Institute of Municipal Markets of Barcelona is constantly striving to find the equilibrium between the global and the local; it is crucial to embrace some aspects of an interconnected global society and food system, but also to preserve the local community, environment, and food systems. Taking steps to renovate and modernize the markets for the population has allowed the markets to move towards becoming a competitive food distributor; with the addition of their new commercial mixes and supermarkets into the building, changing the hours to fit new lifestyle changes, and adding crucial infrastructure changes have expanding the market to make it more modern, while also emphasizing its responsibility for reducing its environmental footprint.

In addition, by becoming a part of several international organizations with similar goals, values, and ideals about the markets and their contributions to each city’s citizens and their communities, they are helping to solidify its importance and relevance for its citizens for years to come. Projects like MedEmporion and the Mercat de Mercats festival that it sponsors, directly
helps to support the local market and its local food producers. Being a part of other organizations like Emporion and WUWM continue to solidify the importance of each city’s own market system while enhancing recognition for shared goals, conserving the market buildings and infrastructures, and establishing funding for activities such as remodels and market festivals. The IMMB is balancing its commitment to the international and commitment to the local, and by using each to support the other, the Barcelona market system can continue to be useful, thrive, and be appreciated in the future. But beyond the governmental involvement, it is also crucial to understand how the market system works, and how the community members themselves influence it, so that one can understand the logistic, social, and cultural meaning for a community or neighborhood.
Globalization and the resulting global food system have enhanced convenience while at the same time largely depersonalizing the product and process of distribution. As described in earlier chapters, Barcelona’s public market system is making no effort to shut off communication or trade with the globalized world in order to secure its survival and permanence. Instead the Barcelona model embraces various aspects of it, renovating and modernizing the network by adding supermarkets, extending the hours of operation, and becoming involved with international organizations. However, while these practical and relatively essential changes are being made to modernize the markets, the true core traditional characteristics of the markets are still being emphasized: quality, variety, professionalism, and accountability. By basing this food distribution system on relationships and trust, it provides a clear contrast to stores or supermarkets run by globalized industrial chains. The market system’s fundamental values and emphases has enabled it to earn a seven out of ten rating from the population in the *Enquesta de Servies Municipals* survey and a third place appreciation rating of all the government services in the entire city, third only to the library and the metro (Genis Arnas, interview 8/4/11).

In this section, I analyze and describe the three pivotal aspects that makes a market such a solid center in people’s lives: the quality and variety of products as made accessible through the wholesale distributor *Mercabarna*, the professionalism and personalized attention from the vendors and the governmental support that allows them to sell, and finally the fidelity to the markets and their vendors and the pride that the consumer feels in this relationship, manifesting the links of trust, social responsibility, and accountability. Markets in Barcelona are typically the focal point in every neighborhood and in people’s consciousness. 60 to 65 million people enter and buy in the municipal markets yearly (*Mercats de Barcelona: 2010, un any per explicar*, 37).
It is an economic center (thanks in part to the numerous strategies set in place by the IMMB), and it is also a center for the community, as a result of the numerous relationships and meeting places found in and around the market. The international fuses with the local while the government fuses with the community in order to create the market system as it is now understood.

