

University of Oxford

DPhil Geography

DPhil Thesis

'Local, loyal and constant'?

On the dynamism of terroir in sustainable agriculture

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Abstract

Terroir is a concept that is used in France, and increasingly elsewhere, to evoke character and quality in food and drink in relation to the place it comes from. In this thesis, I investigate how *terroir* has attained its present-day economic value and cultural resonance; how it is subject to multiple forms of articulation across France; and how it is put to use as part of the philosophies and practices of environmentally sustainable modes of production. I use cultural and historical modes of enquiry and I draw upon interviews, participant observation, discourse and archive analysis carried out on fieldwork in three production chains in eastern France; being wine production in Burgundy, walnut production in the Isère valley, and Reblochon cheese production in the Alps. In the course of this thesis, I elucidate the cultural significance and epistemology of the concept, and make arguments that propositions for *terroir* consist of both specific geographical extent and historical density of explanation; that the rhetorical assembly of stories about *terroir* permits claims for continuity in production and tradition; and that the adoption of organic and biodynamic methods of farming troubles inherited understandings of what *terroir* is, through the intervention of the lively propensities of biotic actors. This is a story about food, farming and culture in France that I tell to critically examine the local, loyal and constant predicates of *terroir*, and to make an original contribution to our understanding of the cultural and historical background to the French and European systems of geographical protection in food and drink.

Acknowledgements

I have long suspected that this would be the most enjoyable part of the thesis to write. Yet now the task is upon me, I am at a loss as to where to start. Perhaps I should start at the very beginning.

On the 25th of November 1991, my Grandma gave me an atlas of the world as a present for my 5th birthday. So began a fascination with the world around me seen through the lens of geography. If we imagine a doctorate as the culmination of study in a particular field or discipline, it would be right to recognise those who have contributed to its achievement from the inculcation of its first principles onwards. I hope the reader will allow me the indulgence of expressing my thanks in this way, before the serious business of the thesis begins.

The first person who ever taught me geography in a formal setting was I believe David Marrett, at St Clement's School in Jersey. He was followed, if memory serves, by Richard Heaven, Monique Lawrence and Alan Cross. I then started at Victoria College, where I was taught by Mary Friswell and Christopher Baglin in the Junior School, before Angela Swindell, Robin Stockton and David Rotherham taught me geography right up to the Sixth Form. Victoria College was a school which practiced the rigid separation of geography and history in that peculiarly British way, and in picking geography in Year 9, I found myself always in smaller groups than those of the history boys. Yet geography could never cease to interest me. From the concise notion that geography was about 'real people, real places and real ale' to the fieldwork conducted on the sand dunes at Le Braye and the streams of St Peter's Valley, we learned geography by reference to our local surroundings as well as global phenomena. I well remember digging up samples of soil and carefully bagging them on a freezing morning at Plémont as part of my A-level coursework. Perhaps this was the first time I made *terroir* the object of geographical study though, as will become clear, examining it in test tubes in a chemistry lab at lunchtime drew upon quite different epistemological predicates from those I have put to use in this project. Indeed, the interest in French culture which this thesis also demonstrates was something cultivated by other teachers at Victoria College, notably Malcolm Orbell, Valérie Videt, Alan Hamel, and Lawrie Winn.

Angela Swindell remained a great friend after I left school and followed my later progress with interest. She persuaded me to report back on my first year at university for the school magazine, and so in the 2005 edition of *The Victorian* one can read me zealously attesting the freedom and opportunities of university life. But that was no journalistic exaggeration. I loved my time at the Cornwall Campus of the University of Exeter. I well remember driving down with my brother and sister and thinking it was such a beautiful part of the world that I simply had to study there. The paint was still wet on the walls (perhaps as much a function of the frequent and horizontal rain as the newness of the buildings) when I started in September 2005, on a BSc degree programme which has now disappeared called 'Geography, Environment and Society'. There our eyes were opened to a whole new world. Stephan Harrison and Jasper Knight made geomorphology live both through the very Cornish elements of coastline, tors and clitter, and through the much more exotic alpine environments of Patagonia, Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere. Karen Anderson and Matthew Wilson taught us GIS, remote sensing and statistical methods; I learnt biogeography from Jon Bennie whilst we roamed about Cornwall in his camper van; and I had a brief flirtation with geology in the Camborne School of Mines, and didn't do very well. But I delighted in the human geography taught by Michael and Catherine Leyshon, Simon Naylor, James Ryan, Caitlin DeSilvey and Rob Fish. If I am a cultural and historical geographer it is because of them. Something chimed with me in the things we studied, the sources we used and the approaches we took, and I guess those things leave their mark even as one is exposed to other modes of enquiry. I am particularly grateful to Michael Leyshon for the efforts he expended in keeping me on the programme when I had a difficult time towards the end of my second year. In

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From Cornwall I headed north to Durham, and completed an MA in Geography (Research Methods) in a small group that included Matt Finn, Simon Beer and Lindsay Coyle. There I also met and got to know PhD students for the first time, and began thinking in practical terms about how I might embark on one myself. I seem to remember discussing such matters with Rob Lowe, Gerry Aiken, Nuala Morse, Nat O'Grady and Ladan Cockshut in the department's convivial coffee room. I was very grateful to my dissertation supervisor Cheryl McEwan and to Peter Atkins for supporting me and offering to supervise my doctoral studies there, even though in the end I migrated south to Oxford.

