

Chapter 14

Mapping the Public of a Literature Festival with MCA: Overall Cultural Capital vs. Specific Literary Capital



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Introduction

In France, festival audiences offer a space in which to examine the transformations of cultural practices in the last 20 years, besides the national quantitative surveys on these issues. The first important research on festivals was dedicated to the theater festival in Avignon (Ethis 2002; Fabiani 2008). Since then, other surveys have been conducted on music festivals (Négrier et al. 2010; Wynn 2015). However, despite the growing prominence of literature festivals since the 1990s, until recently their audiences have been subject to little research. Apart from our own survey on the French festival *Les Correspondances de Manosque*, few academic surveys have been conducted on these events (Giorgi et al. 2011; Giorgi 2011; Driscoll 2014; Kulkarni et al. 2017).

The sociological survey that we undertook during the 2011 edition of the *Les Correspondances de Manosque* festival¹ (see next section) aimed to explore this new form of cultural mediation in the reading sector and its role in the literary field (Sapiro et al. 2015; Sapiro 2016). *Les Correspondances de Manosque* was one of the first literature festivals to be organized in France. Founded in 1999, it

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this chapter (https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15387-8_14) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

¹The authors would like to thank the festival's organizers for their help, as well as Brigitte Le Roux, Jean-Louis Fabiani and Julien Duval for their insightful comments on the questionnaire and MCA. Hélène Seiler-Juilleret, Aude Servais, and Jasmine Van Deventer contributed to the survey, and Pernelle Issenhuth helped prepare and analyze the data.

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focuses on contemporary French literature. Taking place in the southern town of Manosque, close to Marseille, at the end of September, the festival is visited mostly by local residents (7 out of 10 live in the region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur), but it also attracts people from other parts of France, as shown by our results, attesting to the legitimacy it has acquired at a national level. This legitimacy is confirmed by the fact that one of its founders and main organizers, Olivier Chaudenson, was appointed director of the *Maison de la poésie* in Paris in 2015. The festival runs from Wednesday to Sunday and encompasses around 60 events. Most of these events are free events: interviews or debates given on the city's public squares by the invited authors, or readings of their works, but there are also paying literary concerts each night in the local theater. These are conceived of as a way of broadening the audience's social origins, by inviting musicians who mainly perform *chanson française*, a middlebrow musical genre. The festival events are attended by a large and diverse audience, whose numbers are difficult to estimate, but we counted between 170 and 250 persons at free events taking place on the Hôtel-de-Ville square, between 60 and 150 on the smaller squares (Herbès and Marcel Pagnol), and observed that the Manosque theater, which seats 700, is usually full for the paying events.

Like earlier literary gatherings, festivals fulfill a ritual function, which consists in reinforcing the *illusio*, i.e. a belief in the value of literature (Bourdieu 1993; Bourdieu 1995). However, unlike their predecessors – in particular the Parisian *cénacles*, which sustained the cohesion of a group of peers, all professional writers – literature festivals aim above all to support the belief of the public of laypersons. Regarding the prevailing cultural function of literature festivals and their programming, we can thus expect the audience to be, on average, endowed with more cultural capital compared to more commercial events, such as book fairs for instance.

While analyzing the festival's organization and settings enabled us to display the modern ways in which the broader public's belief in the symbolic value of literature is sustained, our survey of its audience, and more specifically our multiple correspondence analysis (MCA), reveals a particular kind of cultural capital: literary capital. This capital is characterized by regular cultural practices focused on literature (reading literary works and critics, knowing about authors, attending literary events), and supported by dispositions related to literary education and/or to occupations such as teaching literature or working as a librarian. The public endowed with specific literary capital differs in its cultural practices from the audience members endowed with other forms of cultural capital, who attend all kinds of festivals or performances (theater, music), but whose reading practices are less intense. Thus we distinguish reading practices from cultural entertainment ('going out').

After a presentation of the survey and of the construction of the variables, the three first axes of the MCA are analyzed. They show the different ways in which audience members engage with the festival, as well as with other literary and cultural practices.

