

INTRODUCTION

Maastricht is the capital city of the south most Dutch region, called Limburg, and one of the most important cities in the Netherlands. It is located in the south-eastern part of the Netherlands very close to the border with Germany and Belgium; the city develops on both sides of the river Maas.

The Market square, located between the Boschstraat kwartier and the Stokstraat kwartier, is the squares that, in Maastricht becomes, on Fridays, one of the most important economic centres, visited by Germans, Belgian, Dutch and, of course, by the “Maastrichtenaren” (population of Maastricht), who go there to buy, visit and learn more about the Dutch culture and traditions.

This topic talks about a research that we, as Form 5 student at ISM, had to conduct last May in Market square, interviewing buyers and sellers we were able to find there. The main aim of this topic is to describe and analyze the range, sphere of influence and catchment area of the Friday morning market and to find out what the main attractions and interests are, according to the point of view of buyers and sellers.



Above is a map of the city. The yellow star shows Market square.

METHOD

We were given the instructions on how to conduct the interviews, collect all the data and, at the end, complete our reports. We were also provided examples of what to do.

For both buyers and sellers we had a questionnaire to fill with information like: nationality, reasons for coming to the market, distance travelled etc...

Being Market square full of people coming from different places, chances could be that some of them were not able to speak English, so the teacher divided the class into groups, in order for every group to have at least a Dutch speaking element. The interview had to be conducted, where possible, in English. We were also instructed on how we were going to travel to get there.

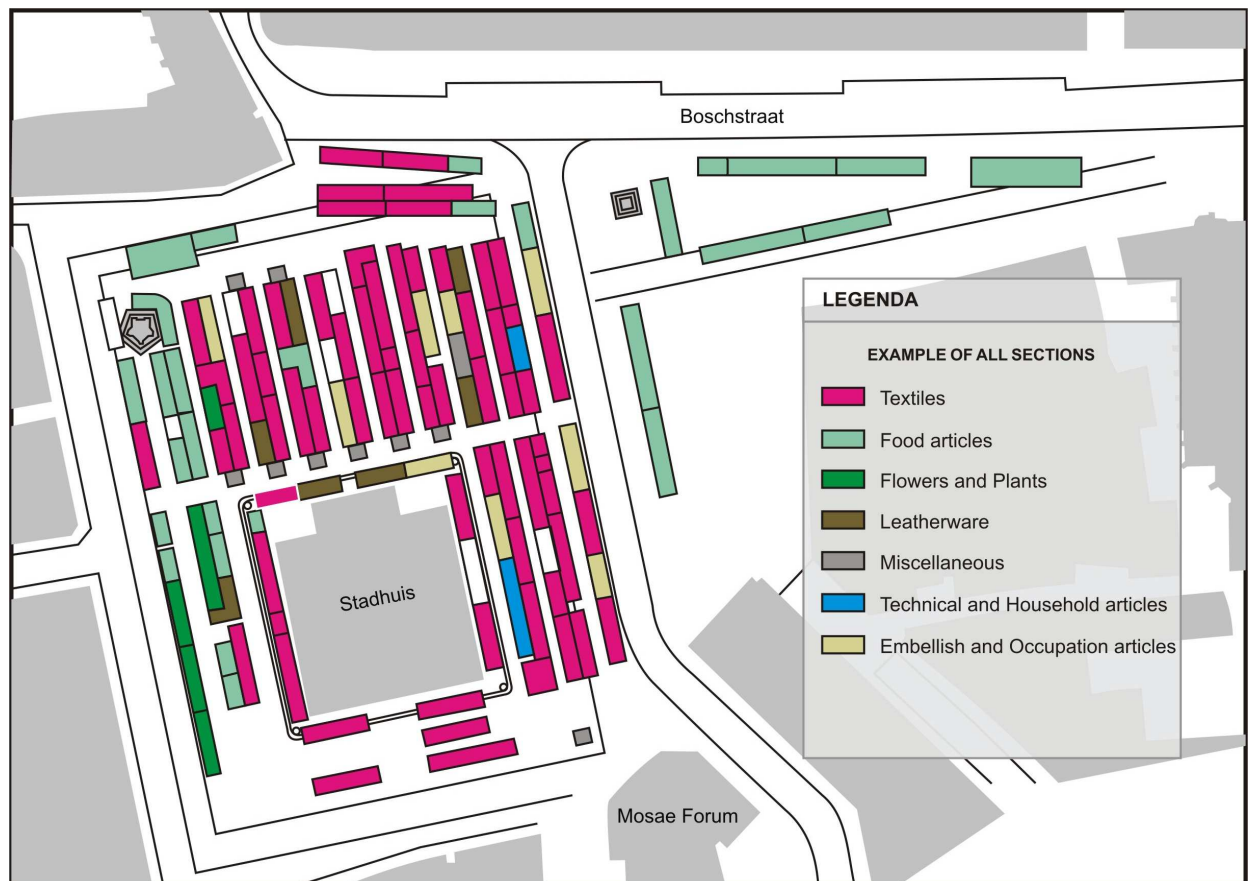
We arrived there and when finally everything was set, we started our research. Our task was to interview 100 buyers and 30 sellers. Every group had to interview a number of buyers and sellers and, after doing that, we had to go back to school and gather all the data.

