

Terroir and the Sense of Place

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1. Introduction

The word terroir is used in a variety of contexts and remains controversial. Terroir stands in opposition to globalisation and displacement. It is a concept used at every level of communication, generally employed as a sounding board for the issues of the moment. French in origin, the concept of terroir is woven into the political and cultural history of France and is still hotly debated in the research community. Today it is more relevant than ever, linked to the French-championed principle of protecting the geographical origins of agricultural products and foodstuffs. For better or worse, that principle is steadily gaining global acceptance, which raises a number of issues, not least in relation to the link between product and territory. It turns out that what is feasible albeit challenging in France is often unworkable in developing countries. The terroir approach has certain inherent weaknesses that tend to give undue prominence to its French origins. But it can also represent a valuable tool for local development. First though, more thought must be given to the nature and extent of the link with place, and the issues at stake in international negotiations. For that, we must take a closer look at France, exploring the reasons behind its current devotion to terroir – what the word means, how it is used and why what works on paper does not always work in the real world. Terroir must be viewed in a global context. Not as a French passion that France hopes to export, but as a key factor in understanding how societies across the globe are linked to the particular places they occupy. All the hype surrounding terroir is symptomatic of our image-obsessed culture. Here we look beyond origin protection legislation, in the form of GI or AO protection, and think afresh about how a sense of place is fostered in different communities around the world.

In the first part of this paper we explore the history and development of the terroir concept, along with the implementation issues it raises. In the second part, we focus on

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the nature of the relationship with place, and also look more generally at how people understand and use the space around them.

2. Terroir in the French context

The role of terroir in France is closely linked to the French nation building project. The concept itself emerged largely as a result of human geography influences and its precise definition remains debatable.

2.1 The weight of history

Anthropologists tend to avoid the word terroir because of its tainted associations with regionalism, and Vichy regionalism in particular. Until recently ethnographers were reluctant to conduct research in this area, mindful of anthropology's contribution to the 'folk museum' ('Musée des arts et traditions populaires') founded in 1936 at the time of the Front Populaire.¹ But terroir cannot be reduced to the narrow meaning it acquired under the Vichy regime, when the idea was employed to support a new French state grounded in a glorified agrarian past, folklore and traditionalism.² In line with its reactionary, conservative ideology, the Vichy regime sought refuge in anachronism by reinstating, albeit temporarily, a rural social order that has become synonymous with one of the darkest periods in French history. Hiding behind that measure, however, is a national-local dichotomy that has persisted for more than 200 years. France since the 19th Century has been shuttling to and fro between the general and the particular, shifting from one extreme to the other as it considers the thorny question of recognition or negation of the weight of local memories.³ Of particular relevance here is the process of post-revolution nation-building. France after 1789 was a unified and uniform entity that relied on a merging of differences: 'local' was seen as the opposite of 'national', a

¹ See the seminal contribution by Daniel Fabre, 'L'ethnologie française à la croisée des engagements (1940-1945)', in Jean-Yves Boursier (ed), *Résistances et Résistants* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997) 319, 319-400.

² Daniel Fabre, 'Le Manuel de Folklore Français d'Arnold Van Gennep' in Pierre Nora (ed), *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Tome III, (Les France, 2. Traditions. Paris, Gallimard, 1992) 641, 671.

³ Thierry Gasnier, 'Le Local: Une et Indivisible' in Pierre Nora (ed), *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (n 2) 463, 465.

contradiction that could not be glossed over and had to be eliminated. This was what later became known as the Jacobin view, and it stood at the core of the administrative reorganisation that took place between 1799 and 1802. ‘It was the way in which the 1789 revolutionaries, overwhelmingly drawn from the urban upper-middle classes, tackled the question of French diversity in light of national unity that really gave birth to the regional issue. They created the problem of regional cultures, you could say, by their insistence on the importance and immutability of local specificity [...]. The will for political unity, in other words, turned the spotlight on local realities that related to essentially rural places elsewhere’.⁴ A few years later, French historian Jules Michelet revisited the question of sacrificing local specificity for the sake of national unity. In his major work, *Histoire de France*, Michelet writes: ‘In this manner has been formed the general, the universal spirit of the country; the local has disappeared daily ... Local *fatalités* have been overcome and man has escaped from the tyranny of material circumstances ... In this marvellous transformation, the spirit has triumphed over matter, the general over the particular, and the ideal over the real’.⁵ The 24 provinces listed in Michelet’s *Tableau de la France* are presented as insular, self-contained unities, each one rendered sterile by its particular relationship with the soil, the climate and the kind of person they produce.⁶ The 19th century saw a concerted political drive to get rid of those particularities, marginalizing local specificity for the sake of nation-building. This Jacobin-style vision of a new-look France, reorganised into administrative *départements*, coincided with a proliferation of learned societies that were based on the new administrative divisions and run by local dignitaries, “dignitaries” perhaps, rather than “worthies” – a coincidence that clearly illustrates the huge ambivalence felt about local places and local knowledge resources.

2.2 Role of human geography and pedology

⁴ Mireille Meyer, ‘Vers la Notion de Cultures Régionales (1789-1871)’ (2003) 33(3) *Ethnologie Française* 409, 410 [Special issue: Cultures régionales. Singularités et Revendications].

⁵ ‘Tableau de la France’, Chapter 1 Book III, *L’Histoire de France*, cited by Gasnier (n 3) 227 ** (translation from: Kippur Steven, A, 1947 Jules Michelet, A Study of Mind and Sensibility).