The Survey and the Definition of the Variables

The research during the festival included interviews with the organizers, observation of the events, and a survey of audience members, on which we focus here. A questionnaire was distributed to festivalgoers over the festival's 5 day duration, be it before, during, or after the events taking place in the city's public squares and at Manosque's theater (for more details on the survey, see Sapiro et al. 2015). Written after exploratory interviews with the festival's organizers, the questionnaire also draws on French national surveys (Donnat 2009, in particular) on cultural practices to allow for comparison. This enables a better evaluation of the volume of cultural capital that the festival's audiences are endowed with, and of the intensity of their cultural practices. It covers three main topics: the participation in the festival (13 closed-ended questions, 4 open-ended questions); cultural practices, including reading, writing, and going out (18 closed-ended questions, 2 open-ended questions); and socio-demographic characteristics (17 questions). 467 questionnaires were filled in before, during, or after events. Because the questionnaire was quite long (around 30 minutes), most of the forms were filled in directly by audience members, sometimes with assistance from our research team; 10 percent were administered directly.

Our quantitative study is based on these questionnaires. We applied MCA to 460 of these questionnaires. Each individual in the MCA attended at least one event during the festival. 445 of them are included as active individuals and 15 of them are supplementary individuals. This small group of supplementary individuals comprises high school students accompanied by their teachers, whose answers differed strongly from the other individuals'. They were excluded from the group of active individuals in order to prevent their answers from contributing disproportionately to the formation of the axis.

The MCA has 81 active variables and 191 active modalities (see the Appendix for a complete presentation of the variables, Tables 14.O2, 14.O3, 14.O4, and 14.O5). In order to prepare and read the MCA, these variables are divided into three groups. A first set of active variables describes the respondents' knowledge of the festival and their attendance practices: the first time they came; why they came; how many and what kind of events they attended; which events they preferred; whether or not they talked to other audience members, to authors or to critics; how many and which guest writers they knew prior to the festival, etc. This group has 26 active variables and 77 active modalities.

A second set of questions is dedicated to the attendance of other cultural events. 16 active variables and 32 modalities concern the respondents' other cultural practices during the previous year: whether they went to theatrical plays or movie screenings, attended concerts of various music styles (such as jazz, rock, classical, world music, etc.), or visited other music, theater, or film festivals.

The last group of active questions focuses on their activities related to literature – that is their reading and writing practices – as well as their participation in other literary events. This set of questions was more detailed, comprising 39 active variables and 82 active modalities. It included questions such as how many books were read during the previous year; what kind of books and novels were most often read; what newspapers and journals were read; attendance of any other literature festivals, book fairs, public readings, literature conferences, or writing workshops during the previous year; whether they write novels, short stories, plays, poetry, or journals; whether any of their texts was published and where. Respondents were also asked Yes/No questions about the types of books they read (from contemporary French or foreign literature to comics, cooking and gardening manuals, or scientific books) – that is, reading practices pointing to different levels of cultural legitimacy, and different kinds of novels, ranging from highbrow to lowbrow fiction.

We used the specific MCA method to transform some modalities in the active variables into supplementary modalities (for more on this method, see Le Roux 2004: 378–394; Le Roux and Rouanet 2004; Lebaron and Le Roux 2015). These are mostly ‘junk categories’, i.e. answers left blank by the respondents. However, non-responses are sometimes as interesting as answers. Two exceptions were made to categorizing missing answers as supplementary modalities: One question asked about the number of events respondents thought they would attend. The answer ‘don’t know’ was made into an active modality, because it sheds light on the respondents’ level of interest and knowledge about the festival. The second question pertains to knowledge of the authors: Respondents were asked whether they knew any prior to the festival, and then asked to write down names. When audience members stated that they knew guest writers but wrote no names, their response was made into an active modality. Of course, they could simply have been too lazy to write any names, but they could also be pretending to know these authors, an element that we analyzed as an indicator for cultural ‘good will’.

The MCA also includes 10 supplementary variables, adding up to 74 supplementary modalities. These questions regard the socio-demographics, careers, and social origins of the attendees: sex, age, city of residence, family and marital status, occupational status, levels and types of academic degrees (see Appendix, Table 14.O1). These are used as supplementary variables because our aim was to see how the respondents differ according to their cultural and literary practices and tastes, as well as their participation in the festival, and then to test the hypothesis that these oppositions are linked to social and economic characteristics. This group of supplementary variables is thus used here as explanatory factors for the geometric distribution of the cultural practices.