During our investigation we encountered some difficulties:

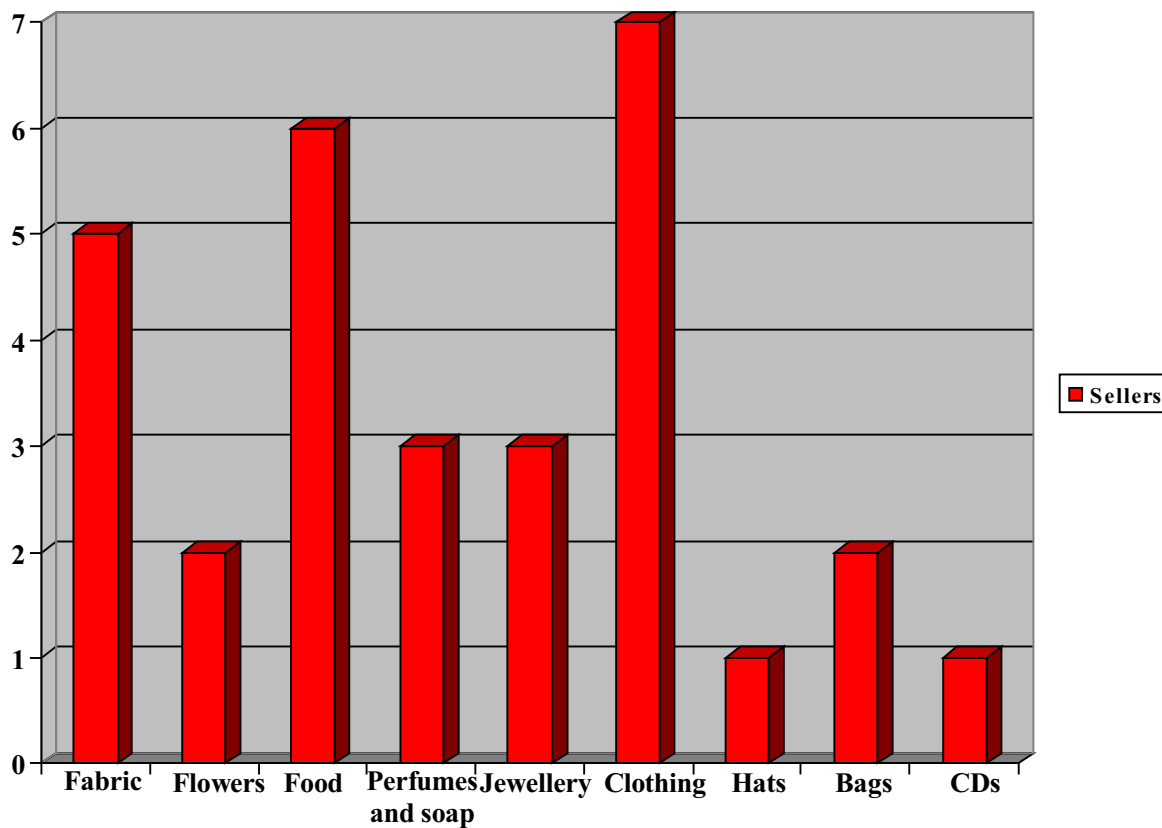
- Reluctance: people refusing to talk just because they didn't like to be interviewed;
- Language barriers: people not speaking English or Dutch;
- Hastiness: people saying they didn't have enough time.