**The Product**

*Quality and Variety*

Some of the most important aspects of the markets are the quality, and the variety of the food products offered. Citizens trust and expect the food to be of a certain quality, and vendors have a sense of responsibility and pride in being able to provide food that matches these expectations. Arnas explains the mentality: “People go, and make a healthier purchase, eat well, take care of themselves, and they know that the market has a high benefit. That is to say that the market sells fresh products, of better quality, from the most professional vendors; there is an environment that is increasingly more comfortable and cleaner, and that is why [people] positively value [the markets]”. “La gente va, hacen una compra más saludable, de comer sano, quieren cuidarse, y saben que el mercado tiene una repuesta altísima. Es decir el mercado vende producto fresco, de mejor calidad, de los mejores profesionales, hay un entorno cada vez más cómodo, es más limpio y por ellos lo valoran positivamente.” The food is expected to be healthier and of better quality because of its freshness. Costa speculates that the reason people (and primarily women) start to use the markets at around 35 years old is because they have started families around that time and want to ensure that their
family eats healthier food.\textsuperscript{8} The quality and variety of the food offered in the market also helps to support the food sovereignty and diversity of the locale. “A known chain of supermarkets is promoting an advertisement campaign…where with pride they explained that within their establishments one can find four kinds of tomatoes…in the Boqueria [market] it is possible to find at least 23 kinds of tomatoes” “Una coneguda cadena d’autoserveis va realitzar una campagna d’anuncis…on amb orgull explicava que en els seus establiments es podien trobar fins a quatre classes de tomàquets…a la Boqueria es poden arribar a trobar fins a 23 classes de tomàquet” (Tolrà, 60). It is understood that most of the products offered at the market support the agricultural system in Catalunya and Spain, from the farmers and ranchers to the vendors. More selfishly, people know that the food is fresher and of better quality. Most of the food that is sold at the market, purchased individually by each vendor, comes from Mercabarna. Each market vendor will go and personally choose the products they will offer in their stalls; this usually takes place daily. The role that Mercabarna plays in the Barcelona food system is indispensable.

\textsuperscript{8} “Nosotros cuando hemos analizado el tipo de usuario del mercado, sobre todo es mujer a partir de 35 años, cada vez hay más hombres, pero sobre todo, mujeres de 35. Porque antes de los 35, probablemente no compran más jóvenes. O si compran, compran lo más justo y lo más rápido que pueden. MI deducción es por la creación de la familia con hijos. Y van al mercado porque quieren que sus hijos coman mejor”.

Figure 25: Locals examining the multitude of varieties of mushrooms offered by vendors
Mercabarna

Mercabarna is the wholesale market that supplies the majority of products to vendors to sell in the smaller, citywide retail markets where individual consumers buy their food. This market also grapples with the same issues of trying to balance globalization, localism, and consumer wishes, while retaining its focus on providing quality and variety in their products. 62% of the products in the market are of national origin, and 38% comes from other locations. 40% of the fruit and 37% of the vegetables are from elsewhere, some as close as France and others as far as Chile and South Africa (Mercabarna, 15-17). 84.3% of all the fish sold is fresh, and 50% of the fish sold is of national origin, mostly from the waters off of the autonomous Spanish regions of Catalunya and Galicia; 52% of the shellfish is from Spain, primarily from Galicia, and the rest of the seafood predominantly comes from France (12.4% fish, 18% shellfish) and Italy (2.7% fish, 25.5% shellfish). Other trading countries include South Africa (4.3% shellfish), Ireland (5.6% shellfish), Argentina (.1% shellfish), and the US (.5% fish and .4% shellfish), among others (Mercabarna, 24-27).
Thus although there is clearly representation of products from global markets, the majority of the food that Mercabarna sources are national products; this, then, helps to solidify the perception of freshness and quality that people have concerning market product. They also continue trade relations from many different places in the world, even if the percentage of the product coming from there is low, such as the US role in providing fish and shellfish. Mercabarna maintains trade routes and open communication between countries in order to provide variety that consumer’s want, while also providing more local foods to maintain a reputation for quality and freshness.

The Vendor

Professionalism

One of the most important qualities of the markets is the attention that the clients are given by the vendors. Many of the vendors are either working in a family kiosk and thus have been observing and participating in how to prepare for their clients for years, or have trained in classes such as those that are offered at Mercabarna. Mostly, the new generations of vendors learn by observation and practice, helping to conserve the tactics and tricks that can only be gained with experience, and the clients appreciate their professionalism and knowledge as well as their personalized service. “The markets conserve many traditional jobs related to the preparation of products and offering them to the public. And, the majority of these are daily activities that require precision and much attention. Working with fresh products requires ability and experience”

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9 26,6000 people have been trained in all varieties of food preparation between 1987 and 2007 (Mercabarna, 58-9).
i la seva oferta al públic. I, en la majoria d’ells, es realitza diàriament una activitat que requereix precisió i molta atenció. Treballar amb el producte fresc requereix habilitat i experiencí” (Tolrà, 64). The professional ability to carve up a fish or cow or pig so as to not waste and to provide the desired cuts, to be able to identify the quality of the meat, and to recommend to their customers the right cuts for their special needs is a crucial element in building trust between vendor and consumer.