⁶ Gasnier (n 3) 473.

The relationship between the ‘national’ and the ‘local’ in representations of French territory underwent significant transformation in the latter half of the 19th century. The French defeat of 1870 redrew the map of France, at a time when French geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache was ushering in a new approach to geography. Considered the father of human geography, la Blache was ‘pivotal in the daunting task of redefining the French nation on the basis of local environments’.⁷ Vidalian geography focuses on identifying natural regions (or *pays*) and the variety of landscapes and lifestyles (*genres de vie*) encompassed within those areas and resulting from the interaction between human groups and their natural milieus. Vidal’s approach is exemplified in his *Tableau de la Géographie de la France* (1903), which is prefaced to Ernest Lavisse’s *Histoire de la France*. It is worth noting that these ideas were hotly debated by the social scientists of the time. Durkheimians like François Simiand (co-founder of the French School of Sociology) argued for research based on abstract places that glossed over any distinction between one place and another and transcended any preconceived geographical frame. French historian Lucien Febvre and his followers meanwhile sided with geographers, endorsing the rationale behind the regional monographs of the Alpine and Rhodanian culture produced by Vidal’s students in the early 20th century.⁸ Costume, language and food emerged as distinguishing marks of locality, part of a broad regionalist tendency that ranged from the exploration of new territorial unities to the promotion of the infinite variety found within France.

The early 1930s marked the arrival of pedology, a new scientific discipline that moved the goalposts somewhat by focusing on the role of the soil. Pedology originated in Russia in 1879 and was introduced to France in 1934 by French soil scientist Albert Demolon. ‘Pedology was developed to provide a systematic approach to soil science, using standard criteria to assess the physical properties of soils. [...]. Soils with designated names have a genetic history, functional behaviour and composition that serve as indicators of soil aptitude. Add to that a particular set of ecological, edaphic [i.e. relating to the soil] and weather conditions, and what you get in the end is “terroir”. The products coming out of

⁷ Ibid 504.

⁸ Roger Chartier, ‘Les Sciences Sociales et la Région: Un Regard Rétrospectif’ (1981) 1 *Le Monde Alpin et Rhodanien* 81.

that area share certain characteristics related to quality and quantity – cue the concept of the “cru”.⁹ As the discipline of geography evolved, that approach was increasingly compelling for French geographers like Roger Brunet, who describes terroir as a place that is defined by its particular physical characteristics.¹⁰

The protection and subsequent use of the term terroir must be seen in this two-fold historical context: on the one hand, environmental determinism; on the other hand, a preoccupation with locality that persisted from the 19th to the early 20th century, but in a country with a long history of centralization. The precepts of the Vidalian School were particularly influential in this regard, providing the impetus to regional studies based on small, coherent entities with shared lifestyles, histories and agrarian systems. It was in this context that the first appellations of origin emerged and were defined in France¹¹ – within the framework of a burgeoning field of geography whose practitioners were already well versed in the defence of locally relevant products. Geographers like Lucien Gallois, Paul Vidal de la Blache and Albert Demangeon¹² laid the groundwork for the French law of 1919 relating to the protection of product names – names that were associated with given places and coherent environments, ones defined by local customs and time-honoured practice. The actual term terroir is not mentioned anywhere in the laws of 1919, 1927 or 1966.¹³ The first two refer only to a ‘production area’, and the third to ‘a geographical milieu, including natural and human factors’. But the notion of the ‘petit pays’ – meaning a region, district or locality – is implicit, alongside a more deterministic interpretation that confines itself to physical factors.

2.3 An endlessly debated concept

⁹ Stéphane Hénin, ‘Utilisation du Sol et Maintien de la Fertilité: Systèmes de Production et Systèmes de Culture’ in *Deux siècles de progrès pour l'agriculture, 1789-1989*, (Académie d'Agriculture de France; Lavoisier, Paris 1990) 124.

¹⁰ Brunet, 1992: 437, cited by Delfosse, 1997: 229. **

¹¹ For their legal emergence, see Chapter *** by Stanziani in this volume.

¹² Claire Delfosse, ‘Le Pays et ses Produits: Défense et Illustration d’Une Identité’ (2004) 139-140 *Etudes Sociales* 117, 121-123.

¹³ See respectively: Loi du 6 Mai 1919 Relative à la Protection des Appellations d’Origine; Loi du 22 Juillet 1927 Modifie La Loi Du 6 Mai 1919; Loi n°66-482 du 6 juillet 1966 Modifie La Loi Du 6 Mai 1919.

Though the term ‘terroir’ often appeared in publications, its meaning remained largely confined to physical factors, focusing on the role of the soil and climate. The terroir was a given factor; it had always existed, pre-dating man, who only served to reveal its potential. That definition still stands in some (chiefly viticultural)¹⁴ contexts, even if it is regarded as rather too simplistic. Taking wine-growing terroirs as an example, French historian Roger Dion observed that the quality of a wine is the expression of a particular social milieu and what he called ‘human will’. Writing in 1952, Dion is quoted as follows: ‘The role of the land in the making of a grand cru scarcely goes beyond that of the material used in the making of a work of art’.¹⁵ Most of the works relating to terroir take into account the human factor. To quote George Bertrand, ‘there is a subtle dialectic between the ecological complex and the historical-economic complex’ that comes from the constant interaction between the agrisystem, production and human effort.¹⁶ Other interpretations followed, mostly by geographers who questioned the relationship between land and human effort. The development of that ambiguous concept was the focus of an article by Philippe Roudié, who stressed how difficult it was for geographers to agree on a definition.¹⁷ Pierre George wrote in the 1970s that ‘terroir’ was a catch-all term that could have several meanings in agricultural geography.¹⁸ Thirty years later, Diry¹⁹ likewise regarded terroir as a vague concept that was far from receiving unanimous support in geographical circles. This commonplace usage is recent – and does seem to epitomize the problems entailed in defining the ways communities take ownership of their local environments. The Africanist approach, for instance, involved a multi-disciplinary research programme lasting several years, bringing together geographers, sociologists and ethnographers for the purpose of establishing an atlas of African terroirs based on ‘terroir monographs’. The authors defined terroir as ‘a portion of territory appropriated, improved and utilized by the group residing there and for which it provides

¹⁴ cf the works of Morlat, Asselin, Salette.