With other minor difficulties we finally made it and we went back to school.

Once we arrived in the classroom we had to organize all the data; we made a first division between buyers and sellers; afterwards we divided the groups of forms in smaller groups based on factors like distance travelled, nationality, etc... Everyone did something and at the end we received all the pieces of information and we were told to start our coursework.



The above picture shows the map of the Market with all the stalls. As we can see, the majority of them are textiles.

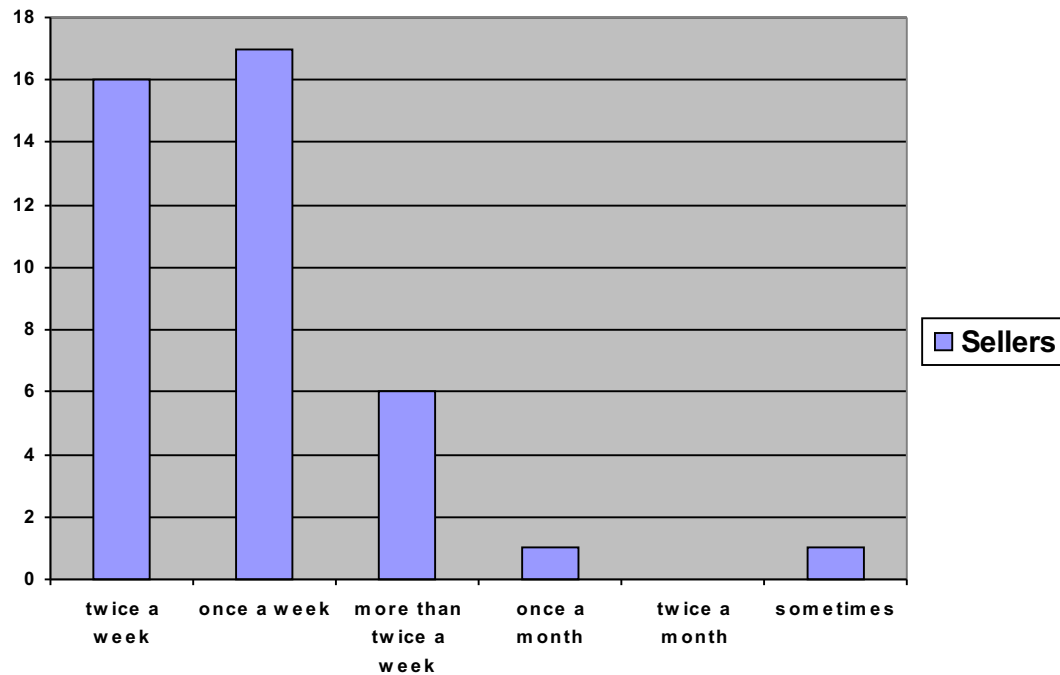
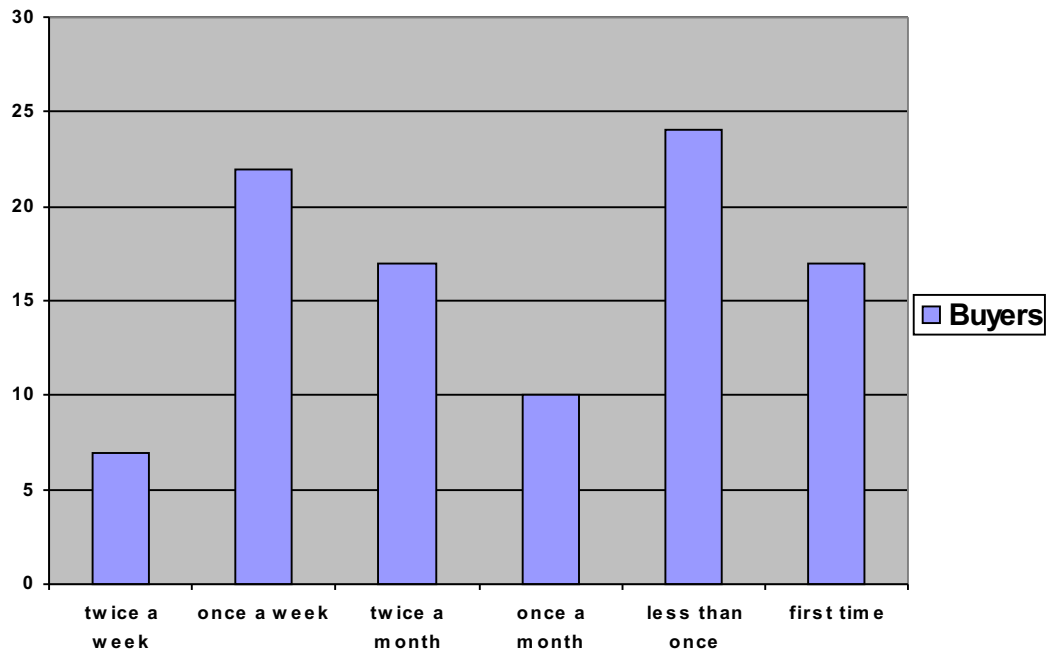