Unlike in the impersonal environment of a supermarket where there is little or no communication with vendors—and those that are available often know little about the products they sell—the vendors in the public markets represent and stand behind their products in a more personal way. Because there is a known face who is selling what the consumer buys, there is a certain accountability and trust. Many customers are loyal to their vendors, returning to them again and again for years, so honesty, transparency, and professionalism are important in this

Figure 27: Pamphlet indicating market vendor expertise and professionalism
job. The chain to the consumer is shortened when food is purchased in this manner, as opposed to being packed by a larger, unaccountable and impersonal conglomerate. Importantly, the public markets also help to keep over 8,000 vendors working as food professionals who own their own businesses, instead of working in a factory or other industrial alternatives. In this way, the markets help to support the community and a higher standard of living for the individuals—buyers and sellers—within their neighborhoods.

**Personalism**

People also enjoy and support the market because of the personalism and accessibility the vendors give to their customers. The vendors take their time to provide the best quality food, and also take their time to cut and prepare the food exactly how the client requests it. If one day the food one has chosen is not quite as fresh or as high a quality as usual, or perhaps if there is a great piece of something else, the vendors will advise the consumer and suggest alternatives. It is a relationship built on trust; if a customer is satisfied customer, s/he will come back. Miryam Sanjuan describes her understanding of the relationship in this way:

Fundamentally, the relations that can be established between the vendor and the client is very beautiful primarily because the vendor doesn’t just sell to make a living, but also sells because it satisfies them to attend to fellow citizens. This first instinct to care…is a barter because they do it also for the pleasure you get when someone buys your product. If you really feel this, to the other [the consumer,) you are giving them quality, human connection, and furthermore, advice. How are the apples today, well they are a little unripe, better to take the pears which are more tasty. If you dedicated yourself to fruit, it is because at some level you like it.

*Fundamentalmente la relación que se puede llegar y establecer el concesionario y el cliente es muy bonita, de entrada porque el vendedor no solo quiere vender para ganarse la vida sino vende porque satisface atender al ciudadano. Este primer instinto de querer… es un trueque pero lo hace también por el placer que te produce cuando el otro compra el producto que tú tienes. Si tu realmente siente esto, al otro estas dando calidad, trato humano y encima, consejos. Hoy como están las manzanas, pues son un poco verdes, mejor llévate las peras que te saldrán más sabrosas. Si tú te dedicas a fruta es porque algo que te gusta.*
Not only do the vendors think it is important to advise their customers on the quality of their product, it is the norm for them to suggest ways to cook a product, or to be asked and give advice on cuts or cooking tips. “The personal attention to the client that one can find at markets is exclusive and does not have a rival in commerce.” “L’atenció personalitzada que el client pot trobar als mercats és exclusive i no té rival en el comerç” (Tolrà, 66). As Sanjuan explained, the vendors are in the service industry because they like and are proud of the product they are selling, but also because they are committed to their customers, who are usually lifelong clients. The buyer trusts the person who sells you the food that s/he puts into her/his body every day, and the vendors trust the buyer to come back to purchase more of their wares another day. These personal relationships based on mutual trust are the backbone of the market systems and are a fundamental reason why people come back again and again. There is a high level of accountability concerning the food that is bought helps to build the crucial relationship between vendor and customer. The kind of personal relationships that are established at the markets are simply not seen in supermarkets because of the anonymity of the food and the service. However, now that customers have learned that they can buy pineapples, papayas, bananas, and mangos
year round thanks to the international connections the markets have developed, they may do so. The customer and their preferences are what dictate the food that is bought and sold in the markets, and their fidelity to and pride in the markets is what sustains them.