The first person to whom I owe my thanks in Oxford is my supervisor, Sarah Whatmore, who accepted me on to the doctoral programme and who has been a fount of knowledge and source of advice and encouragement from the beginning. Sarah has a way of taking my confused ideas and helping me make some sense out of them, of identifying what's important, and of finding the *mot juste*, and I have always felt that she has my best interests at heart. She also recommended early on that I get in touch with Hugh Clout, at UCL, who has also been a wonderful source of advice and encouragement and who, it seems, knows everybody in geography, on both sides of the Channel. Hugh has been kind enough to follow my progress in this project and has in many ways also been a supervisor for me. I have benefitted enormously from their wisdom.

Oxford is a very stimulating intellectual environment in which to carry out research, and in the course of this DPhil I have been lucky enough to discuss my project with many academic colleagues and friends and receive valuable insights and advice. The most direct links to the thesis can be drawn to those who examined it as it progressed, and I am grateful to Derek McCormack, Richard Powell and Jamie Lorimer for their sage advice, questions and comments on earlier drafts of and plans for this thesis. I am pleased to now also be able to thank Henry Buller, who joined Jamie Lorimer in examining this thesis, and with whom I had a learned and enjoyable *viva voce*. I also remain grateful to Steve New, Fiona Ferbrache and Thomas Turnbull, who read earlier draft chapters of the thesis and provided valuable feedback. Within the geography department, Jeremy Brice has been from the beginning a friend and a mentor, and I would add to the last two names mentioned those of Thomas Jellis, Joe Gerlach and Maan Barua as friends and more senior colleagues who have been encouraging and convivial from the start of my time here through to the end.

The DPhil group I started in was large, at around forty people, and I am grateful to those friends and colleagues amongst that cohort with whom I have undertaken the doctoral adventure. In later years I got to know more teachers, researchers and students in the department and my project has only stood to benefit from bouncing ideas off so many learned colleagues. In the third and subsequent years of the DPhil I was allocated an office, and I would also like to record my thanks to those colleagues on whom I was inflicted and with whom I progressed towards the eventual submission of the thesis. So to all these geography colleagues, teachers and friends, I offer my thanks: Ariell Ahearn-Ligham, Festus Asaaga, Elizabeth Baigent, Jonathan Balls, Janet Banfield, Alex Black, Jan Burke, Vanessa Burns, Cristina Cabello-Briones, Cecilia Chavana-Bryant, Michael Dangerfield, Andrew Dansie, Anna Davidson, Tahia Devisscher, Alexis Gutierrez, Heather Hachigian, Saher Hasnain, Shuai Shuai He, Kersty Hobson, Ryan Hogarth, Britain Hopkins, Takeshi Inagawa, Rachel James, Mary Kanui, Peter Winn Kirby, Nick Kreston, Chris Lander, Michelle Lanzoni, Alexandra Littaye, Sarah-Jane Littleford, Sarah McGill, David Maguire, Joe Milkovich, Alex Money, Viresh Patel, Helge Peters, Ruth Saxton, Tim Schwanen, Troy Sternberg, Patrick Thompson, Laura-Marie Töpfer, Annette Vaneeden, Liwen (Lily) Wang, Lorraine Wild, Katherine Wilhelm, Victoria Wyllie de Echeverria and Ying Yang.

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Later in this thesis I locate my work within what Hugh Clout has called 'Cross-Channel Geographies'. The thing is, I have grown up in the very interval of that proposition; in the Channel Island of Jersey. The group of people I owe more of my thanks to than any other is my family. My Mum, Dad, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, sister-in-law, great aunt and Grandma have supported and made this project possible in so many ways that I could not list them all. I count myself very lucky to have enjoyed the support of such a loving family in the

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I started these acknowledgements with my Grandma, and I should like to end them with her too. But just as I found it hard to know where to begin these acknowledgements, I now find it hard to know where to begin in thanking her. My Grandma, Iris May Romeril, was a monumental figure in my life and in the lives of all of my family. She has been such a source of love, support, advice, encouragement and wisdom in my life that it seems ridiculous to attempt to frame that in terms of this thesis. But that love, support, advice, encouragement and wisdom did much to carry me along the D.Phil. journey, just as it did the earlier activities in my life. Grandma's knowledge of life in Jersey, its people, places and *temps passé* are in the most fundamental way the origin of my interest in terroir. It is a rich, colourful, local knowledge that is transmitted through stories and conversations that extend over years and develop as one grows. What could pass as our products of terroir – Jersey Royal potatoes, milk, cream and butter from our Jersey cows, figs, cider, fruit from the Romeril apple trees and others, mackerel, crab, lobster, cabbage loaf, Jersey wonders, bean crock, tomato fricot, vraic buns, and so on – all of these I ate at Grandma's table. All of these we discussed and related to history, practices, landscapes and producers. What better training, what better launching pad could there be for somebody who wanted to study what terroir means? And such is but one facet of how Grandma supported this project. I once read an interview with the Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez, in which he said he owed much to the memory of his grandparents. That remark struck a chord with me, and in carrying out this project and writing this thesis, Grandma has been brought to memory so often, and her wisdom has animated it in so many ways. We lost Grandma in January 2015. The last time I saw her, at her bedside, she asked, as always, about my studies. I am very sad that I will not be able to show her the fruit of those studies in the shape of this thesis. But I am honoured to express my deepest gratitude for her support in its conception, execution and completion, and I dedicate this thesis to her memory.