¹⁵ Roger Dion, *Le Paysage et la Vigne. Essais de Géographie Historique* (Payot, Paris 1990) 226.

¹⁶ Georges Bertrand, ‘Pour une Histoire Ecologique de la France Rurale’, in G. Duby & A. Wallon, (eds), *Histoire de la France Rurale* (Le Seuil, Paris 1975) 37, 74.

¹⁷ Philippe Roudié, ‘Vous Avez dit ‘Terroir’? Essai sur l’évolution d’un Concept Ambigu’ (2001) *Journal International des Sciences de la Vigne et du Vin* 7 (Special Issue).

¹⁸ Cited to in Roudie (n 17) 8.

¹⁹ Ibid.

a means of livelihood'.²⁰ There was obviously a problem with that definition to judge from the frequent necessity to envisage alternative solutions – substitute the de facto terroir for the terroir under study, draw on the physical setting or on the contrary, the purely social setting in the absence of any autonomous socio-spatial organisation.²¹ Reviewing their research in a special issue of *Etudes Rurales* (1970) devoted to African and Madagascan terroirs, the authors argue that there is no substitute for the word terroir. They make a particular distinction between terroir and 'finage' ('community territory' in French-speaking West Africa); likewise between 'terroir foncier' (the notion of ownership contained within 'finage') and 'terroir d'utilisation' (terroir defined by use). Clarifying their comments, they point out that 'terroir studies, far from being confined to a narrow field of enquiry, range across every factor that is somehow pivotal to a group of people living in the same space or with common social norms, on land that they farm and manage on a collective basis'.²² The concept of variable geometry as used in France seemed concerned here with agrarian structures and types of land occupation. It represented a tool for development by collecting data on relevant variables that included the biocultural heritage linking a community to a place. These data were the basis of the local land register, providing the research input for a major cartographic survey carried out by the French authorities some 30 years later. The official use of those data, however, particularly as reflected by the mapping survey, showed scant regard for the complexity of land use in Africa and sparked serious conflict over access to resources and their control. Several authors²³ have expressed reservations about using the concept of terroir in the context of emerging and developing economies.

The question continues to provoke discussion among French researchers. Marc Dedeire develops the theme of terroir-based agriculture.²⁴ Jacques Maby presents terroir as a

²⁰ Gilles Sautter and Paul Pélissier, 'Pour un Atlas des Terroirs Africains: Structure-Type d'Une Etude de Terroir' (1964) 4(1) *L'Homme* 56, 57.

²¹ *Ibid* 58-59.

²² Pierre Pélissier & Gilles Sautter, 'Bilan et Perspectives d'Une Recherche sur les Terroirs Africains et Malgaches (1962-1969)' (1970) 37-39 *Etudes rurales* 7, 24.

²³ See for e.g., Thomas J. Bassett, Chantal Blanc-Pamard & Jean Boutrais, 'Constructing Locality: The Terroir Approach in West Africa' (2007) 77(1) *Africa* 104.

²⁴ Marc Dedeire, *Le Concept d'Agriculture de Terroir* (PhD dissertation, Economic Sciences. Montpellier, University of Montpellier I, 1997)..

'knowledge organisation tool'.²⁵ Terroir is increasingly seen as a tool for local development and spatial planning, generating what agronomist Jean-Pierre Deffontaines describes as projects in the broader human interest. He defines terroir as encompassing 'players, with their histories and ways of life, plus activities, especially agricultural practices – which are defined as specific, concrete modalities adopted by farmers to implement farming techniques – and a particular stretch of land with its ecological profile, layout, area, neighbourhood and landscape'.²⁶

This kind of dynamic understanding of terroir, projecting it into the future on the basis of projects that harness collective wisdom, addresses a very contemporary issue. The concept of terroir is highly adaptable due to its polysemous meaning and broad scope, and it is therefore easy to see why it continues to occupy such a prominent place. The hierarchy of French wine as we know it today is the outcome of those local ways of life generated by an aspect of terroir that lies at the heart of France's greatest vineyards. Wines are ranked according to a vibrant and constantly evolving system that straddles time and protects local interests. Senior anthropologist Marion Demossier explores this process in her recognition of the Burgundy *climates*.²⁷ Soil, aspect and *climat* are certainly important but most important of all is the ability to make a difference and to make it known.

The French AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) system is so inextricably linked with terroir that it makes no sense without it, especially where wine is concerned. To quote the INAO (Institut National des Appellations d'Origine – guardian of the AOC system): 'With AOC wines, everything starts with the particular relationship between the grape variety and the terroir: this is what defines the wine's identity, which is then expressed through

²⁵ Jacques Maby, *Campagnes de Recherche: Approche Systémique de l'Espace Rural* (Habilitation à diriger des recherches, UMR Espace, University of Avignon, 2002) 28, cited by Jean-Claude Hinnewinkel, *Les Terroirs Viticoles: Origines et Devenir* (Bordeaux, Féret, 2004) 5-6.