**Public Land and Private Enterprise: Importance for the Vendors**

The balance between the global and the local that is managed by the IMMB that helps to keep the markets alive and thriving, is, in part, a calculated effort to keep the 8,000 market vendors in business. Earning their livelihoods in this manner allows the vendors to own their own businesses and to be their own bosses. They decide by themselves which products they buy and sell (within their permit category such as fish, vegetables, meat, etc.), establish relationships with their customers, and act as purveyors of skill and knowledge that might easily be otherwise lost. The vendors are part of a real economy, based on and for the consumers and citizens.

![Figure 29: Vendors and customers within the market](image)

These kinds of transactions, based on relationships established and trust built up between sellers and buyers, would not be possible without the private/public dynamic within which the
markets operate: they are located on public/municipal land, but each stall or kiosk is worked and managed individually by private vendors. This partnership carries a guarantee to the vendors and buyers alike: it carries the stamp of the city and the government whose concern is for the greater good, not the stamp of private investors whose end goal is self-enrichment and who need not answer to the population that they serve. Arnas explains: “They [the government] have guaranteed a future existence, understanding that it is a continuous service for the consumer, that there are small businesses, and as we say in colloquial language that the market is a real economy. And that happens when a market is municipal, not private” “Han garantizado un tema de futuro, entendiendo que es un servicio finalista, consumidor, que hay micro-empresarios, como decimos en lenguaje colloquial, que el mercado es economía real. Y esto pasa cuando un mercado es municipal no privado.” The markets provide a forum for the vendors to sell in a way that is a commitment to the profession and to the community: often the management of the stalls will pass from generation to generation. In contrast, it is clear that workers in supermarkets are replaceable and answer only to the corporation that owns the location. The markets are a healthy alternative, they maintain competition within the food industry, and the wealth is more evenly distributed among many vendors. While the vendors are a crucial piece in the markets, they would not be able to perform and continue to be relevant if the government did not own the space and allocate sufficient resources to keep the markets healthy and alive. The end-users in this food chain are the consumers and the citizens who thoroughly value the market system and the kinds of products that it is able to provide.

The Consumer

Fidelity and Pride
The fidelity and identity/pride that accompanies the professionalism and personalism of the vendors and the relationship between them and their clients sustains market activity. It is a hyper local interaction that most of the community understands and participates in, an interaction that the government believes needs to be maintained and supported. Markets have been present in people’s lives for centuries, and thus fidelity to the people who provide one’s food runs deep.

Arnas explains:

Part of the public tries [different vendors] but there is a part of the public that is very faithful to their stall, very very very faithful to their stall. In some ways, it can be understood as an inheritance case. Inheritance in the sense that the person who has gone to buy in the market since they were little with their mother, and the day that they go to buy, because they are living alone or in a pair, goes to the stall that their mother showed them that was there, they have become involved in the culture of the market. There is also a sensation of pride of what is yours. The same that someone has their market, others talk about their fishmonger or their butcher. My butcher prepares it and cuts it like this. When confidence is established and if the quality is maintained which is not easy, you will be faithful for sure.

Hay un público que va probando pero hay público que hay muy fiel a su parada, es muy muy muy fiel a su parada. Y de alguna forma, se da cuenta de que es un caso casi de herencia. Herencia en el sentido de que la persona que va a comprar desde pequeño con su madre al mercado, y el día que va a comprar para él, porque vive solo o vive en pareja, va a ir a la parada que su madre enseño que le explicaba que estaba allí, y que ha cogido ya esta cultura de mercado. También hay este sensación del autoestima de lo tuyo. Igual que esta mi mercado, hay gente que hable de su pescadero, o su carnicero. A mi carnicero me lo prepara y lo corta tal. Cuando se establece confianza y si mantiene este estándar de calidad que no es fácil siempre, vas a fidelizar seguro.
Consumer confidence and fidelity to their market vendors plays an established role in people’s lives and helps to build the community net that enhances the livability of the city. When participating in the market system, shoppers are supporting the values of the markets as well as the community that it helps to feed. Arnas continues:

In the market you can live and touch every day. It is something that the citizen can value daily, but also, curiously, there are citizens that are not consumers at the market or very rarely consumers at the market but who value the market very highly because the market in a way is the pride of the territory. It is their market. People do not say my supermarket. They say ‘in my market…’ referring to their neighborhood, ‘in my zone, in my locale…’, this is their market, and that market is municipal.