* * *

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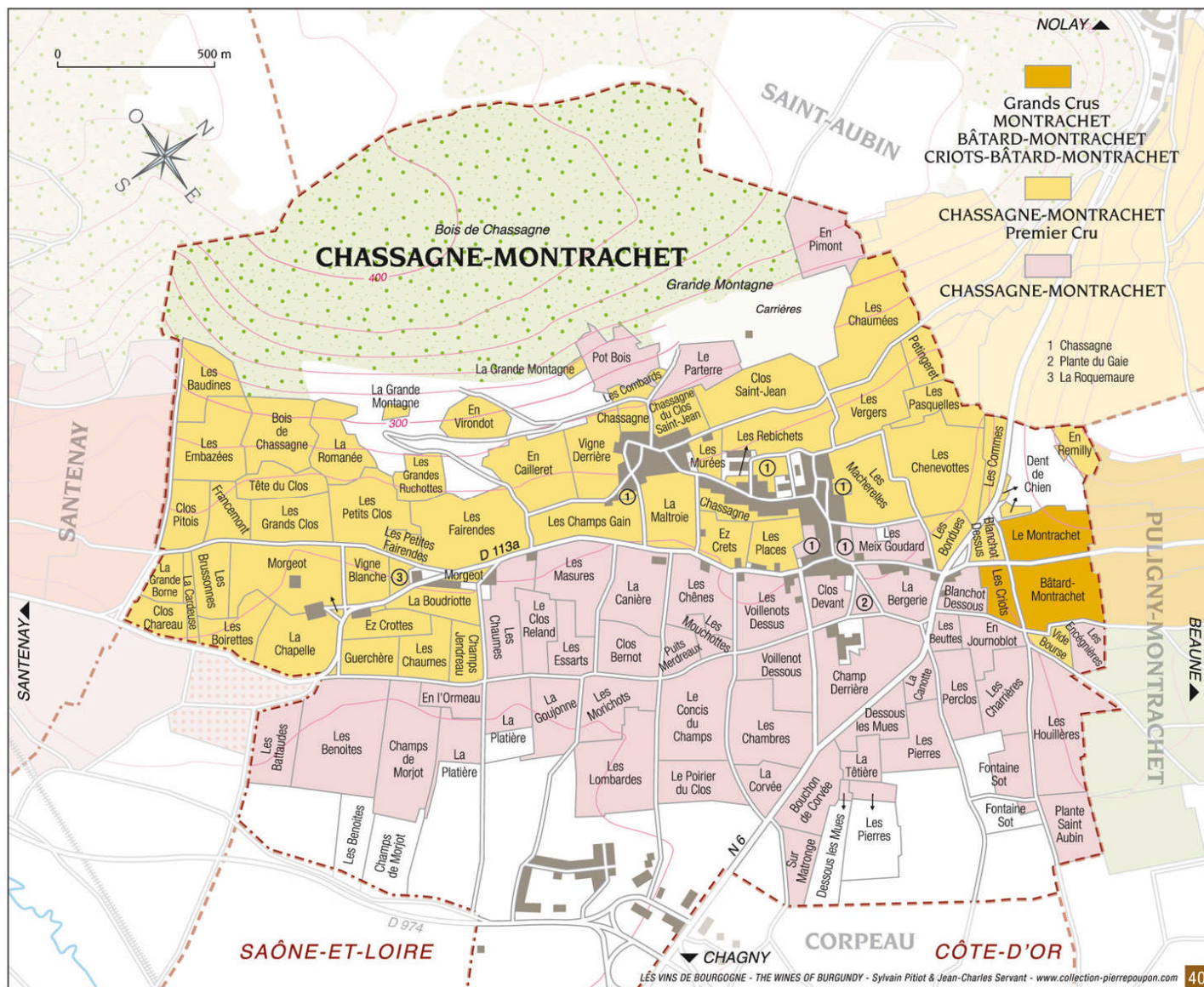
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Terroir?











The morning of February 24th 2013 was cold and dry in Paris. Three friends and I took the number 80 bus to the Porte de Versailles where, at 9am, huge crowds of people were already bustling about the entrance gates. We showed our tickets and then took an escalator down into a large exhibition building. As we went down, the scent of hay grew stronger, a mixture of noises grew louder, and we eventually arrived in a hall filled with animal pens and people. There were sheep, goats, cows, and pigs with their piglets. Children climbed and leaned over the pens to look at and try to touch the animals. A man with a microphone was giving a demonstration of how a chick hatches from its egg. A television crew was interviewing a farmer who was explaining something about a lamb. This was the ground floor of the 50th annual *Salon de l'Agriculture*, Europe's largest agricultural fair, an event which brings farmers to the capital from all over the country and allows Parisians to celebrate all things rural and edible. Above us the fair occupied two more floors, and around us many more buildings were filled with it. I had never seen so many people in one place.

In this hall, I tasted some Roquefort, some Reblochon, and a ewe's milk cheese from Corsica whose name I'm not sure how to spell. I attended a ten-minute lamb tagliatelle cooking demonstration, and passed a sausage stall set up in full view of a pig pen. As I studied a map of the Savoy region at a Savoyard cheese stand, a farmer walked past me leading a well-coiffed cow to be judged in that day's competition. My friends and I then went upstairs. We walked through some double doors and entered a world of tastings and representations, which were now organised by region rather than species. Maps showed what parts of France were to be found in which parts of the fair. A large map of Picardy was decorated with the different foods that come from different parts of that region. We walked past the Franche-Comté area, where beer was flowing out of taps and a group was singing, playing music and making very merry. In the Auvergne area, a beekeeper explained to me that his honey was so brilliantly

yellow because of the way he sets it. But we couldn't find Burgundy, so we went up again to the next floor.

