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TITRE=Innovation et patrimoine alimentaire en Midi-Pyrénées. Formes d'innovation et lien au territoire.

TITLE=Innovation in food heritage. Typologisation in three rural areas of Midi-Pyrénées.

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Abstract

Food habits and cultures are subject to various forms of change and innovation. The different actors of the agro-food sector are involved in those innovation trends, renewing or reversing their relationship to "tradition". This article is based on a study of three rural areas of Midi-Pyrénées: Southern Aveyron, Rouergue the High Country (Northern Aveyron) and the Armagnac area in the Gers and reveals three main profiles of innovators in the field of food heritage. Each of these profiles corresponds to an organizational form, itself contained in a particular relationship to the territory and the system of local actors. It also highlights the importance of how these innovators are regarded by the local population, and it shows the central role of local companies in the appropriation of the innovation process.

Key words: Food heritage, heritagization, innovation forms, innovator, local integration, appropriation.

Résumé

Les cultures alimentaires sont évolutives et font l'objet de différentes formes d'innovation. Qu'ils soient artisans, industriels ou institutionnels, reconnus ou plus marginaux, les différents acteurs de la filière agro-alimentaire portent ces mouvements d'innovation, renouvelant ou inversant ainsi leur rapport à la « tradition ». Cette dernière se trouve alors remaniée dans le projet de valorisation. L'étude fait ressortir trois principaux profils d'innovateurs dans le champ de la patrimonialisation alimentaire. Chacun de ces profils correspond à une forme d'organisation, elle-même inscrite dans un rapport particulier au territoire et au système d'acteurs local. Cette typologie souligne par ailleurs l'importance du regard de la population locale sur ces innovateurs ; elle montre le rôle central des sociétés locales dans l'appropriation des processus d'innovation, participant ou non à leur légitimation. Si le processus d'innovation a longtemps été porté par des groupes d'acteurs structurés, reconnus par la société locale, il est également, le fait de petits groupes ou acteurs en constellation et en déséquilibre social, animés par une forte cohérence idéologique. La réflexion s'appuie sur une enquête réalisée sur trois territoires ruraux de Midi-Pyrénées : le Sud-Aveyron, le Pays du Haut Rouergue (Nord Aveyron) et le pays d'Armagnac dans le Gers.

Mots Clés : Patrimoine alimentaire, patrimonialisation, formes d'innovation, innovateurs, intégration locale, appropriation

Introduction

Food heritage encompasses tangible and intangible elements making up food cultures and defined by the community as a shared heritage (Bessièrè, 2001; Tibère, 2001). In concrete terms, it is composed of all the agricultural products, raw and transformed, of the knowledge and know-how mobilised to produce them, as well as the techniques and culinary artefacts linked to their transformation. This heritage also comprises the knowledge and practices linked to consumption (table manners, forms of sociability, symbolism of food, tableware...) and to food distribution (country markets, farm sales).

As a genuine resource for territorial development, heritage has become a place for projects and mobilisation which participates in boosting and differentiating rural areas. Its economic promotion is also built on processes of appropriation and collective constructions in which the relationship to change plays a specific role. Bearing this in mind, we have looked at innovation and the links with heritage construction, in terms of both representations and local players' practices. In the study conducted, innovation is understood in relative terms, from a perspective of change and the introduction of a novelty into an established framework. It is a reconstruction process taking place within a territorialized social context (Doloreux, Filion, et al., 2005). It mobilises technical, human but also social capital. It thus builds on the active heritage or rehabilitates the "sleeping heritage"; it also builds on a "constructed or invented" heritage (Poulain, 1997). It can also be focused on products and techniques, practices or tableware; finally, it may result from the appropriation of historical and cultural elements associated with the territory. The territorial approach leads us to consider innovation in its contextual dimension. Our hypothesis is that behind such innovation as it is visible in the various areas of Midi-Pyrénées under study, different relations to continuity and change, but also to history, context and the local social fabric can be discerned amongst the players of the food sector. The data collection was organized in three southwest French rural areas with great heritage attractions¹: Southern Aveyron, Rouergue the High Country (Northern Aveyron) and the Armagnac country in the Gers department. These fieldwork areas were also chosen because of their commitment to innovative strategies². We interviewed institutional players in local development (local councillors, people involved in organising tourism) and professionals from the agro-food and catering sectors (cooperative managers, agribusiness directors, restaurant owners). The present article presents the analysis of the various discourses of players involved in innovation processes, asked notably about their perception of innovation and their way of implementing it. The analysis first considers the forms of innovation implemented by the players in the areas studied. The next step was to identify the innovative approaches implemented at a local level. A typology was constructed around three criteria: the first one has to do with the frameworks for innovation, or more precisely, their individual or collective