Tú en el mercado puedes vivir y palpar cada día. Es aquello que el ciudadano valora diariamente, pero incluso, curiosamente, hay ciudadanos que no son consumidores del mercado o son poco consumidores del mercado pero que lo valora muy altamente el mercado porque el mercado de alguna forma es un poco el autoestima de su territorio. Es su mercado. La gente no dice mi supermercado. Dicen ‘en mi mercado…’, refiriéndose a su barrio, ‘a mi zona, a mi entorno…’, este es su mercado, y este mercado es municipal.

Citizens have pride in their vendors, in their market, and in their community, and ultimately, that is what the IMMB is striving to maintain. They straddle this push and pull between the local necessities and the international arena in order to provide citizens with their markets. It is this balancing act that helps to provide the thriving markets that so many people support and take pride in.
Accountability and Quality: Importance for the Consumer

While the IMMB is trying to provide as many options as possible for the consumer by adding supermarkets and accessibility to international foods within the markets, along with such services as home delivery, wifi, and parking, it is undeniable that the consumer is the final part of the puzzle that supports the existence, maintenance and flourishing of the markets. With the increasing everyday use of supermarkets, the buyer has been pushed farther and farther away from the source of the food that is purchased. While it is important for the IMMB to give consumers the option to buy non-perishable goods from a supermarket within the public markets, it is also extremely important that the markets put an emphasis on providing food that is closer to the source, thus supporting small, private businesses. This enables the consumer to build a personal relationship with the growers and purveyors of the food that they eat and expect a level of accountability for the quality and freshness of their food.

[T]he public only has contact with the end of the chain, that is, with final places of distribution and the products, and this means that they put a great deal of their trust in the product knowledge that in reality they lack. In other words, the professional on the other side of the counter who is considered to be closer to the production and the origin of the product... “Who? You don’t know what you are eating anymore! I don’t buy much meat now, but you must buy some, don’t you think?...I trust (name of the seller), I’m sure she wouldn’t give me anything bad. If it is bad, she doesn’t accept it. She knows about it. (…) I have bought from this stall all my life and she always gives me the best (…)” (Medina, 266).

Food quality and variety are crucial elements for the consumer, who, although the end users, are typically the ones who know the least about the product. It is therefore of utmost importance to be able to have a place where people can comfortably buy their food and to be able to rely on the recommendations and choices of the distributor. Quality and trust keep the customers coming back, and in so doing they support the “real” economy and the community’s health and interconnectedness. The IMMB and the markets vendors and community members also help to
Social Responsibility

Markets and the Wider Community

The markets continue to foster relationships with the community by providing and instigating many acts of social responsibility, and by so doing they place themselves solidly as bona fide members of the neighborhood. The markets and communities of vendors help create a healthy and productive environment in many different ways. For example: “they are participating in the World Day against AIDS; they organized and joined with other associations, in prevention activities for cancer; and solidarity with Saharan populations, in conjunction with the Raval House of Infants etc. The Friend Clothes campaign, of recycling used clothing, is another example [of giving back to the community].”