This bar chart shows the products being sold. The item which is sold the most is clothing: the rate at which clothes are sold is 7 by 30.

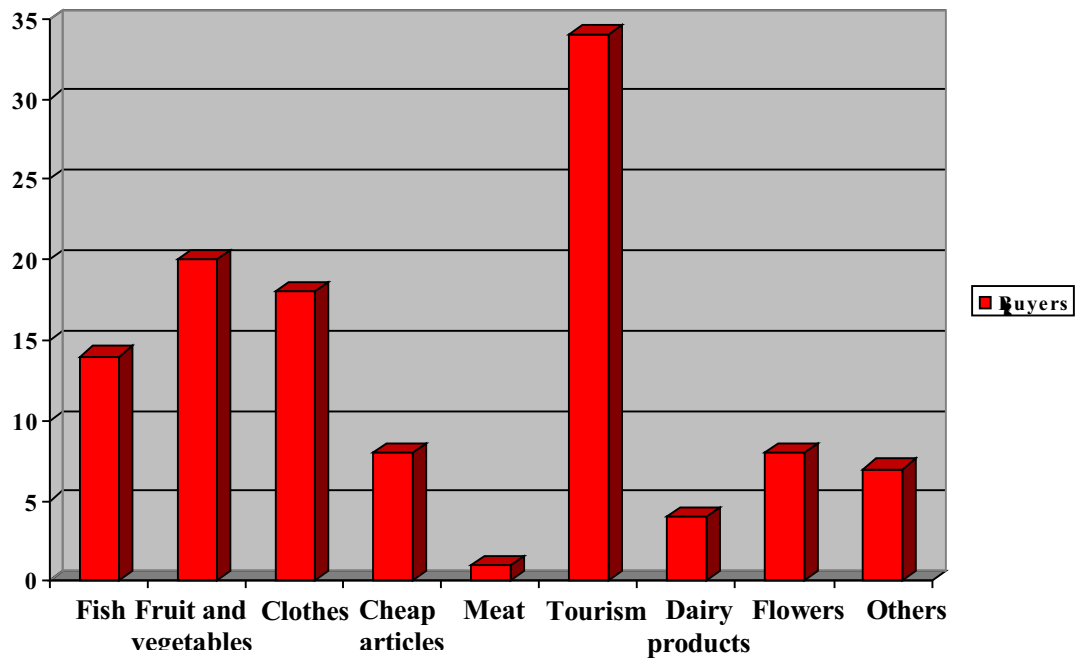
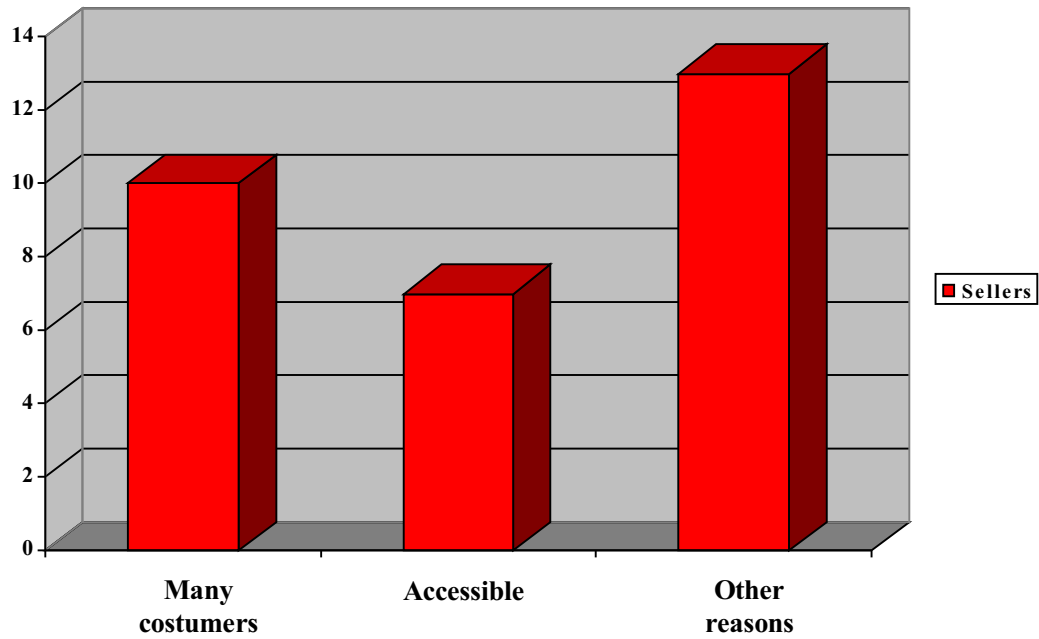
One interesting thing, which I would never have expected, that I found out was that there are also people who go to the market just to spend some leisure time, without a real interest to the market.

For all the sellers, going to the market is really important. They are probably aware of the vast amount of people visiting the market and their interests: so many people coming from several different places, some of which are far away from Maastricht, are a good occasion for the sellers to make their day rich. The market is, in fact, an attraction for many people, who travel also very long distances to spend some time there, some of them animated by the hope of making a good bargain.

Food is also a good-sold product with a rate of 6. All around the Market there are many types of stalls selling raw food such as fruit, meat, vegetables, candies and much more, and also cooked food like roasted chicken, fish, French fries etc...