¹ Apart from food, such attractions belong to different heritage categories: landscape, built, hand-crafted and industrial heritages, around which various promotion initiatives are being deployed.

² Each of them has joined the Leader +1 European program in which innovation is a major thrust.

dimension, the second concerns the local status of the player and his level of integration locally, the third one considers the presence or absence of genuine innovative strategies. Furthermore, this approach reveals the significant presence of women and migrants in innovation dynamics.

Diversity in forms of innovation

Observations show the diversity of innovations and the capacity of local players to integrate changes to various degrees and at different levels of their professional environment. All types of innovation are found in the territories under study: those relating to products, techniques, commercial processes or even the organisational forms of agribusiness companies. The following analysis aims to draw up a typology.

“Product innovation”

This leads to the creation of new products, of new recipes from the combination of local raw materials and unusual combinations. This leads to culinary innovations such as those of Michel and Sébastien Bras, Michelin-starred chefs, who propose new associations of ingredients, the transformation and elaboration of new recipes, going as far as inventing new dishes and giving birth to a new type of cooking: *“I make a Laguiole ice-cream that I serve with trout and farçous”* (Restaurant owner, Aubrac). This type of innovation seems to be thriving in all the areas surveyed. In the area of cheesemaking, new cheeses thus appear, such as the “small tomme cheese” or Ecir d'Aubrac, a cheese created, invented, inspired by farming recipes belonging to the agricultural world. Regarding the sector of cooked pork meats, we can mention a few products described as innovative such as sausage made with Laguiole or Roquefort cheese or offal, and Boeuf Fermier Aubrac dried beef.

The creation of local Aubrac beer is another example of introducing a new product to the area. Thus commercialized, it is followed by the launch of other derivatives: lemonade and cola, lemonade flavoured with chestnut, fig, violet, *“Rétortillat”* from the Jeune Montagne cooperative, snail and ostrich rearing, Aubrac beer, sandwich spread, revisited *“foie gras”* products, all these represent “product innovations” whose local roots are an essential heritage component. The relationship to the place enhances the approach and confers a heritage dimension on the product invented: *“Today, a desert creator cannot use a Gers Clementine, it's a Clementine with Armagnac. We also know that the chestnut velouté sauce is not a made with chestnuts from the Gers but rather with the Gers know-how”* (Foie Gras producer, Armagnac country).

Technological or process innovation

Process innovation refers to technological progress observed at the various levels of the agro-food sector linked to the local food heritages. Manufacturing a new product with new