Compared to other kinds of festivals, the audience of this literature festival has specific characteristics. Close to 75 percent of the respondents were women. This proportion of women can be explained by the gendering of literature reading among the French population: according to the last national survey (2008), twice as many women as men read novels (other than crime novels). The respondents’

average age is 51 years old. Elderly people are overrepresented, with 52.2% of the respondents being between 35 and 64 years old, and 22 percent older than 65. The overrepresentation can be explained by the free time necessary to attend the festival, which also takes place on weekdays that are not holidays. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that the average age of respondents decreases during the weekend, and by the overrepresentation of retirees: 37.1 percent of the respondents are retirees, which is twice their share of the French population in 1999, and much more than their percentage (2.1 percent) amongst the audience members at the theater festival in Avignon in 2004 (Ethis et al. 2008).

Similarly to Avignon, respondents belonging to the upper middle and upper classes are overrepresented, compared to their share in the French society: 44.6 percent are high-status occupations (the French *cadres et professions intellectuelles* category), with many civil servants and teachers, intellectual or artistic professions, and fewer private sector managers, engineers, and representatives of the medical and law professions. Respondents with intermediary positions (*professions intermédiaires*), mostly working in the fields of health, social work or teaching, represent 27.6 percent, whereas service workers (*employés*) comprise only 7.1 percent (around a quarter of their share in the French working population in 2012). Businessmen and women, skilled crafts workers, and shop-owners represent 4.1 percent (a little more than their national share), and fewer than 2 percent of respondents are blue collar workers, although 20.8 percent belong to this category amongst French workers in 2012. 11.3 % have never worked (students belong to this modality).

The role that cultural capital plays in attendance of the Manosque festival can also be seen in the high levels of educational achievement amongst the respondents. These are comparable to those at Avignon, but given the difference in age between festivalgoers, audience members at Manosque appear to have even higher academic credentials: 57.4 percent have at least a bachelor's degree (a similar percentage compared to Avignon in 2004), 17.6 percent have a two-year higher education diploma, 10.9 percent have a high school diploma (baccalaureate) and 8 percent have not graduated from high school. More than half of the respondents with a university degree have studied literature, foreign languages or social sciences and humanities. This suggests a specific type of cultural capital, as we will see later.

Applying MCA to the questionnaire reveals more clearly the diversity within the respondents' cultural and literary practices, and enables us to link these practices to the diverse ways in which the audience members engage with the festival. It also allows us to show how these cultural practices and festival attendance patterns are inscribed in different occupational and social backgrounds.

To interpret each axis, we selected only the modalities whose contributions exceed the average contribution. We present the first three axes, which account for 12 percent of the total MCA variance, or 67 percent according to Benzécri's modified rate. The latter gives an idea of the importance of all three axes (Le Roux and Rouanet 2004).

Frequency of Cultural Practices and Overall Volume of Cultural Capital

The first factor of the MCA shows that the attendees' cultural and literary practices vary in their frequency and also in their cultural legitimacy. Their engagement with the festival (number and types of events attended) is correlated to these other cultural and literary practices.

This factor helps to identify a first group of participants who know the guest writers and attend many events of various kinds during the festival (Fig. 14.1, on the right). These audience members also state that they discussed literary issues with guest writers and literature professionals (such as publishers and critics) while at Manosque. Their reading practices are well adjusted to the festival's program; they read several books every month and enjoy French contemporary literature. The year before this festival, they attended other literature-related events, such as public readings and other literary festivals, and they also read literary magazines or supplements. Some of them write poetry, short stories, or novels. These literature