The social contributions are visible and as a result help to create interaction and exchange within the community, creating a social space, while also aiding the needy, both within their own neighborhoods and beyond. “Collaborations with all kinds of social entities in the promotion of solidarity campaigns are part of the day to day habitual work of the markets. In that way, the markets recover their role as an agora and a forum, taking advantage of being a place where citizens can unite people from all origins and conditions.”
campanyes solidàries conformen el dia a dia habitual de la feina de mercats. Així, els mercats recuperen el paper d’àgora i de fórum aprofitant el fet de ser un espai on es reuneix la cuitadania de tota procedencia i condició” (Tolrà, 211). In 2009, the Ninot Market was able to donate more than $3,000 to UNICEF in order to help fight against malnutrition in countries such as Somalia, Eritria and Ethiopia, and by bringing together DJ’s and booksellers and the like, they are able to raise money and awareness for these, and more causes—the markets unify the community in order to help the local and international communities (Mercats de Barcelona: Activitats 2009, 37). Their constant interaction with members of their community along with their physical presence, allows the markets to create a thriving neighborhood and to amplify the quality of life for so many of Barcelona’s citizens.

The government supports the market system by looking forward and addressing the issues of globalization from a top-down perspective in a way that will help to conserve the local market experience. The community supports the markets through their consumption, and through this bottom-up perspective of supporting the vendors who concentrate on their neighbors and help make the neighborhood the kind of community they would want to live in. International
connections and globalization is supported while at the same time the local people and their values and needs are upheld as well. Because the people dictate the products of the market through what they choose to purchase (or not), if they want international foods as well as local, pre-cooked and cleaned as well as whole and raw, they rely on the markets and their professional vendors to give them precisely what they want.
Conclusion

The unique public markets of Barcelona are poised for a thriving future based on their theoretical and empirical grounding and commitment to both global influences as well as the local traditions of trade and consumption. It is a necessary balance that keeps the markets both expedient and attractive for contemporary consumers allowing them to have a well-rounded experience as they shop. The sociable open-air style, the quality of foods offered, the accountability of traders and suppliers, and the system of embeddedness within local neighborhoods merit increased attention from scholars and urban policy makers. The Barcelona markets promote economic, socio-cultural, and health benefits, and provide a critical alternative to the dominant globalized mode of food provisioning and consumption.

In this paper I traced the history and previous incarnations of public markets through the Greeks, Romans and Arabs, as well as considered the European situation and its fluctuations over the centuries. I then uncovered the debate surrounding globalization, its influence on the food system, and the technological and anthropological perspectives that inform future trajectories. Thereafter, I analyzed the role of globalization manifested through the goals of the IMMB and their current tactics, including creating supermarkets within the markets and creating and participating in international organizations. Similarly, I then examined the role of the IMMB and the community, primarily through the role of the products, the vendors, the consumers, and the markets social contributions. By probing the layers of the market system, one can fully comprehend the drastic influence markets have on the citizens, the city of Barcelona, as well as the other various cities and countries involved. It is thus possible to understand the importance of why concentrating on the markets today will help to ensure the dynamism of food consumption
as well as a healthy city overall—economically, culturally, and socially—and how markets will continue to thrive into the future.

**Fusion of the Global and the Local: The Market Sweet Spot**

The key finding that shapes the majority of this project is thus the fusion, the bridge that the markets are striving to execute. As explained above, the influence of globalization, specifically on the global food system has reached the traditional markets of Barcelona; instead of completely embracing or wholeheartedly rejecting this influence, they are wisely and calculatedly accepting certain qualities of the global system in order to remain pertinent. By incorporating the new with the traditional they are supporting the community—it allows the vendors to remain as full time, self-employed professionals, while at the same time providing citizens with quality, accountable food, in addition to the faster, packaged and mainstream food that contemporary customers want as well. While the IMMB is the official decision-maker concerning the markets and their current status, they are very much reacting to the needs of the community. In other words, the various factors—the government, the vendors, the consumers, the products, the traditional, and the contemporary—all contribute individually to creating the markets that exist today. The Barcelona public markets are a fusion, a bridge between all of these elements; as a result they will continue to thrive within this ever-dynamic role, helping to keep the city healthy.
Reflections