technology or processes is the form most commonly seen as innovation. However, following Drouand & Williot (2007), we can observe that *“both in the food sector and the industrial sector, innovation can mean manufacturing a new product with an existing technology, manufacturing an existing product with an existing technology or manufacturing a new product with a new technology.”* In all our three fieldwork areas, many socio-professionals surveyed refer to innovations which implement techniques or processes aiming to obtain an existing product or perceived as equivalent to the existing one: *“Innovation also means creating machines to manufacture products which used to be handmade, a return to values, not only modernizing to produce more cheaply”* (cannery director, Southern Aveyron). In this case, innovation is essentially aimed at adapting to a changing regulatory, economic or social context. A few examples from the field illustrate this form of technological innovation. Technological changes, essentially at the breeding level, can be noted in the beef sector with Boeuf Fermier Aubrac or Fleur d’Aubrac. In the cheese sector, for institutionalized fields such as Laguiole and Roquefort notably, technological innovation means meeting ever more stringent health regulations. These norms seem encourage process innovation, whilst imposing a framework for change which tends towards “standardizing” innovation, in this case technological. Innovation can also mean the acquisition and/or use of new techniques such as deep freezing to create new products. It is the case for frozen aligot from the Jeune Montagne cooperative, which enables the consumer to preserve products longer and delay using them.

Marketing or sales innovation

Marketing innovation relates to the price, the promotion and the communication policy around the product. This form of innovation is recurrent and widespread in the various agro-food sectors encountered, as well as in all discourse: *“It’s not so much the product, but the way it is sold which has been drastically modernized”* (Tourist office director, Armagnac Country). This marketing or sales innovation can be found in branding (here territorial), in packaging (the wrapping used) as well as in distribution circuits used by food heritages. The use of the “terroir” can indeed be considered as a sales innovation: the brand crystallizes both the high quality and the identity of the territory. In the case of Choc’Aubrac for example (a spread manufactured and sold in Aubrac), the Aubrac territory is mainly used for marketing and sales purposes. This territorial approach is only a communication ploy aiming to increase the territorial added value of the product (that initially has none). This form of innovation, focused on the creation of a territorial image, offers leverage for communication rather than being an actual content of the product. This symbolical, commercial dimension to the territory is easily found in the sales and communication policies of the food territories surveyed.

Functional innovation

Together with packaging changes and newly-invested sales networks, food heritage may be subject to modifications in its uses and/or its status. Its way of existing and being consumed may evolve: *"the type of food is changing; I think that the products of the region will also evolve...maybe the laguiole during aperitif time, the same goes for meat, there are other ways of consuming"* (Farmer, farm cheese producer, Aubrac). This type of innovation that we will describe as functional innovation refers to a diversification in uses or in the traditional functions of the product. The components of food heritage, such as Laguiole or Roquefort, are here diverted from their main functions through the invention of new uses or the diversification of their modes of consumption.

The multiplication of product consumption modes is achieved through a change of status. It is all about modifying the representations of the product. In the case of Armagnac, it would be the switch from a "noble" product, an almost sacralised one, to a commonly used product: *"Armagnac can be savoured in a sacred way, calmly, around the fireplace in the evening, or after partying with "bandas" (musical band) all afternoon or even with products that give it zip such as an Armagnac/Schweppes/apple juice cocktail..."* (Manager of a grape cooperative, Armagnac country). Innovation can also emerge from the shift of a product from the private to the public sphere. Once again, this is a change in status as the domestic product becomes a market commodity.

Organisational, partnership or network innovation

Organisational innovation as we have noted it concerns territorial synergy between socio-economic and political players by strengthening partnership and exchange around food heritages. The technological and sales innovations previously mentioned generally presuppose the invention of new means of organisation within the structure itself, but also with partners. Far from being fragmented, the various forms of innovation observed are interdependent, thus creating, within their structure new forms of social and economic organisation. However, rather than instilling an organisational dimension, some innovations rest on these logics of partnership or network creation. This is a dominant feature, rather than a mere characteristic of innovation. Grouping together, associating, being committed to the same approach is indeed a genuine innovation for some players. Quality-driven initiatives or qualification systems are seen as innovative forms of collective organisation (Fleur d'Aubrac, Boeuf Fermier d'Aubrac obtaining the Label Rouge for example).