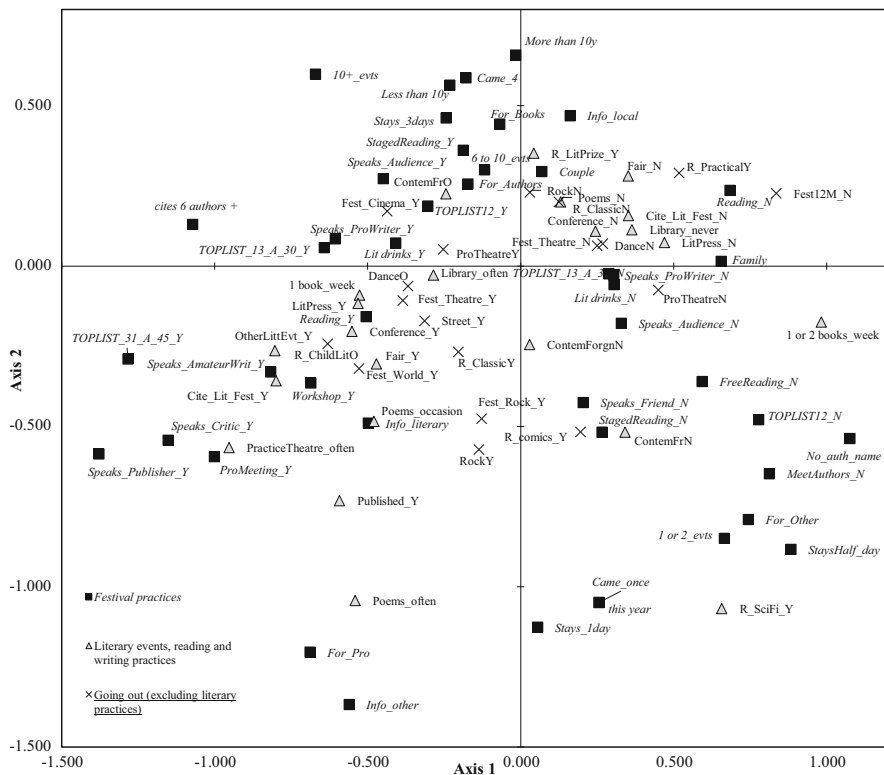


Fig. 14.1 Axes 1 and 2: active modalities with above-average contribution

enthusiasts also enjoy other highbrow cultural practices: they attend festivals, concerts, plays, movie screenings, and dance performances. Unsurprisingly, higher-ranking civil servants, librarians, people working in the media or the cultural fields, and (to a lesser extent) teachers are overrepresented in this group of respondents with high cultural capital and frequent highbrow cultural and literary practices. The fact that the respondents most engaged with the festival are endowed with high volumes of cultural capital is a result of Manosque's specific literary line-up: The festival focuses on living authors, many of them quite young. These writers are located at the pole of small-scale circulation of the literary field: They do not write bestsellers, but have won literary awards (though not the most prestigious ones) and are recognized by their peers and by literary critics (Bourdieu 1993; Bourdieu 1995). The festival's events also take a specific form, which also explains this social selection amongst attendees; events are not academic courses *per se*, but they require listening skills comparable to the ones people learn at university or at the library.

On the other side of axis 1, we find people who spend little time at the festival, who do not know the guest writers, and who do not attend the festival's main events (that is, interviews with writers). These audience members read fewer books than other participants (one or two per semester). Some of them declare less legitimate literary tastes. These can be oriented towards forms of literature that are absent from the festival (science fiction for example). On this side of axis 1, we also find people who attend neither movie screenings nor theatrical plays. Most of these participants belong to the working class or lower middle class, which are underrepresented among the festival audience.

This axis shows that attending the Manosque festival usually correlates with having a great amount of cultural capital (Figs. 14.2 and 14.3).

Differentiated Forms of Participation

The second axis of the MCA reveals the intensity and duration of respondents' participation in the festival. These various ways of engaging with the festival are related to different writing and reading habits. They are also distinguished by age groups (the supplementary variable about age is dispersed alongside axis 2, with the youngest at the bottom and the oldest on top, Fig. 14.3).

At the top of axis 2 (Figs. 14.1 and 14.3), we find people who participated in many festival events, over a period of several days. They have been attending the festival for many years. The guest writers and their books are their main interest in the festival. They often come with their husbands or wives, although women respondents are overrepresented on this side of axis 2. These longtime attendees are older than the average respondent (who is 51 years old). In summary, the group of participants at the top of axis 2 represents the core of the audience (Fig. 14.1), whose literary tastes are well adapted to the festival's literary line-up. But this core faithful group is not necessarily composed of audience members whose cultural and literary practices are the most intense and diverse.