Throughout the fieldwork, internship, and research process I have learned to value and understand the full implications of maintaining alternative food distribution methods. Public markets, farmers markets, food trucks/carts, and the like all help to support different types of communication and relationships between buyers and customers, allows access to non-conventional foods and tastes, as well as upholds the accountability that people often lack when buying standard food at supermarkets. It is a process that pushes people to realize that food does not magically appear—by buying differently, people might begin to change their understanding of the current global food system. Barcelona, unlike many cities in the world, gives all citizens in their own community’s access to alternative distribution methods, something that one would be hard-pressed to find elsewhere to the same extent. This project has thus helped me to realize the important void that the markets fill in Barcelona, and inspired me to try and eventually fulfill a similar alternative food distribution method where I reside—giving people in all types of neighborhoods access to diverse foods and food distribution systems.

This paper addresses concerns regarding the ever-growing global food system based on convenience and mass production. By casting the Barcelona market system as a functional alternative to the two current, extreme, food options now in place—the hyper-global and the hyper-local—it helps to broaden the possibilities for different food distribution and consumption methods. The success of the Barcelona markets is that they retain their historical role as a local and community food center, while catering to the contemporary needs of citizens, thus providing a viable model for other cities and countries. If the US was able to incorporate the convenience oriented supermarkets, with the health and accountability oriented farmers markets, it could create a healthier, more conscious group of consumers. Allowing more communication and
transparency within the US food system could help to transform the current trajectory of the global food system. In Barcelona, every neighborhood has access to at least one market; this is possible mostly due to the density of the city. Similar cities such as San Francisco should be able to create a comparable network of super/farmers markets. By transforming places such as the Ferry Building farmers market, or the soon to be vacated Exploratorium building, and establishing permanent vendors within, the same sort of global/local fusion markets might be achieved.

As with any paper, there are topics that I am not able to address that merit further investigation, both within the Barcelona markets, as well as the global food system. Specifically, I was not privileged to interview either vendors or customers (just the IMMB employees who were also market shoppers). Interviews from those points of view might have extracted different anecdotes and perspectives on the markets. Interviewing vendors could also have shed light on more of the food distribution process itself—where they source from, how they choose their foods, and what it means for the sellers and/or farmers that they buy from. Access to information about the actual food chain process was something that I focused less on, and was harder to acquire, (as it is more under the realm of Mercabarna), but is a crucial element within the markets that needs to be addressed.

Markets as a whole also deserve further study. Because this is such a pivotal time within the markets, more attention must be focused on their dynamic role in society and how it may help to alter the trajectory of the eating/shopping habits of today. Author and anthropologist, Rachel Black, in her upcoming book on the open-air market of Porta Palazzo, also addresses the
importance of renewed interest and study in the markets of today. Specific anthropological studies such as hers help to shed light on these multi-use markets; I believe more studies like this are necessary to fully understand and promote the importance of public markets. Comparing and studying successful European and non-European markets might also help to lead to discoveries and strengthen the role of markets globally. Markets combine food, health, society, culture, tradition, and space—it is not a small task to dig through the layers that markets have to offer. Each of these topics must be further analyzed in the context of the market.

As per the larger global food system, there is much information and studying that needs to occur. Due to the increasing urbanization of the world—more people now reside in cities than in rural areas—urban food supply and distribution systems need to be strengthened. The lack of accountability and transparency in the current global food system is an issue when it supplies food to such large amounts of the global population; when the health of our bodies and the environment is in jeopardy, changes need to be made. It is important to further uncover and understand the effects of the global food system as a whole, as well as its viable alternatives more in depth if a healthy, sustainable way of feeding the world is to be achieved.

In conclusion, the forty-three markets that make up the Barcelona public market system are an amazing and unique web of markets that, by combining traditional and contemporary methods of distributing and selling food, have produced markets that allow the local communities and neighborhoods, as well as international ones, to thrive. By retaining this historical yet updated style of consumption, the markets remain loyal to the vendors and consumers, ensuring their important role in citizens’ lives for decades to come.

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Figure 33: Barcelona map indicating the markets and their areas of influence for consumers (red, closest range; orange, med range; yellow, least range).
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