In Aubrac, network-based organisations are mainly in charge of production activities and of pooling means of production (the production chain upstream counts a few networks of breeders and farmers). In Southern Aveyron on the other hand, these innovative networks are more geared towards an activity of sales promotion (downstream networks of professionals close to the consumer). Organisational innovation can also lead to the construction of new partnerships, the affiliation to new networks of players. The Laguiole farm sector and the links with the DSV (Direction des Services Vétérinaires) is an illustration, just like the organisation of transhumance festivities and the creation of new sales networks

which emerge as innovative initiatives for breeders. Developing tourism also constitutes a form of organisational innovation reflected in the implementation of promotion associations, sales networks such as “Aubrac de Ferme en Ferme” or the association “De Ferme en Ferme” in Southern Aveyron.

Social innovation

This form of innovation is centred on the creation or re-creation of common values in relation to the territory. Notably present in Aubrac, this form of innovation seemed remarkable to us through the relationship established with the territory and its agriculture and food resources. Social innovation as observed in Valadier’s³ discourse was shaped by the renewal of values and designates an improvement, a reactivation, a revalorisation of the territorial heritage, thus crystallising new forms of social opportunity. Heritagization means bringing back, inventing or constructing heritage value. Innovating here consists in “*not being inactive in matters of heritage*”, here food (town councillor, former manager of the Coopérative Jeune Montagnard, Aubrac). This form of innovation consists in building and inventing new relationships with a society and its heritage. This form of innovation is reflected in the importance granted to the symbolic, cultural and memory patterns.

These values, nonexistent in generic products, can go beyond the content of the product itself. They ensure territorial specificity and the future of territories. Social innovation as described here is part of a quest for this added value. It consists in inventing new modes of construction of symbolic values. This form of innovation is characterized by a symbolic value provided by territories: “*the added value of Aubrac products represents around 25 to 30%. It is neither the weight of the basket, nor the content, and what is in this basket we did not invent, the region did*” (town councillor, former manager of the Jeune Montagnard, Aubrac cooperative). This innovation is made up of social inventions around man and environment. It consists in creating a link, a harmony, a structure between man and his environmental resources. As a territorial invention of values, this type of innovation is located in the quest for this added value. In the case of the Armagnac country, the search for, and creation of common values around living together, notably in the contact between the locals and those newly arrived, seems to be an emerging form of social innovation.

Innovator’s profiles: what is the link with the territory and the local society?

The following typologies arise from the analysis of individual characteristics which would differentiate innovators from other individuals, but most of all from the analysis of their place within a collective, a local social group. With whom do these players innovate? What are their relations with the population and the local society (position and status within the local society)? Does innovation result from purposeful or rather unconscious strategies? The analysis of their social role and the place they occupy in the three territories surveyed

³ André Valadier is a town councillor in Aubrac and founder of the cheese cooperative *Jeune Montagne*

enables us to paint three pictures of innovators. Finally, two types of social players are strongly identified in these areas: women and migrants.

“Free riders” and their continuous desire for change

They are individuals with personal dynamism and individual initiative. Their approaches are marked by an ongoing search for invention and innovation. Opportunistic innovators, they express their desire and continuous will to adapt, to change. Forces for upheaval and new experiences, they lead initiatives based most commonly on external contributions. Also described as “pioneers”, who are capable of acquiring new property or know-how, they define themselves as “in advance” of the general movement and play a double role as experimenter and example for others. This category of innovators is easily found in the Armagnac country. In Aubrac, and in Southern Aveyron, these initiatives of permanent experiment are also discernible in various agro-food companies’ moves where innovation remains a key point of focus. The entrepreneurs or managers of the agro-food structures we met (bakers, pastry chefs, brewers, cheese makers, restaurant owners) stand out through their will to anticipate any change, to meet external demand and the surrounding competitive offer: *“I remove, add, experiment; we don’t innovate enough because of a lack of time. I love to innovate...We need to innovate more”* (Agro-food company manager, Aubrac). The playful dimension of innovation is sometimes clearly expressed: *“We sometimes add little regional touches, like a dinner around duck. A menu, with a foie-gras lollipop dipped into hot stock. The semi-cooked foie-gras, to melt in very hot stock. People are very surprised but its good fun. We try these dishes, and if they are successful, we validate them, and that’s all there is to it. I rely on my instinct”* (caterer, Armagnac country). These “free riders” most often meet in small complexes or “family-owned establishments” which have a strong historical presence in the territories. Innovation strategies find their legitimacy in family transmission. They operate, most often, independently from collectives of players integrated into the local, traditional sectors.