'Don't let on that you're a student,' my friend said, as we climbed. 'Let me do the talking. If they think we're all students, they'll think we won't buy anything, and they won't give us their best wines to taste.' We soon arrived at our first Burgundy wine stall. They had many of the big names: Montrachet, Saint-Georges, and so on. We were given an ordinary chardonnay first, which did not apparently have an *appellation d'origine* – so it could have come from anywhere in Burgundy; indeed it could have come from anywhere in France. It certainly had the typical character of white wines from the Côte d'Or – nutty, buttery, cold, savoury. Then, letting my friend talk all the time, we moved on to taste a Chassagne-Montrachet, which we were told by the stallholder we could buy for 88 euros a bottle. This was less rich than the first one, and we suspected less new oak was used in its maturation. The man seemed a bit disappointed that in the end we didn't buy anything. At the second Burgundy stall we were offered an average Chablis white, followed by a mediocre red, followed by a Mercurey red. I had an interesting conversation with the lady serving us about the origin of this last wine. 'Mercurey's at the edge,' I exclaimed. 'No, no,' she replied, 'it's in the middle.' She pointed to the large map behind her to prove her point. 'Oh, well, in that sense, yes,' I admitted. I meant to say that it was at the southern edge of the vineyards of the Côte d'Or, but she wanted to say that it was in the middle of the whole band of vineyards that stretch from the northern to the southern tip of Burgundy, from Chablis, through the Côte d'Or down to the Mâconnais. I wondered in which geographical perspective the wine would seem more valuable.

We headed off for lunch. Never have there been so many options. I had a Raclette sandwich. My pals went to the Breton fish stall, which was doing a brisk trade, and where cups of white

wine could be had for one euro a throw. After eating, I introduced my friends to some stalls from Savoy, the region where earlier in the month I had been carrying out interviews with dairy farmers. I still had fond memories of the place. At their wine stall, my friends were polite but I could see not really convinced about the merits of Savoy wine after having had Burgundy. I talked to the lady at the stall and she explained that the Savoy vineyard is a small one. Behind her was a map of the region with the areas of grape cultivation highlighted. I suggested that it was a small vineyard but of good quality. She agreed, but didn't really make much of it. Maybe, I thought, even the Savoyards don't rate their wines as highly as those of Burgundy, or Bordeaux, or elsewhere. We then moved to a cheese stand. There the man talked to us about the difference between summer and winter versions of the Beaufort cheese. This difference was indeed marked; we detected it in colour, taste and texture. He described Beaufort to us as 'the Rolls-Royce of cheeses'.

I spotted a man who I had met at a conference at Aix-en-Provence. He was part of the delegation from Provence, promoting their food and the region more generally. We chatted, and he called up a geographer who I had also met at that conference and who was on site, involved in the olive oil judging. He came up and chatted and I had to pinch myself that at a fair so heaving with people I should run into two that I knew. We weaved our way to an olive stall, which had come up from the Drôme region. We had olives and then olive tapenade on toast. It was delicious. I talked to the man about the region, its olive trees, the appellation that they used, and my project. He told me that one feels the presence of history in the olive groves – they are where one's forefathers are – and the trees live longer than men. I thanked him and took his card.

On our way out of the fair, we passed the stands of France's overseas territories. These were more exotically decorated. I was not surprised to see that the French Caribbean island of Martinique had the world's only rum with an *Appellation d'Origine Protégée* (AOP; protected designation of origin). I discussed with my friend how this was the French system, the French convention; we should not be surprised that the Bahamas or Trinidad do not have appellations – but they do, on the other hand, have well-known brands, like Mount Gay, and Lamb's Navy Rum. In both cases, postcolonial exoticism is materialised in an edible product, but for the French, that product is valued as part of a system that recognises places as synonymous with quality; a system that promotes *terroir*.

Introduction

The annual Salon de l'Agriculture is, as Margaret Campbell (2011) put it, 'a celebration of rural life, local customs and the entire French food-chain,' or, put another way, 'edible proof of the *exception française* so vaunted by the chattering classes on the other side of the Channel.' It is an occasion for French people to get to grips with the panoply of food and drink that is produced throughout their country; to appreciate its variety, to judge its tastes and textures, and to learn first-hand of the problems and opportunities farmers face. It is a highly mediatised and politically important event. Newspapers have observed how, while former President Jacques Chirac could approvingly slap a cow's backside and thereby show his credentials as a man in tune with rural France, a remoter urbanity was attributed to his successor Nicolas Sarkozy when he engaged in a slanging match at the Salon with a man who refused to shake his hand (Lichfield, 2011). Such things are important in a society which several geographers have argued is profoundly attached to its rural heritage (Prince, 1977; Clout and Demossier, 2003; Buller, 2003; Frayssignes, 2008). Where geographers and historians have observed the cultural value, national pride and moral concern invested in spatial concepts such as 'the countryside' in Britain and 'wilderness' in the USA (Prince, 1988; Daniels, 1993; Cronon, 1995; Matless, 1998; Brace, 1999; John, 2007; Fish, 2010; Lorimer, 2013), in France the concept that was evoked in talk and text at the Salon de l'Agriculture, that is used ceaselessly in the description of food and narratives of the country, that is regularly made synonymous with quality and authenticity, and that is used as a fundamental principle in the governance of food production chains, is *terroir*. This is a word that has no obvious translation into English, but it is a word that I shall no longer italicise because I am going to use the entirety of the present thesis to mine its meaning and use.

When French farmers talk of terroir they are usually talking of a sense of territorial quality, of the aptitude of their land combined with their expertise in the production of goods with certain qualities. In the images and text that precede this Introduction I have tried to give an initial sense of terroir, and thereby open out the possibilities of its interpretation, rather than close it down immediately through a definition. Indeed, as we will see in later chapters, attempts to define what and where terroir is, who should be able to speak for it, and what it is worth, are processes which put the concept at risk even as they seek to protect it. This is what makes the tension between dynamism and constancy in terroir which led me to start this project. The processes of drawing lines, whether imagined, or printed on a map, or erected as fences, around an area of land and imputing qualities to the physiography, crops, biotic life, farming practices and traditions that are thereby enclosed is one part of what we will investigate. Another part will be how that terroir becomes valuable; how it is known, recognised and consumed outside of its bounds, and how farmers understand and play their role in this process. And a third part will be how that terroir becomes meaningful within wider French culture, and is apt to be imaginatively sustained over time even as it might materially change.