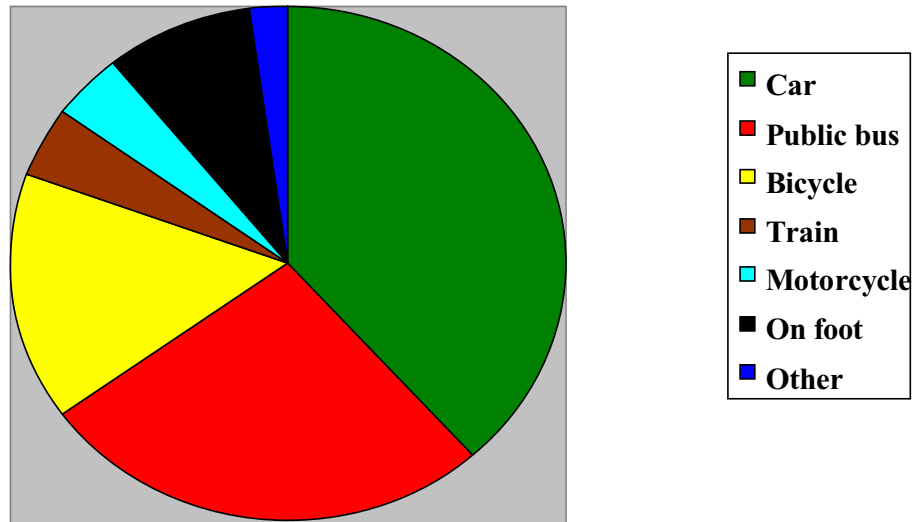


This histogram shows the frequency of coming to the market. Since the sellers' job is to find customers, the more often they go, the better chances they have to make money. For the buyers the thing is different. Most of the buyers come from Maastricht so they don't need to travel for long time and they can go to the market at their discretion. For those who live far from Maastricht and need to travel longer distances the frequency of their visits is, of course, more limited.

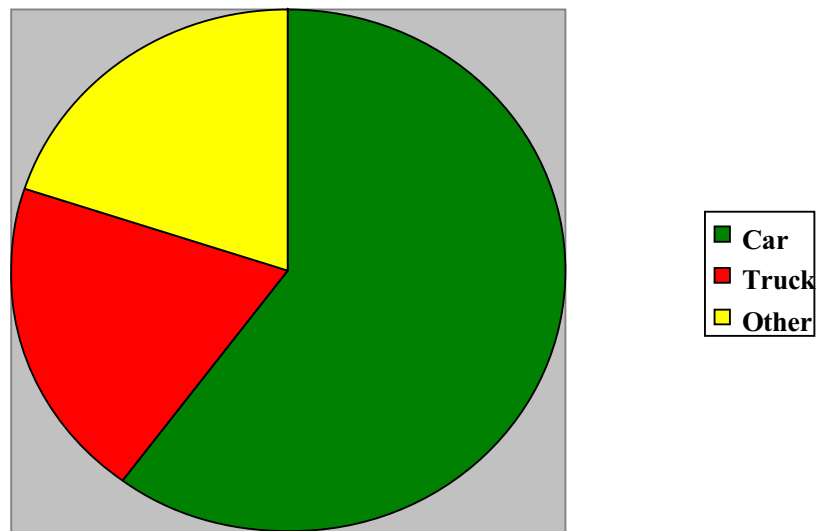


Here we have a bar chart showing the number of people and the reasons for coming to the market. The sellers look at the customers as the only for them to be there, since they go there, mainly, to work. An other reason is the nice atmosphere they find, but far less important than the busyness. On the buyers' side the main reason is the tourism: in fact, there are many people coming from places far from the market; they go to Maastricht for tourism and, once there, they get the chance to spend some time at the market.

BUYERS



SELLERS



As we see in this pie chart, the car is the most used mean of transportation for both buyers and sellers. Oppositely to what I imagined, that is sellers travelling by track, considering the amount of goods they need to transport, with big surprise our investigation showed that the majority of them get there by car, as well as the highest percentage of buyers, with the difference that many buyers often travel using several other means of transportation, such as the public services, buses especially. A reason is, obviously, that buyers live far away from the Market and this tells us that the catchment area is pretty big.

In relation to the sex we don't have exact data, but we could notice that around 65% of buyers were female.