“Collectives” acknowledged by the local community

The territories surveyed feature sectors established and recognized around food heritages within which another kind of innovator can be found. These industries are perceived by all the players met as essential for the territory for their economic, but also social and cultural spinoffs. They appear as structural economic components for the local society: generating employment, economic impetus, social networks and cultural anchoring. In Aubrac, it is the case of the "Laguiole cheese", "Aubrac meat" industries; in Southern Aveyron, it's the "Roquefort" industry which marks the agro-food landscape; finally in the Armagnac country, the “Armagnac” and goose and duck industries undeniably colour the local socio-economic structure. “Sacralised” in some discourses, these industries are mainly composed of collectives of individuals grouped around professional or inter-professional trade-unions

linked to the agriculture world (examples: Confederation of producers and industrials of Roquefort, BNIA, Fleur d'Aubrac, Boeuf Fermier Aubrac). These groups of players are anchored in the history of the community and build, in their promotional approach, on the historicity of places and products. These structuring industries appear as collective players offering accepted and legitimate innovative processes. They may, or may not, favour the emergence of other products. For example, the Jeune Montagne cooperative supports the Ecir d'Aubrac, an "invented" cheese, currently included in the basket of goods (Hirczak, Moalla, et al., 2005). Production chains thus appear as structures legitimizing the innovation process. Innovation is located here in a framework already acknowledged or admitted. It's the case of the "innovative" relaunch of the Laguiole farm cheese in 1996, which follows the previous AOC Laguiole industry supported by the Jeune Montagne cooperative. It is also the case of the Fleur d'Aubrac industry (IGP in the pipeline), which integrates innovation in a recurrent, permanent way in its evolution process (technological, organisational and marketing innovation): *"We always try to adapt to the expectations of all the operators of the industry. Producers, butchers...and consumers. Producers themselves are going to change their breeding, procedures and feeding methods. It's not an innovation policy but rather a day-to-day business..."* (Project officer for the association Fleur d'Aubrac, Aubrac).

In Southern Aveyron (Gal AMIE), the Roquefort industry, established for over a century, is responsible for numerous different innovations. It accompanies and supports other innovations around the industry as shown by the experience of farm to farm networks in the Roquefort country and the Table des Grands Causses: *"I think that the fact people taste the cheese here is an innovation, and that they say they no longer eat it in the same way...people are discovering aromas. The way we did things was innovative"* (Organiser, farm to farm network, Southern Aveyron).

"Deviant" collectives centred on opening up and differentiation

Besides those structures integrated and acknowledged by the local society, a third category of innovators can be noted, characterized by smaller and more "marginalized" structures. This third profile brings together initiatives emanating from small groups of individuals. On the margins of more structured sectors, innovation here reveals a logic of makeshift jobs, amateurism, somewhat fragmented, but with important social and cultural impact for the area. This type of innovation, that can be described as "deviant"⁴ and noticeable through various local initiatives of agro-food promotion, and carried by a "spirit" or "a mode of thinking and being" centred on opening but also on differentiation. This third type of innovator is often non-conformist or discrepant with the territorial cultural system. Through their acts, their representations or their innovation practices, these individuals or groups of

⁴ The notion of deviance should thus be understood in reference to the norms put forward by societies. According to Ogien (Ogien, 1995), this notion of norms referring to that of culture, contains in itself the idea *"according to which the belonging to a social group implies that each of its members has habits and ways of seeing the world he inherits and which define him entirely."* This leads this author to describe the deviance phenomenon *"like the appearance of non-conformist behaviours in relation to a culture."*

individuals, are revealed as marginalized from the local society. They can be the subjects of negative collective judgements, conferring on them an image and a position of “marginals” in the society under study.