²⁶ Jean-Pierre Deffontaines, 'Commentaires à l'article de Lucette Laurens' (1997) 5(2) *Natures, Sciences, Sociétés* 60, 60.

²⁷ Marion Demossier, 'Beyond Terroir: Territorial Construction, Hegemonic Discourses and French wine culture' (2011) 17 *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 685.

local know-how'.²⁸ As the INAO gradually extended its remit to include the agrifood sector as a whole, it also broadened its approach in consultation with INRA, France's centre for agricultural research, thereby arriving at the definition of terroir we find today, published in the INAO guide to applicants seeking registration as an AOC/PDO:²⁹ 'A geographic area with defined boundaries where a human community generates and accumulates across its history a collectively developed knowledge of production based on a system of interactions between bio-physical and human factors. The combination of techniques involved in production reveals originality, confers typicity³⁰, and leads to a reputation for a product originating from this geographical area'.

Other organisations share this preoccupation with terroir – most notably 'Terroir et Cultures' that campaigns for the 'recognition, promotion and value enhancement of "terroirs" and the goods and services originating from specific geographical areas around the world'.³¹ The adoption in 2001 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity raised cultural diversity to the level of 'the common heritage of humanity'. Following that Declaration, 'Terroirs et Cultures' was the impetus behind 'Planète Terroirs': a charter and international definition of terroir, signed at UNESCO headquarters in 2005, recognizing the intrinsic cultural diversity of terroir and its potential as an alternative to standardisation and uniformity. An accompanying mission statement uses openly militant language to drive home a six-point agenda that revolves around two major foci: 'the strength of terroir'; and the conviction that 'the future needs terroirs', especially for the sake of sustainable development, food safety and helping the local economy. The charter concludes with an inset calling for a clear, international definition of terroir – even though the word itself is untranslatable – and attaches a

²⁸ Institut National des Appellations d'Origine, 1992, 26.

²⁹ INAO GI Applicants' Guide (07/10/2005); Available at: www.inao.gouv.fr

³⁰ The concept of typicity, uniquely French, is quite recent. It is derived from the idea of a typical, or representative product whose characteristics, particularly those pertaining to its taste, are strongly linked to its place of origin. See , Letablier M.-T., Nicolas F., 1994 - « Genèse de la "typicité" ». *Sciences des aliments*, N°14, pp. 541-556;

Casabianca F., Sylvander B., Noël Y., Béranger C., Coulon J.B., Roncin F., Flutet G. et Giraud G. 2011 - « Terroir et typicité : un enjeu de terminologie pour les Indications Géographiques » La mode du terroir et les produits alimentaires in Claire Delfosse (dir.), *La mode du terroir et les produits alimentaires*. Paris, Les Indes savantes, pp101-117

³¹ See: www.terroirsetcultures.org

revised and extended version of the INAO definition of terroir. On-going projects include maintaining of a worldwide network of terroirs, co-sponsored by Unesco, through the development of an international approach to terroir. Three forums have been held to date: two in France and a third, in 2010, in Chefchaouen, Morocco, on 'diversity, sustainability, terroir and development'.

3. The Root of the Misunderstanding

It is one thing to say that terroir is an easy-to-use tool, and quite another to prove it – in practice, there are complex social factors involved. The word is now such common currency that it has become a catch-all, obscuring the many different ways in which people relate to places, in France and elsewhere.

3.1 Terroir – a 'long quiet river' by no means

'Terroirs et Cultures' is a case in point, symbolizing the importance that the French attach to the terroir and the issues it raises. Terroir is a 'tool for sustainable development'; it plays a role in the 'safeguarding of diversity and sustainability'; it must be 'internationalised' and 'its potential unlocked': the association's platform reads like a terroir manifesto, founded on an entity that is not up for discussion since it has already been defined. But scientists remain divided over the issue of terroir. The concept is certainly interesting and can sometimes produce an ideal synergy of the possible and the humanly do-able. But today more than ever terroir stands at the crossroads of multiple converging interests, raising a host of thorny issues that demand closer scrutiny. The challenge lies in distinguishing between the fact and fiction of terroir. While it is true that terroir implies specific collective skills that confer 'typicity' (another term that is not easy to define), plus a shared history and cultural profile, none of this is necessarily set in stone. In regions with harsh environmental conditions, agriculture is largely consistent with traditional practice – French mountain cheese is a good example. In more clement

regions, it can be quite a different story. Take Bresse poultry for instance.³² Though production is linked to a defined geographical area, the methods are at odds with local advances in agriculture that have made Bresse famous as an agricultural centre. Bresse poultry production is labour-intensive, time-consuming and almost entirely manual. It appears to have little common heritage with regional agriculture as a whole, but for the French it is a national institution. All the ingredients are there – a specific method of production, shared history, collective skills and professional identity linked to a defined geographical area. But how is one to conceive of terroir as a developmental tool in this context?

Social organisation – particularly farming and land ownership schemes can be an obstacle to the promotion of terroir-linked products. Take the case of Dombes carp,³³ which are farmed in ponds mainly owned by city folk who reserve them for fishing and the pursuit of leisure and privilege. And very few of the local farmers have a strong say in the matter, however proficient they are as fishermen themselves.