Why Terroir?

Terroir is most visible in two contexts: firstly, the wine industry, which is globally expanding and wherein exists a tension between place-based and other forms of attributing quality (Bailly, 2000; Jones, 2003; Loureiro, 2003; Schirmer, 2010; Johnson, 2014). We know that in Europe and in France, people are drinking less wine than they used to, but they are drinking wine of higher quality (a fact usually measured by reference to wine with designated labels of

origin, or sometimes simply higher levels of alcohol) (European Commission, 2004; Pitte, 2007; Stagg, 2013). Within this qualitative logic, the rhetoric of terroir has become more valuable and more widely used, and the unique, exclusive nature of products of terroir is promoted in terms of them emerging from practices that are 'local, loyal and constant' (Pitte, 2007; Demossier, 2011b; Flutet, 2013). The French wine industry makes more wine and makes more money out of it than anyone else. In 2014 it produced 46.7 million hectolitres of wine, and between the years 2000 and 2014 it made an average of €7.7 billion per year out of its wine exports (Girard, 2014b). The average value of its wine exports is also much higher than its closest European competitors ([Figure 0.1](#)). I am convinced that the most significant factor in this success is the concept of terroir, which is communicated at every stage of the production chain and which is used constantly in the promotion of wine within France and overseas. With its lucrative wine industry built upon prestigious terroirs (evoked by names like Champagne, Hermitage, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Château Lafite-Rothschild, Romanée-Conti, and so on), France is the envy of the world (Pitte, 2001; White *et al*, 2009; Jones, 2014). And, as we will see later in the thesis, although the word terroir has not been translated into any other language (with the Oxford English Dictionary describing it as a word 'not fully naturalized' into English (OED, 2015)), the reasoning that comes with it, that of attributing quality through reference to a particular geography and history of production, is being adapted elsewhere, and not just for wine.

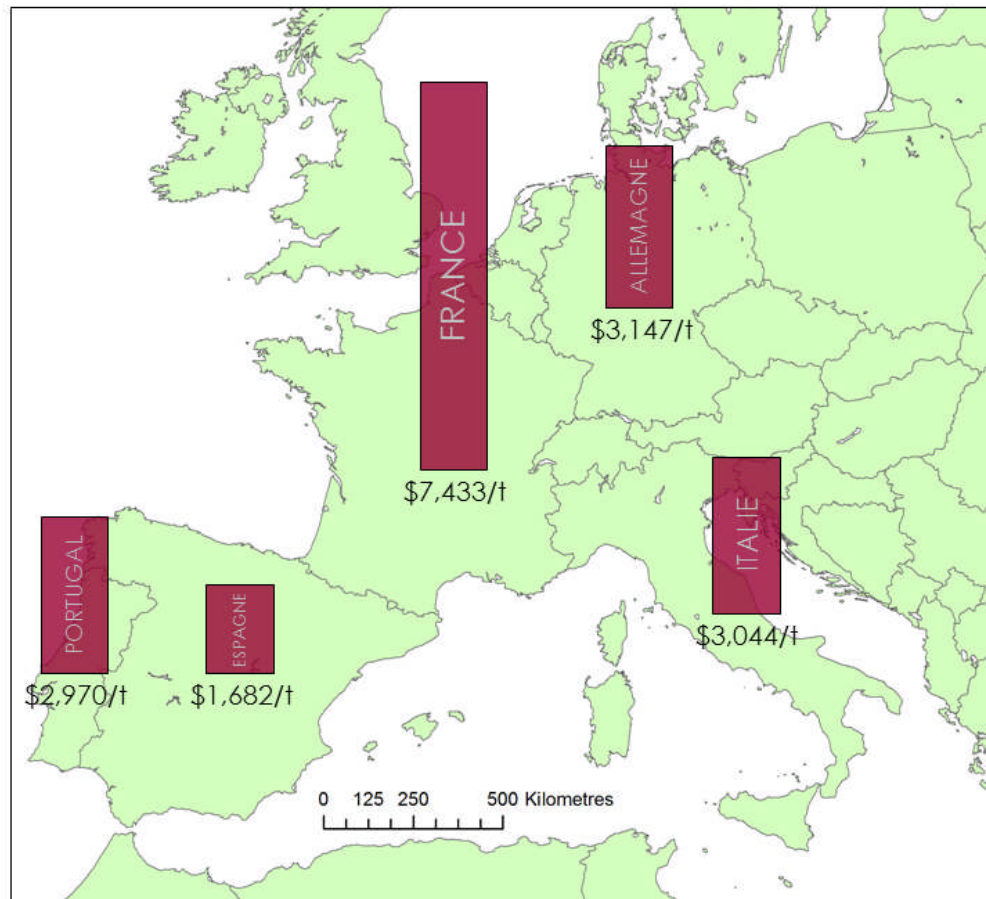


Figure 0.1: Map of average value (in USD) per ton of wine exported from five European countries in 2011. Map drawn by author. Source of data: FAO (2014) (<http://faostat.fao.org/site/666/default.aspx>); Cartographic data source: Natural Earth Data.