In our study, we observed, notably in Southern Aveyron, an ideologically dissenting territory, that the social groups more inclined to innovation and change are the groups on the margins of established socio-economic structures. These players or groups of players, are motivated by a strong social or ideological cohesion. In Aubrac, innovation seems to mainly emerge from structured chains, as we have shown in the previous paragraph. We can observe a marginalization or indifference towards small innovative projects, centred on alternative forms of agricultural development or food promotion (sales of farm products, short circuits, agri-tourism, etc.): *“I am a kamikaze here, totally cast aside”* (organic farmer).

The small promotional initiatives encountered (breeding of ostrich, goat’s cheese manufacturing, etc.) seem to be suppressed or put aside in Northern Aveyron, superseded by dominant showcase products such as the Laguiole or Aligot cheeses. Emerging innovation or that centred on the invention of new products has little place in Aubrac.

These approaches, described as “marginal or deviant” can appear according to some discourses as the result of logics of differentiation compared to structured sectors acknowledged locally. They express and construct themselves through opposition and differentiation; they appear as dissenting forces in the face of the local dominant model, that is to say the structuring collective organisations (legitimizing instances of innovation), most often helped and accompanied by public authorities: *“Which triggers strong oppositions or resistances linked to the supremacy of some sectors”* (Representative, Aubrac).

Conversely, we can observe in Southern Aveyron a predominance of diverse forms of innovation in small structures, on the margin, carried by neo-rural or external players to the territory. This category of innovators or “deviant collective” is widely present, inheritor of the protest movement of the 1970’s now well settled in the area. These new inhabitants reveal and bring to light potentialities or territorial resources little promoted until now. These initiatives are sometimes perceived as disturbing from the “inside”, but remain, through their number and their past, non-negligible components of the local community of Southern Aveyron. These innovators meet through networks composed of actors from external territories, rather on the fringe of local society. Perceived as “deviant” by “born and bred” local populations, and against an established system, they organize themselves in networks and create in their own way forms of collective organisations: *“We were seen as reckless, we were going straight to the wall. They said it would never work out, that we were peasants and not retailers. We were even excluded from the producer’s group of the local cooperative because we didn’t want to join the cooperative as we undertook direct sales. At first we were not encouraged by the local population.”* (Manager of a producers’group, Southern Aveyron). It is nevertheless worthwhile noticing that these “deviant collectives” can, as we have seen in the case of Southern Aveyron, largely find and negotiate their place, by creating complementarities and close links with local populations. These two “worlds”,

represented here by the “outsiders/neo-rurals” and the “insiders/locals” are led to cohabit, to articulate: their discourses are also marked by understanding and encounter. The articulation or the complementarity of these two groups lies in balance and mutual acknowledgment.

The prevalence of women and migrants

Amongst all the types of innovators met, we identified two recurring profiles, i.e. “women” and “migrants”. The innovation process turns out to be greatly supported by the two profiles of players. Women and/or migrants are at the heart of the “deviant collectives”. Perceived and analysed as receivers or transmitters of influence, these players are marked by their capacity to create substitution norms and influence the local system. These recurring profiles sometimes appear as “passionately committed groups” invested and animated by strong convictions and a desire for change.