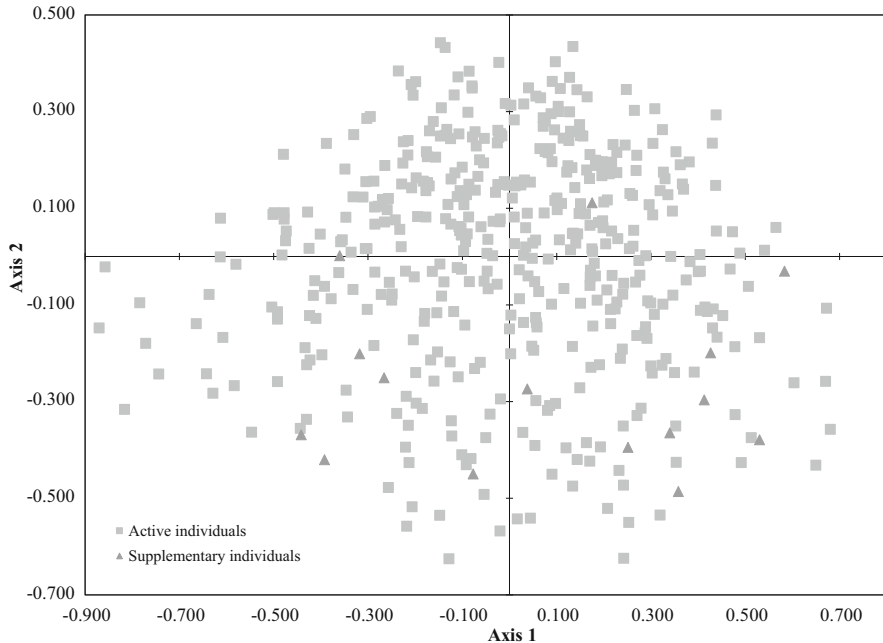


Fig. 14.2 Axes 1 and 2: active and supplementary individuals (Individuals are represented without using the transition formula)

At the bottom of axis 2, the participants' cultural practices and social backgrounds are quite diverse, as shown by the dispersal of individuals on Fig. 14.2. Several types of attendees can be identified. Some of them are librarians, who know many of the guest authors, including those that the rest of the respondents fail to mention. Librarians attend the festival for several days, and also attend other events related to literature. Students form another group of participants (the supplementary individuals that are in high school also appear here) whose literary tastes are quite different from the festival's line-up; consequently, they attend the festival only for a short period of time. Lastly, some participants state that their presence at Manosque is determined by work-related reasons. They only attend a few events, and generally work in the cultural and media fields or are students. The modalities for those not knowing the invited authors prior to the festival, as well as those referring to personal writing practices (writing novels or poetry, having been published), also appear at the bottom of axis 2. These categories point to a group amongst respondents who attend the festival for work-related reasons, engage in conversations with literary critics and professionals, and express an interest in the way authors work. Writing also plays a part in their presence at the