The size of the French supermarket sector gives it a huge impact on the food-processing industry, reinforcing the latter's hefty market share even though relations between the two are not always cordial. Localized products that remain in high demand are no exception to this rule, particularly cured meats and dairy products. France's largest industrial dairy company, dairy cooperative, Lactalis, which is also Europe's leading producer of raw-milk cheese, is represented in the vast majority of French AOCs. As a result, milk or cheese produced in those defined geographical areas is increasingly sold to dairy plants falling outside the remit of the AOC, operating at national or international levels. This contradicts the first principle of AOC regulation, seriously undermining localized production and with it local development, to say nothing of the repercussions for local knowledge systems and product culture in general. Consider the case of AOC

³² Also registered as an EU PDO Volailles de Bresse, Dossier No. FR/PDO/0117/0145. All Dossiers can be accessed via the EU DOORS Database, at: <http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/quality/door/list.html>

³³ See e.g. Bérard L. , Marchenay Ph., 2008 - "Les étangs de la Dombes". In *Agricultures singulières*, Montpellier, IRD Editions, pp. 111-117,
Bérard L. et Marchenay P., 2004 - Les produits de terroir. Entre cultures et règlements, Paris, CNRS Editions, pp 120-122.

Normandy Camembert³⁴, made with unpasteurised milk in keeping with a traditional recipe specified by the INAO. Would the great ‘Camembert war’, which very nearly spelt the end of the road for unpasteurized milk, have been quite as fierce if there had not been such major commercial interests at stake? Every terroir is a place of dynamic interaction between local forces and balances of power, between complex mechanisms that dictate the uses of heritage and a revisiting of tradition that is often controversial. All of these factors deserve close attention if we are to understand the role of terroir in local development.

3.2 Terroir – concealing origin

The importance that the French attach to terroir, a word almost exclusively used in the context of local production, distracts from a clear explanation of the link with the physical environment as a factor in the protection of origin. No-one would deny that the term is closely associated with territory, meaning a piece of land with a particular soil, aspect and other physical factors. Yet two types of regulation are envisaged by the measures in force at European level, most especially by the legal framework that makes it possible to establish and protect the relationship between a product and a place by reserving the use of a particular name. One is Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), closely modelled on the French AOC system (and whose name is now AOP, or Appellation d’Origine Protégée) which takes into account the effect of natural factors. It refers to a product ‘whose quality or other characteristics are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and/or human components and which is produced, processed and developed within the delimited geographical area’.³⁵ The other is Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), which makes no mention of natural factors. It designates a product whose geographical origin is defined by ‘a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics [...] and the production

³⁴ Florence Boulanger « Camembert, les enjeux du débat », Profession fromager n°26 mard-avril 2007, pp 10-11

³⁵ See Art 2(1) of Council Regulation (EC) No 510/2006 of 20 March 2006 on the Protection of Geographical Indications and Designations of Origin for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs [2006] OJ L93/12. This replaced its similarly titled predecessor, Council Regulation (EEC) 2081/92 [1992] OJ L208/1. Regulation 510/2006 has itself been replaced by Regulation 1151/2012.

and/or processing and/or preparation of which take place in the defined geographical area'.³⁶ Natural factors actually play little part in some localized production systems, particularly in industrialized countries – but France refuses to get the message³⁷. It persists in a dogmatic view of protection of origin that comes across loud and clear in some of the product specifications laid down for PGI applicants. Small wonder then, that the Commission's approval procedures are fraught with misunderstandings.

The protection of geographical indications is in accordance with internationally recognized principles set out in the provisions of the TRIPS Agreement, which refer to geographical indications as 'indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a Member, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin'.³⁸ This closely resembles the definition of a PGI. The European Commission now intends to move towards a single system of regulation for PGI and PDO, in line with a Communication adopted on 28 May 2009 laying down strategic orientations to improve the EU's agricultural policy related to product quality. Some might argue that this is partly France's fault – a consequence of formulating applications for PGIs as if this were a 'lesser form' of PDO. But if the two systems are brought under a single set of regulations, we can be assured that the wording of the legislation will come closer to the definition of a geographical indication than that of a PDO. This would be regrettable, because the current emphasis on natural and human factors makes for a protection system that is ideally situated to identify and assess the impact of biodiversity and cultural differences on localized production systems. Emerging markets should be aware of this when drawing up their own frameworks for protection. EU Regulation N°1151/2012 took this ambiguity into account by confirming the existence of the two forms of protection. Let us hope that this distinction remains clear well into the future.

3.3 Is 'terroir' untranslatable? Here's proof

³⁶ Regulation 510/2006, Art 2(1).

³⁷ For the legal history of the compromise between France and Germany which resulted in the PDO/PGI distinction see Chapter *** by Gangjee in this volume?