The comments collected highlighted the role of women in the innovation process associated to food heritage. Indeed, the food and/or culinary dimension underlines systematically the status and social position of women. The latter, closer to the domestic sphere highlight in their comments the places and modalities of construction of innovation and food dissemination in the private and family environment. These women, encountered on agricultural holdings or on the local political stage, sometimes declaring being “outsiders” or “from the city” are motivated by a feeling of openness, questioning and strong revival. Let’s give the example of the visiting network “De Ferme en Ferme” in Southern Aveyron, impelled and set up by a few women concerned about proposing an alternative to the promotion of Roquefort cheese. The purpose of this network is to offer tourists another image of Roquefort cheese, based on the discovery of goat-breeding farms and the tasting of the “culinarised” cheese and proposed in other forms (Roquefort tarts, association of cheese and jam...). This approach appears, both in its organisation and in its content, as a true innovation for the Southern Aveyron product and territory: *“When we first created a network, we were five women and a man. It was in 1993, fifteen years ago. We were kind of innovators at that time because there wasn’t any existing network at that time, and the particularity of this network was to innovate around Roquefort”* (Organiser De Ferme en Ferme network, Southern Aveyron).

Our analysis also shows the importance of mobility strategies in the creation or the diffusion of the innovation process. Indeed, migration, may it be for geographical, professional or family reasons, seems to carry, and be favourable to, the innovation process. Going back to Gaudin’s analysis, various features impact innovation, the first of which is the presence of “displaced” people (Gaudin, Aubert, 1994). By this word “displaced”, the author refers here to immigrants, but also any individual outside his original background. In our study, we observe the recurring role “of foreigners” or “outsiders” newly set up or roaming through territories, in the promotion of local food heritages such as *foie gras* or *Armagnac*, etc. It is the exceptional value of the product which is put forward as main promotion reason. These

so-called “external” populations to the territory come for and through the image of the place. Most often from the city, they seem to possess another vision of the place and time and develop another relation to local heritage: feelings of appropriation, of safeguarding and transmission are thus deepened. This new relationship to the territory and identity of places can be explained by effects of distancing or territorial and social confrontation. Geographical and social mobility seems to participate in the reactivation of feelings of belonging to a group, to a place.

The migrant, or the neo-rural plays a non-negligible role in the forms of heritage promotion through practices and representations more marked because the latter are strengthened by the desire for local integration. It brings “the proof” of their attachment to the territory by redoubling promotion initiatives and strategies. Many examples have been seen in the Armagnac country but also in Southern Aveyron: *“There are a lot of outsiders. An Englishman has just settled down and opened an inn. It’s not simple. It’s working out quite well actually, he proposes local cuisine. People who come from outside and promote heritage manage quite well because they doubly adopt the heritage. They promote it with great conviction”* (Representative, CDT Aveyron).

Conclusion

The study shows that innovation is at the heart of food heritages and their dynamic. Whichever form it takes, innovation reflects diverse practices and representations, as well as bringing to light different realities, different contexts and taking various forms depending on the types of structures and players, the territories and the food heritages promoted. Unlike tangible heritages, such as the built heritage, food cultures undergo permanent construction. They are mobile, even unstable, and are subject to various forms of innovation, which sometimes linked, or sometimes divided, have a mutual influence on each other. At a corporate level, product or business innovations often call for organisational innovation. At the territorial level, it stimulates the arrival of external populations, thus strengthening the attractiveness of the place. May they be craftsmen, industrial or institutional players, recognised or more marginalised, the various players of the agro-food chain carry these movements, hence renewing or reversing their relationship to tradition. The latter is thus modified, readjusted in the promotional project. The study also highlights three main innovators’ profiles in the field of food heritage. Each of these profiles corresponds to a form of organisation, itself part of a particular relationship with the territory and the local players. This typology thus emphasizes in addition the importance of the way the population perceives these innovators; it shows the central role of local societies in the appropriation of innovative processes, participating or not in their legitimization. If the innovation process has long been supported and legitimized by groups of structured players, recognized by the local society, it is also due to small groups or players in constellation or in social imbalance, driven by a strong ideological coherence.

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