Indeed, the second context in which terroir is becoming increasingly visible, but where the word is less commonly used, is the Europe-wide move to geographically protected foods as part of a European Union-sanctioned push for quality. With efforts to develop more than just productivist agricultural policy, the EU has promoted ‘quality foods’ by which it means those products with specific measurable qualities, or organic methods of production, or, most commonly, a demonstrable connection to the place of origin (European Commission, 2011; cf. Goodman, 2004). This is a means to discursively frame changes to the Common Agricultural Policy that move focus, and funding, away from the ever-increasing production that resulted in the wine lakes and grain mountains of the 1980s and 1990s; to develop the comparative

advantage of European agriculture against the large-scale commodity production and neoliberal agricultural economies of the USA and other countries; and to support the system of family farms, and the multifunctionality of the countryside, in a continent which is becoming ever more urban in population but ever more desirous of green space, healthy food and a protected environment (Valceschini and Mazé, 2000; Clout and Demossier, 2003; Buller and Morris, 2004; Morgan *et al*, 2006; Whatmore and Clark, 2008; Bardsley and Pech, 2012; McDonagh, 2013; Horlings and Marsden, 2014). The system of geographical protection of food is regulated through the EU regulations (EC) Nos. 509/2006 and 510/2006, and their predecessors, and it is organised in three categories of label (Figure 0.2).



Figure 0.2: The AOP, IGP and STG food labels of the European Union.

The first is what in French is called the Appellation d'Origine Protégée (AOP) and in English the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO).¹ The next is the Indication Géographique Protégée (IGP), and the third is the Spécialité Traditionnelle Garantie (STG). Groups of producers who wish to obtain the right to use the 'shared intellectual property' (Morgan *et al*, 2006; Valceschini and Mazé, 2000) of one of these labels have to submit a file to the European Union, via their national governments, arguing for why their product should be recognised and protected. The AOP label is the most demanding with regard to how the

¹ And in Italian is called the Denominazione di Origine Protetta (DOP), and so on for other European languages. Throughout the thesis I will generally use the French names and acronyms, though occasionally the English ones will be reproduced from cited works.

product should be linked to the place it comes from, requiring both the identification of ‘quality or characteristics...which are essentially or exclusively due to a particular geographical environment with its inherent natural and human factors’, and that the product be produced, processed *and* prepared within the specified geographic area (European Union, 2006a). The IGP is somewhat less strict, requiring that only one of those operations be carried out in the specified geographic area, and that the product ‘possesses a specific quality, reputation or other characteristics attributable to that geographical origin’ (*Ibid*). The STG label stands for much less altogether, requiring only that it be made with ‘traditional raw materials’ or that it ‘corresponds’ with a traditional mode of production, and not requiring that the product be made in a specific place at all (European Union, 2006b). Because the link to terroir is so much more developed in the AOP and IGP categories, and because 96% of all geographically protected foods in the European system come under those two categories, I will not, for the purposes of this thesis, concentrate any attention on the STG category.

The European regulatory apparatus of geographical protection developed from, and was strategically influenced by the earlier French system of *Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée* (AOC), which itself began with wine and was later used to protect other food products, and within which the ‘local, loyal and constant’ expectation was first nationally propagated (Pitte, 2007; Stanziani, 2010). Indeed, later in the thesis we will examine how that system, which was originally set up to prevent fraud in early twentieth-century France, has come to represent, enframe and regulate terroir in the French food chain, and how this has been imitated, though not so perfectly or with such fixity as to avoid contestation, in the rest of Europe. Today, the AOP and AOC labels are essentially equivalent in France, and products (mostly wines) with the latter label are being progressively relabelled with the former (INAO, 2016). France is one of the countries with the most geographically protected foods in Europe,

and has in common with the other countries displaying large numbers in [Figure 0.4](#) a cultural history of valuing foods from specific places and specific traditions of production (compare, for instance, the findings of Miele and Murdoch (2002), MacClancy (2004), MacDonald (2013) and Congdon (2015) in Spain and Italy). Indeed it has been argued that the countries of the western Mediterranean have maintained a historical attachment to place of origin in attributing quality in food where other countries have invested value in other matters, notably brand names (Valceschini and Mazé, 2000; Parrott *et al*, 2002; Montanari and Pitte, 2010). Exporting, proposing and performing place as an index of quality is a means for producers and promoters to create cultures of valuation for geographically distinctive food and drink.

Why Now?

In Britain, which has been imagined as sitting in between the food cultures of continental Europe and the USA (Whatmore, 2002: 123), I would contend that we are making more and more space for terroir. Where once the defence of local food was considered pathetically parochial (Waugh, 1930), and to remark upon the quality of food in any sense was considered vulgar (MacClancy, 1992), now I would argue that the country is experiencing nothing less than a renaissance in how it thinks about, talks about and consumes food. From when I began this project in 2011 to the time of writing these words in 2015, I have been astounded by the ever-greater visibility of, and valuation of, foods with specific qualities from specific places. To look only at the example of television, in early 2012 the BBC broadcast an innovative series entitled ‘Our Food’ in which writer and food critic Giles Coren ‘embark[ed] on a journey across Britain to discover how our landscape, history and climate shape what we grow and where we grow it’ (BBC, 2012). Throughout the episodes, he and other presenters

talk to farmers, walk through the landscape, and eat and drink on a mission to map the idiography of British food and to pursue a desideratum of territorial authenticity. Indeed, maps are used throughout the series to educate the viewer as to where quality foods come from, such as in an episode that featured the county of Kent and wherein the presenter wished to ‘put [its] cherries back on the map’ (Figure 0.3).



Figure 0.3: Food map of Kent, as shown in the *Our Food* (2012) television programme.
(Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01gflcy>)

The nascent interest in local food that enabled this television programme to succeed has only grown. Now, at the moment of writing,² there are no less than four original series being shown across the BBC channels in which presenters travel around Britain and showcase the different foods that come from different parts of the country.³ And this is in the context of dozens of different series on food more generally being available, and in a year in which the final of the series *The Great British Bake-Off* was the most watched programme on British television (Sweeney, 2015) and has become a much-discussed point of reference for wider

² 6th November 2015.