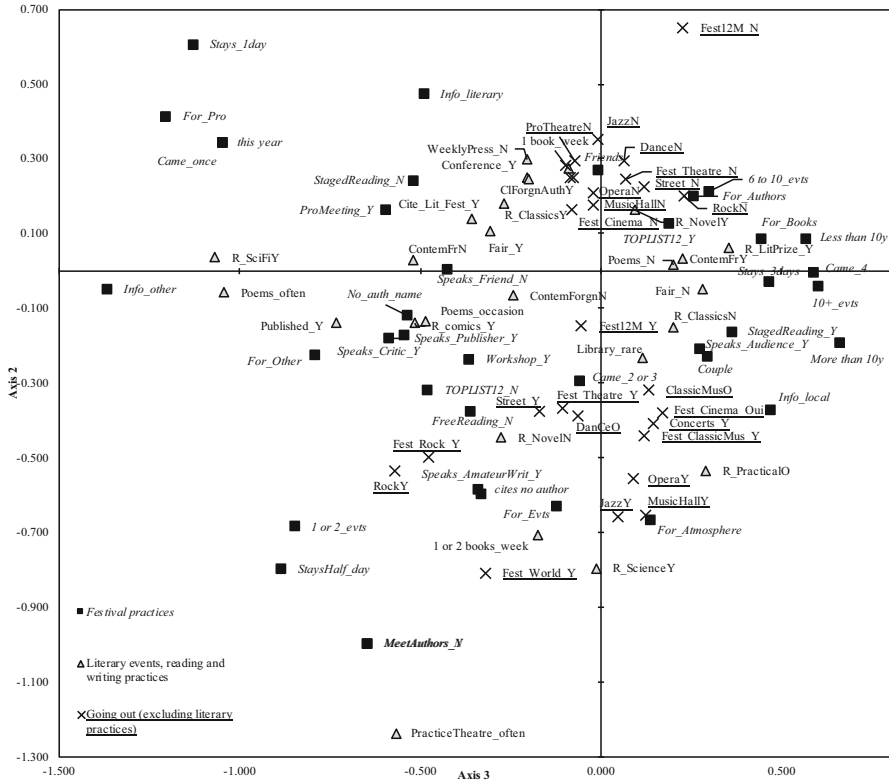


Fig. 14.4 Axes 2 and 3: active modalities with above-average contribution

their cultural practices and the events they favor during the festival. The first group comprises respondents more likely to attend performances (music concerts, theatrical plays etc.), the second those for whom reading literature is more central to their cultural practices. However, rather than clearly separating the audiences at the festival into two distinct poles, the respondents appear to be spread out on a continuum between both, because many tend to accumulate different types of cultural practices.

On the right are individuals whose cultural practices generally revolve around ‘going out’: they attend festivals, dance and theatre performances, and concerts of both highbrow and lowbrow music genres (jazz, rock, music-hall, opera and operetta, world and traditional music). This preference for performance is also attested by the events they attend during the festival, namely the concerts and staged readings. Their appreciation for the artists and comedians during the festival’s events, or the fact that they come to the festival primarily for its atmosphere, rather

than for the authors, also singles them out. Contrary to a large majority of the respondents to the questionnaire (88 percent), some of them declare that they do not intend to or have not participated in the interviews with writers. On this right-hand side of the axis, we also see the modalities signaling respondents who read less frequently than others (no more than 3 or 4 books a year), and whose literary tastes are less legitimate and/or more distant from the festival's choice of books, such as scientific, technical or professional books, practical books, comics, or self-help books. Citing contemporary novels amongst one's reading preferences does not appear on this side of the axis, nor does knowing the names of many authors on the festival program.

On the other, left-hand side of axis 3, the respondents rarely attend performances but read often, citing literary supplements and magazines, and their literary preferences include novels, and also books by important foreign authors. These different literary practices testify to the possession of specific literary capital. This is also apparent in the events that they attend during the festival, both encounters with the authors as well as professional gatherings. Outside of this festival, they also go to conferences or classes on literature, an indication of the perpetuation and enrichment of this literary capital through participation in other collective events. The festival *Les Correspondances* thus appears as one of many different places in which this capital may be reinvested and yield a profit.

The supplementary variables show that respondents are distributed along this axis according to their age, professional status, gender, education levels, and occupations. The older they are, the more likely it is that their cultural practices revolve around literature, rather than going to performances or activities such as taking theater lessons. On the other hand, men tend to be situated closer to the group of performance-goers than women, controlling for age.

The difference between both groups of audience members is also strongly linked to educational levels and professional occupation. Indeed, literature teachers and librarians (they comprise 1 out of 3 respondents) seem especially willing to attend the interviews with writers. This can be explained by a large amount of literary capital, but also because of their professional interest and habitus, both well-adjusted to this type of event. Indeed, half of the librarians surveyed and one out of ten teachers declare that they attend the festival for professional reasons, even when it takes place during their free time.

For that part of the audience possessing this literary capital, the festival offers a space for the accumulation of capital, and for perspectives of distinction, as is the case for some librarians or teachers in their professional sphere. It also creates a place similar to concert venues for music-lovers, allowing a collective celebration of literature and the enjoyment of literary sociability and exchange. In this space, specific literary capital, less valued or visible elsewhere, can be actualized and establish distinction.

However, the results of the MCA also show that *Les Correspondances de Manosque* bring together individuals whose social characteristics and cultural practices are diverse, some of them being endowed with less literary capital. The individuals keener to attend concerts and staged readings rather than interviews with writers are also more often medical or law professionals and engineers, or people who have graduated in law or economics, but also those participants who have working class backgrounds and low levels of education. They tend to prefer the artists and musicians rather than the literary works presented during the events. This may indicate that performances offer more attractive and generally 'safer' situations for festivalgoers endowed with less legitimate cultural capital and/or literary capital than the other respondents (Figs. 14.5 and 14.6).