³⁸ TRIPS, Art 22.1

The French say, not without a certain pride, that the term ‘terroir’ is impossible to translate. There is no equivalent term in any other language. It is uniquely French, the mark of France’s distinctive character and much-vaunted geographical variety. France is certainly an amazingly varied country, but couldn’t the same be said of Italy or Portugal? More than likely, says historian Thierry Gasnier, but that has nothing to do with it.³⁹ France’s attachment to local diversity is partly linked to its history. Terroir, what’s more, is closely related to the protection of geographical origin and to French winegrowing, which is where origin protection was first introduced and where it remained confined for many years. Based on the concept of the AOC, those early regulations were revised and reinforced through successive crises, tightening up loopholes for the sake of better enforcement.⁴⁰ The law of 1927, for instance, established a de facto link between origin and quality, by making quality dependent on the existence of terroir and particular grape varieties. Passed in the wake of phylloxera, fraud, over-production and administrative delimitation, the new law was an attempt to bring order out of chaos – a joint undertaking between producers in different winegrowing regions, administrative authorities and wine merchants. Economic factors were very much a part of the equation. Everything revolved around wine, though the law also covered, albeit loosely, a selection of other products – mainly cheeses plus certain fruits and vegetables. It would be more than sixty years before the AOC structure and rule system was officially extended to the entire agri-food sector, under the law of 2 July 1990.⁴¹

The INAO was the state labelling body for all French food products until the new agricultural orientation law of 2006, and did not find it easy applying a wine-business mindset and approach to other sectors, principally because the link with terroir is more difficult to demonstrate. Do charcuterie and particularly everyday cheeses really exhibit those effects of terroir so often celebrated in wines? The relative importance of climate,

³⁹ Gasnier (n 3) 463 (‘that comparable diversity exists in neighbouring countries is irrelevant’).

⁴⁰ For historical background, see Chapter *** by Stanziani in this volume.

⁴¹ For further details, see Chapter *** by Marie-Vivien in this volume.

pedology and human environment is still up for debate within INAO.⁴² Already controversial enough already for the French, the concept proves even more difficult to translate to other countries, including those of southern Europe that are otherwise culturally and linguistically close to France – never mind the vast majority of emerging economies that don't have a wine culture. New World countries on the other hand have often welcomed a stripped down version of the concept, usually reduced to the role of natural factors, and capitalizing on its potential to add value to vineyards now operated on a commercial footing.⁴³

'Terroir' also only partially addresses the complex issues raised by some of the production systems typical of emerging and developing economies. Coffee production in Ethiopia, for instance, a country whose economy revolves around coffee-growing, is based on a classification and grading system directly linked to quality in the cup (and setting aside any mention the influence of particular ethnic groups).⁴⁴

To a certain extent, preaching the powers of terroir has eventually paid off, since the term is now part of the international vocabulary. However in the absence of any specific geographical and historical frame of reference, terroir can sometimes change meaning – a point made by Yveline Poncet in her Chilean case study.⁴⁵ She comments on the 'snob value' of the French word 'terroir', whether used by Chile's major companies to 'gain market visibility in the global arena', or by small and medium-size farmers in Coquimbo (the region under study) to illustrate the localized nature of production.

⁴² See Scheffer and Roncin's study of the different concepts used by INAO agents: Sandrine Scheffer & François Roncin, 'Qualification des Produits et des Terroirs dans la Reconnaissance des Produits en Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée' in Louis Lagrange (ed), *Signes officiels de qualité et développement agricole: Aspects techniques et économiques*, Actes de Colloque / SFER Société Française d'Economie Rurale SFER. 14-15 avril 1999 à Clermont-Ferrand. (Technique et Documentation, Paris 1999) 37.

⁴³ For the Australian situation, see Chapter *** by Stern in this volume.

⁴⁴ Cindy Adolphe & Valérie Boisvert, 'Nommer et Contrôler: Les Appellations de Café en Ethiopie' (Paper presented at Unesco International Symposium: Localizing Products: A Sustainable Approach for Natural and Cultural Diversity in the South?, 2009).

⁴⁵ Yveline Poncet, Tchansia Koné & Héctor Fabián Reyes, 'La Diversité des Produits de Terroir en Pays Emergent: Un Chemin Malaisé' in Marie-Christine Cormier-Salem and Bernard Roussel (eds), *Les Produits de Terroir au Service de la Diversité Biologique et Culturelle*. (Autrepart, Revue de sciences sociales, N° 50. Paris, IRD éditions, 2009) 17, 19-20.

4. An anthropological interpretation of place

Given the limitations of the terroir approach, which as we have seen oversimplifies the relationship between place and product, we need to restate the problem of terroir in the larger context of globalisation and what it implies for the way people live their spaces.

4.1 A Sense of Place

People construct their spatial spheres of action by setting boundaries, by occupation and by transformation, designating and distinguishing a given place ‘by considering it in all of its forms and from every aspect, and generally stamping it with the unmistakable mark of their identity’.⁴⁶ Localized agri-food production is a part of that process, helping to foster a sense of place through a wealth of specialized products that engage with local society in all sorts of ways and on all sorts of production levels. Polymorphism apart, all local food production systems maintain a particular relationship with their surroundings. Their place within a given area involves historical precedent and shared know-how, a common thread that links them in place and time. This collective historical dimension is what defines their origin, allowing us to think of them as a family of products that make sense at a local level. The time-span in question may range from several centuries to just a few decades, but there is a definite sense of historical precedence. That historical dimension, linked to the collective memory that has been handed down through generations, is what gives a place depth. Thus, in order to understand the diversity of localized products we need to look at the cultural criteria that link a place with a particular history and social group. The collective dimension of a products is what makes it a part of local culture and helps to distinguish origin (meaning ‘to be from a place’) from provenance (meaning ‘to issue from a place but with no particular connection with that place’).

⁴⁶ Gérard Lenclud, ‘L’Ethnologie et le Paysage. Questions sans Réponses’, in Claudie Voisenat (ed), *Paysage au Pluriel: Pour une Approche Ethnologique des Paysages* (Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, Paris 1995) 3, 11.