³ They are: *A Taste of Britain*, *Terry and Mason's Great Food Trip*, *Great British Menu* and *Harvest 2015*.

trends in British culture (Nikkhah, 2012; Rainey, 2013; Higgins, 2015). Whilst all this has been going on, Britain has also submitted several applications to the EU for geographical protection of its food, and now has a total of over 60 (Figure 0.4); a figure, I should add, which doesn't include the output of Britain's (and above all England's) renascent wine industry. The reason I say Britain is making space for terroir is that AOP regulations have encouraged a particular form of geographical rhetoric amongst groups of farmers, just as the popular media have propounded a geographic sensibility amongst consumers. Not only are we more interested in where food comes from, but those producing it are more interested (including financially) in telling us about it.

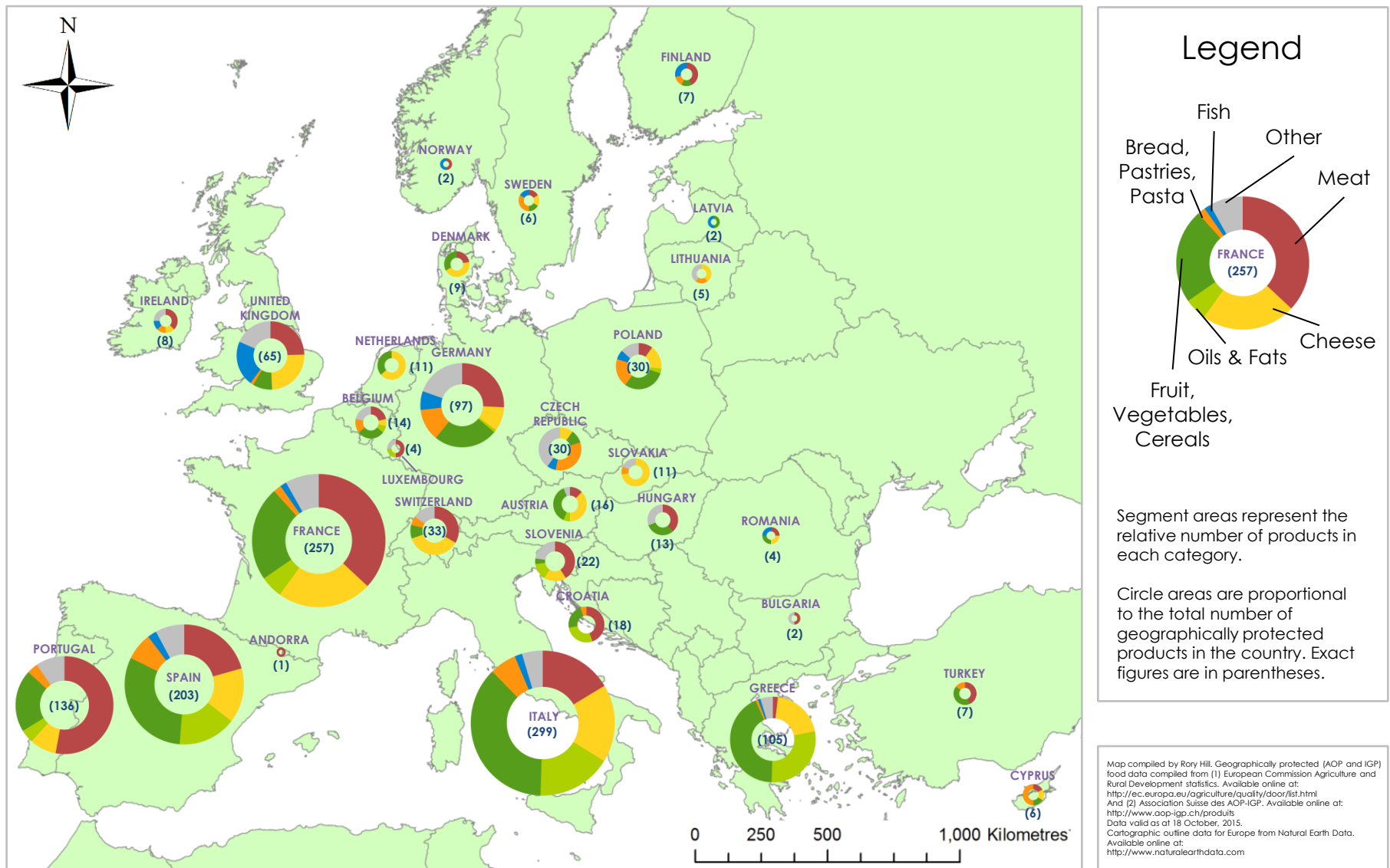


Figure 0.4: Map showing the number and types of geographically protected (AOP and IGP) food in Europe

This movement also has political traction. At the annual conference of the National Farmers Union in February 2015, the Environment Secretary, Elizabeth Truss, announced a long term economic plan for British food and farming (HM Government, 2015a). At further meetings throughout the year, she clarified that a substantial part of this was the launch of a five-year ‘Great British Food’ programme (HM Government, 2015b), which would pioneer nothing less than a ‘British food and drink revolution’ (HM Government, 2015c). In explaining the rationale for these initiatives, Truss noted that:

‘In the past, I remember growing up and being told by people that it was places like Italy and France that had great food and that here in Britain it wasn’t really very much, and that if you wanted sophistication you ought to go to an Italian restaurant to get it.’

She continued:

‘But we are now at a stage where we are beginning to connect with the food and where it comes from, we are beginning to understand that.’