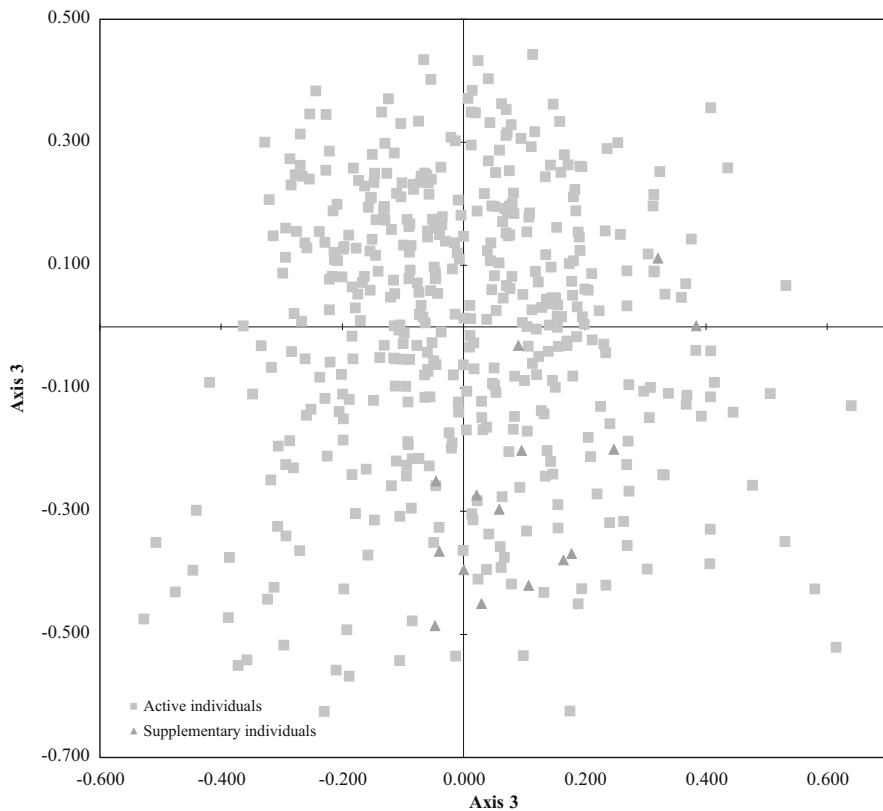


Fig. 14.5 Axes 2 and 3: active and supplementary individuals

Conclusion

The festival *Les Correspondances de Manosque* enables different types of mediation between the literary market and audiences who, on the whole, are endowed with a considerable amount of cultural capital – both reading a great deal as well as frequently going out – but whose types of cultural capital and practices differ. The interviews with writers draw on a specifically literary cultural capital, which can be found mainly amongst people who studied literature or whose occupation is linked to literature. The meetings with writers create a space to share this capital, and allow its development and upkeep, so that it might be converted and redeployed in the professional space or in moments of private social exchange. Mediating literature through well-known artists makes the staged readings and literary concerts accessible to other audiences less endowed with literary capital, and whose social characteristics and cultural practices are more diverse.

This research has thus allowed us to distinguish a specific kind of cultural capital: literary capital. Acquired during literary education of all kinds, this specific capital is becoming increasingly devalued in the French social space due to the growing importance allocated to economic and financial capital (Denord et al. 2011), as well as the devaluation of literary education itself, and the rivalry with other forms of cultural expression (see also Bennett et al. 2010). Invested in contemporary literature and shared during the festival, this capital finds a space where it is valued and exchanged, not just upheld, but even yielding a profit. The worth of new works is difficult to assess in an autonomous literary field where competition is harsh and this can further complicate the process of measuring one's own literary capital. The festival enables comparisons of this personal capital with that of other well-read individuals. Furthermore, meeting in person with the sanctified figures of the writers adds value to the consumption of cultural goods for those audiences best endowed with specific literary capital. Thriving on the “self-actualizing experiences” described by Holt (1998)², this capital thus enables the appreciation of the authenticity derived from meeting with the authors, discussing their works, and listening to staged and musical readings, all of which contrast with the usual isolation and asceticism associated with reading a book.

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²These elements are characteristic of the consumption habits of people with important amounts of cultural capital: “they seek out diverse, educational, informative experiences that allow them to achieve competence, acquire knowledge, and express themselves creatively” (Holt 1998: 17).

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