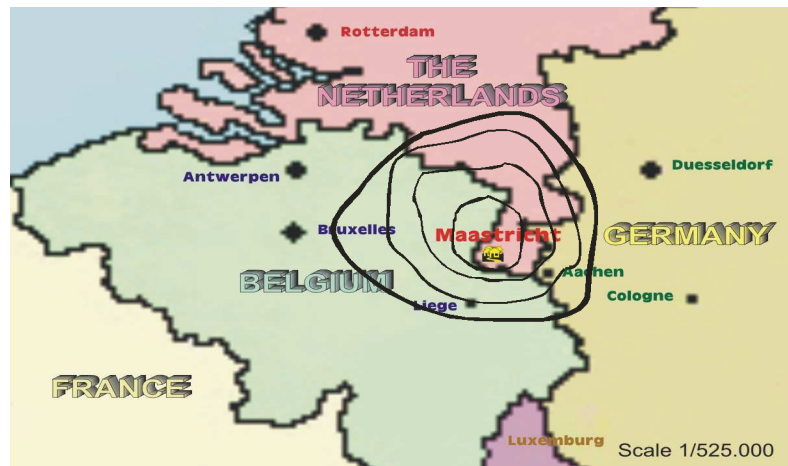
Buyers



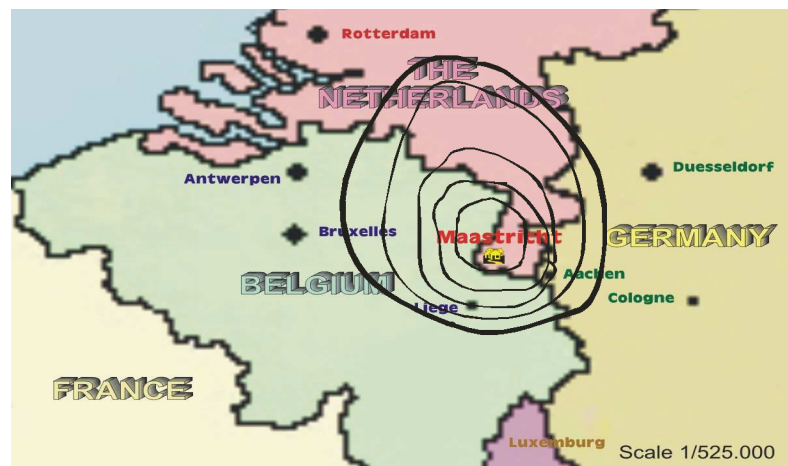
Sellers

This is a distance line map showing the distance that people travel to the market. As expected, sellers travel longer distances than buyers. We all thought that the distance would be a factor. The market in Maastricht, although important and full of nice goods, is not the only place where to buy necessary things at reasonable prices: other cities here around host a market, where local inhabitants go and buy. Still, the market in Maastricht is a very visited one, but people who need to travel long distances will only go there sporadically, while the sellers go there much more often, also because, once they get a selling spot, they don't want to easily give it up.

The visit at the market in Maastricht is, for many buyers, a nice occasion to live a day as tourists, know something more about a wonderful city, like Maastricht is, and spend some relaxing time in a very nice environment.



Buyers



Sellers

Here we can see an isopleth of the catchment area of the Market. The circles design a wide area around Maastricht, indicating the provenience of both sellers and buyers. The data on the previous pages demonstrates, however, that the distance covered by sellers is most of the times far longer than that travelled by buyers, naturally for obvious reasons. Again, the reason related to this aspect might be the interest the buyers have for the city and not for the market itself. Tourists are more likely to travel long distances to visit nice places than buyers to go to a market, no matter how big or important it might be.

CONCLUSION

The result of our investigation demonstrates that, as it could reasonably be deduced, the majority of people were from Maastricht or Limburg area versus people coming from elsewhere.

Based on the collected data I can affirm that, even if Market square is a very beautiful place to visit and that I had a great experience during that investigation, the market itself is basically a place for aged people, mainly women.

The distance is a factor: near places are more likely to be visited than far ones. This is true even in countries like Germany, Holland or Belgium where the means of transportation are, basically, secure, timely and clean.

An interesting point to analyze was the number of people interviewed. According to me, not enough to evaluate the phenomenon correctly. The reluctance some visitors showed didn't help us much, and also the time at our disposal, in addition to our inexperience, wasn't as much as we might have needed for such a research. The data collected was probably gathered in an incorrect manner, since the numbers weren't corresponding correctly.

My suggestion for a future investigation would be to have a coordinator, better if this individual has got some experience in the matter, able to organize and distribute the workload among the participants, both during the investigation phase and during the data collection one. This would reduce the risk of working with wrong information and would allow every participant to organize his job in a proper way.

No matter what happened, I had a great day and I hope to live a similar experience again, possibly inquiring other sectors of the daily activities.