Some localized production systems maintain powerful links with the physical environment, based on complex interactions between bio-physical and human factors that are consistent with AOC philosophy and reflected in the definition of terroir. For the sake of simplicity, all localized products involving historical precedent and collective practices are usually lumped together under the catch-all label ‘produits de terroir’. Though widely used in France, this term makes no distinction between origin and provenance, creating a huge temptation to pass provenance off as something it is not and doing nothing to address consumer demands for clarity. We suggest therefore that ‘produits de terroir’ should be exclusively reserved for products that show a discernable link to terroir.

Outside France, two good alternative terms are ‘origin-based product’ or simply ‘localized product’. Both are easy to translate and used to best advantage by authors Petra Van de Cop, Denis Sautier, and Astrid Gerz in their book *Origin-based products*.⁴⁷

4.2 Place in Effervescence

In France there is sustained debate about the respective significance of savoir-faire, history and ‘milieu’ in justifying the relationship with a given territory and usage of a geographical name. It all started a long time ago with the reorganization and subsequent development of French territory. What drives the success, or revival, of local production systems is a process of innovation and transformation that borrows from other sources, but revolves around an already established element, or set of elements, pertaining to the product that are developed to a greater or lesser extent. The protection of geographical indications is a principle that has been adopted at the international level, encouraging emerging and developing economies to seek recognition for products whose quality is linked to geographical origin⁴⁸ – with varying degrees of success, depending on the country. New World countries, especially the USA and Quebec, have barely begun to tap

⁴⁷ P. Van de Kop, D. Sautier & A. Gerz, A. (eds) *Origin-Based Products: Lessons for Pro-Poor Market Development* (KIT, Amsterdam 2006).

⁴⁸See Barham, E. & Sylvander, B. (eds) *Labels of Origin for Food – Local Development, Global Recognition* (CABI, 2011).

(2) Giovannucci, D., Josling, T., Kerr, W., O’Connor, B. and Yeung, M., *Guide to Geographical Indications: Linking Products and their Origins* (International Trade Centre, Geneva 2009).

(3) FAO and SINGER-GI *Linking People, Places and Products: A Guide for Promoting quality Linked to Geographical Origin and Sustainable Geographical Indications* 2nd ed (FAO, Rome 2009-2010)

the potential in this area. Numerous initiatives are underway, at every level of activity, aimed at exploring the full implications of 'local' and ways to develop and take ample advantage of the concept in local agriculture and food production⁴⁹. Among the questions already raised are how to motivate, manage and steer local production, and what local sources or studies can be cited to support the link with place of a particular product.⁵⁰ All of these questions encourage us to rethink that link for the purposes of cases where, unlike France, there is no requirement to reinforce and optimize what already exists, presenting an exciting opportunity to view this issue from a broader perspective. A new understanding of territory is emerging, based on an alternative approach to localized production, because the producers' own view of it also matters, as became clear in the 'Taste of Place' conference held in Vermont in 2008 and organised by Amy Trubek⁵¹. Some products are already rooted in place, like apples, apple juice and ice cider. Maple syrup is a particularly good example of the close ties between place, natural raw materials and specific savoir-faire, and clearly eligible for AOC registration, albeit such recognition may need to take into account that the natural boundaries of maple territory straddle the frontier between the U.S. and Canada. Other products, such as cheeses for instance, have no tradition to speak of or commonality of typicity, but are the focus of strenuous development efforts at the individual producer level. For Amy Trubek the focus of the Taste of Place initiative which involves producers, researchers and policy makers in the state remains the consideration of a PGI for maple syrup; however artisan cheese and cider and ice cider ⁵²are also part of discussions and projects. A series of collaborative research projects have considered a broad definition of "terroir", one that involves natural and human contexts, as intrinsic to economic development, emergent in ideas of sensory quality, and crucial to cultural identity. Some results are a sensory tool

⁴⁹ For concrete illustration see "Taste the Local Difference program" in the NW part of Michigan - in the counties surrounding Traverse City.
<http://www.mlui.org/food-farming/projects/taste-the-local-difference/#.Ujei>

⁵⁰ See Chapter *** by Barjolle in this volume.

⁵¹ See also Amy B. Trubek, (2008) - *The taste of place, a cultural journey into terroir*, University of California Press

⁵² see <http://goo.gl/K33qgx>

for maple syrup, analysis of terroir in the supply chain for Vermont artisan cheese, and studies of consumer perception and commitment in the greater New England region.

In Missouri, an applied research programme mounted by the Department of Rural Sociology of the University of Missouri-Columbia was created to promote local produce, especially wine, as part of a drive to develop agri-tourism in the area⁵³. The program was originally run in partnership with the Missouri Department of Agriculture and the Missouri Division of Tourism, and drew upon the region's wine-growing history while also highlighting the present-day activities of local farmers and restaurants capable of providing a food pairing experience to go with the local wines. The programme director, Dr. Elizabeth Baham, who later moved to the University of Arkansas, was asked in 2010 by OriGin, the Organization for an International Geographical Indications Network,⁵⁴ to consider the adjustments required to the current legal framework for the protection of 'American Origin Products' or 'AOP' – a nod no doubt to the European acronym 'AOP'. Her findings are published in a manual, co-authored with other American experts, setting out the current situation and suggesting where to go from here.⁵⁵ One direction this work has taken is the organization of the American Origin Products Association, and more recently the American Origin Products Research Foundation (see AOPCentral.org). This is part of a more general interest in place. Increasing numbers of American researchers are rethinking the concept of place – what it means, how it feels, and why people feel attached to the places where they live.⁵⁶

⁵³ See: Barham Elizabeth, Lind David, Jett Lewis, (2005). – The Missouri Regional Cuisines Project : Connecting to Place in the Restaurant. – In Peggy F. Barlett (dir.) *Urban Place : Reconnecting with the Natural World*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 141-172.

Barham Elizabeth, (2009). – The Missouri Regional Cuisines Project : Geographical Indications as a Rural Development Opportunity. – In *Rural Research Report*. Macomb, IL : Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Edition Summer, vol. 20, n° 4, 8 p. See : http://www.iira.org/pubs/publications/IIRA_RRR_703.pdf

⁵⁴ The Organisation for an International Geographical Indications Network (OriGin) is the first international network of Geographical Indications producers, representing some 150 associations (upwards of two million people) from around 40 countries. See: www.origin-gi.com

⁵⁵ Elizabeth Barham (ed), *American Origin Products (AOPs): Protecting a Legacy* (Origin, Geneva 2010)

⁵⁶ See for e.g. Laura B. DeLind and Jim Bingen. 2006) Place and Civic Culture: Re-thinking the Context for Local Agriculture.² *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 21,2: 127-151

'Farmers markets' for instance are a growing trend, and with them the interest in local products of known provenance. In France, geographical proximity matters like never before, championed by the peasant farmers' organisation AMAP (Association for the Preservation of Peasant Agriculture) through weekly market outlets where consumers can buy fresh market-garden produce ordered direct from the grower.

Initiatives to connect producers and consumers are proliferating, in particular with periurban agriculture and various « buy direct » efforts linking consumers to produces nearby. However, as the local has taken on more importance in France it has been reduced in meaning to proximity, to the detriment of a sense of product origin.

4.3 The great 'globalisation versus localisation' debate

Globalisation, which is centred on the accelerated circulation of capital, people, goods and ideas,⁵⁷ disrupts conventional wisdom by forcing us to think differently about our relationship to place. The idea of local roots has no apparent place in a techno-scientific world wedded to free trade and progress, where growth, rationality and productivity inevitably correlate with the emergence of a rootless society that has lost all ties to the land.⁵⁸ This is a point stressed by the authors of *L'Équivoque Écologique*,⁵⁹ who insist on the need to give contemporary currency to place and a sense of attachment to one's home in geographical terms. Freedom, social belonging, universal awareness – it all starts with a sense of place. What chance is there of that today?

The result of this broad circulation of people and goods is a shortening of time and a shrinking of space. Both of these effects, says French anthropologist Marc Augé, are closely linked to excess: 'an over-abundance of events and space that makes modern time

⁵⁷ Marc Abélès, *Anthropologie de la Globalisation* (Payot, Paris 2008).

⁵⁸ Pierre Alphandéry, Pierre Bitoun & Yves Dupont, *L'Équivoque écologique*, (Paris, La Découverte, 1992). The authors refer, specifically, to the 'essential correlation, unique to trading and techno-scientific societies, between growth, rationality and productivity and the loss of everything supporting an attachment to the land, roots and a sedentary existence'.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

increasingly difficult to understand, space less and less intelligible, leading to featureless suburban landscapes and a proliferation of non-places that conflict with the sociological concept of place, one which for Mauss and a whole generation of French ethnologists is supported by cultural legacies located in time and space'.⁶⁰ This is precisely what some people find wrong with anthropology – this obscure relationship with the land, verging on a fetishistic attachment to place and the 'micro-level', that favours cultures largely impervious to change and divorced from the context of space and time.⁶¹ Then again, 'what does this reference to land mean today, in a context marked by a very general process of "deterritorialisation" where people and products circulate on a global scale, in a procedure that repeatedly defines and redefines cultural distinctions?'.⁶² In the same vein, Akhil Gupta criticizes anthropologists for considering place as a given factor without bothering to understand how it is perceived, constructed and experienced.⁶³ Arjun Appadurai also takes an interest in the concept of 'locality' – meaning to come from a place – as a consequence of 'localized production'. He too questions the false evidence on which this so often relies, by examining local production techniques and the ways in which people become attached to the place they live in and transform it materially. All of this, says Appadurai, relates to the perpetuation of local lifestyles, which depends on: 'the uninterrupted interaction of localized space and time with local people who possess the knowledge to reproduce locality'.⁶⁴

Globalisation moves the goalposts and raises endless questions. The discipline of ethnology may well be based on the study of self-contained communities, but ethnologists have long ago shed the belief that the society they study functions as a closed circuit divorced from the noise of the world. It does all the same remain true that people still live and breathe in identifiable places, where they are sheltered to varying

⁶⁰ Marc Augé, *Non-lieux: Introduction à Une Anthropologie de la Surmodernité* (le Seuil, Paris 1992) 48 ; Also Tr: *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (Verso Books, 1995) .

⁶¹ Abélès (n 45).

⁶² Ibid 88-89.

⁶³ Akhil Gupta & James Ferguson (eds), *Culture, Power, Place. Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Duke University Press, Durham and London 1997).

⁶⁴ Arjun Appadurai, *Après le Colonialisme: Les Conséquences Culturelles de la Globalisation* (Payot, Paris 2005) 261; See also Michel Agier, 'Quel Temps Aujourd'hui en ces Lieux Incertains?' (2008) 185-186 *L'Homme* 105 (Special issue: L'anthropologue et le contemporain. Review of Marc Augé).

degrees from those global forces that seek to interact with and profoundly modify their particular codes of living. Geographical indications takes their place today among those global forces by opening a space for thinking differently about local development.