The media attention I mentioned above is a major and pervasive part of developing that connection and understanding. Harnessing the geographical imagination in the celebration of quality food is a step in the direction of geographical protection and support for the precepts of terroir. The Great British Food programme that Truss and DEFRA (the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) have launched aims to celebrate what is produced in Britain, what is grown and what is manufactured. It aims to promote entrepreneurial activity and to market British foods overseas. And I would argue there is a substantial cultural dimension to these economic efforts. One of the key priorities of the over-arching long-term food and farming plan is:

‘Encouraging more top-quality regional foods to apply for Protected Food Name status. The UK currently has 62 but has a long way to go to match the 219 protected foods in France’

Connecting to food and where it comes from, and following the model of France, means following a country wherein a national compendium of geographical foods rests upon the longstanding cultural recognition of terroir at the origin of quality and authenticity in food. It means developing an economy of stories about local foods as well as local food economies. It means re-connecting products with places.

In this project I want to examine how claims that link product to place are made and how they resonate. The word terroir is already used to a limited extent in Britain to make that connection, especially for wine, and especially for products from France. But the particular form of rhetoric that attributes quality to specific places and the stories they have to tell is, to judge by current trends, something we are going to become ever more exposed to, whether the word terroir is used or not. By developing a critical geographical perspective on how that rhetoric has developed and is contested in France – the world leader identified in the rationale for Great British Food – I hope to make an original contribution to our understanding of how provenance comes to matter in what we eat and drink. Indeed in essence, with this thesis I hope to bring a sustained analysis of the French concept of terroir – including matters of ongoing controversy – to a British audience.

One distinctive part of this project is arguing for the importance of history in the recognition of the geography of food and drink. In the chapters that follow, I will argue that the sense of authenticity arrogated to products of terroir often builds explicitly upon a sense of anteriority. If policymaking can sometimes be neglectful of history, it is heartening that in the discourses

of Great British Food, some sense of how Britain's food culture has developed over time is transmitted. But, as I will argue in the conclusion to the thesis, more historical geographical exploration must be undertaken, for history is doubly important in the successful recognition of products of terroir. Not only is historical precedence almost always tied to provenance in the stories used to reclaim geographical protection in food, but food and drink products must also build up their reputation over time if their label of geographical protection is to be recognised as meaningful and contribute to the commercial success of the product.

Given the policy context in Britain, and indeed more widely in the British Isles,¹ I hope my project will serve as an example of how historically-informed cultural geography 'can offer insight into current public policy issues' (Myers *et al*, 2003: 91). In Chapter 7, the final chapter that draws upon empirical materials, I discuss the policy context for terroir within France, and in the Conclusion I revisit the relevance of this work for the policy context in Britain. However, given its theoretical background of cultural and historical geography, and the nature of the fieldwork I carried out in France, this project is substantially concerned with understanding the historical emergence and present-day articulation and contestation of terroir in France. The empirical depth I have sought in the thesis is in probing the nature of terroir, in interrogating its meaning and its application in several French agricultural, and more broadly cultural, contexts. My interest in terroir is, as mentioned in the Acknowledgements, a longstanding one. Whilst I am keen to offer insights into the wider applicability of the concept of terroir, my overriding aim has been to improve our understanding of terroir in itself. This I have tried to do through attending to its historical and

¹ Where, for instance, the Irish Department of Agriculture has been pursuing further geographical protection of food products with its 'Linked to the Land' strategy (Irish Government, 2012); and where the Genuine Jersey label is now being used by some 138 producers in the promotion of the 'diversity and quality' of goods produced in that island (Genuine Jersey, 2015).

cultural development, and also through exploring the as yet little-studied matter of its perception and use in putatively sustainable modes of agricultural production.

A few years ago something began to be communicated in both popular and scholarly accounts of terroir that animated my desire to carry out this project in the way I have. That is, with the growth of organic agriculture in the 2000s (interpellated by social science scholarship such as Tovey, 2002; Roe, 2006; Willer et al, 2008; Tranter *et al*, 2009; David *et al*, 2010), a form of rhetoric emerged wherein the environmental principles of that method of cultivation were claimed to facilitate the expression of terroir. This was proposed in Bruno Bravo-Maza's (2010) film *Quatre Saisons à la Romanée-Conti*, relayed by John Lichfield (2010) in an article in *The Independent*, and discussed briefly in Sylvie Boulanger-Fassier's (2007) study on wine production in the Alsace and Jura regions of France. I wanted to investigate how this could be the case; how you could have, as Pouzenc and Vincq (2013: 39) later put it, 'Organic wine, to better express the terroir!' and how this might also work in production chains other than that of wine. I wanted to take apart not only the idea that organic and other modes of environmentally sustainable production were good for terroir, but also, more fundamentally, the idea that terroir was something that *could be* facilitated or expressed. On what ontological and epistemological bases could such claims be made, I wondered, and in whose interests? And does that mean that terroir is a dynamic assemblage of elements that can be performed and articulated in different ways, or a fixed phenomenon that will contribute to products with a consistency *qualis ab incepto*? Teil *et al* (2010) undertook a project looking at what is at stake in, and how actors involved in wine production chains view, the possibility of wines made without pesticides. They recounted the interesting notion that environmental sustainability is seen by some wine producers as a means, not an end; as being commensurable with the desire to work closely with terroir in the field. At conferences I

attended early in the project, I talked with two doctoral students in geography (Florian Houard And Frédérique Célériér) who were also interested in the experience of organic wine producers, though in different regions of France from me. The theses and publications they produce will provide a more complete picture of the adventure of terroir through sustainable production methods in France. But mine is the only project that looks at how environmentally sustainable methods of production interact with terroir inside and outside of the wine world, and how those modes of production raise questions about what terroir is and does. This has meant adding the problem of sustainability to, or at least discerning its role in, the problems of the idiography of terroir, its governance and conceptual development in France, and the risk is that as a result I have spread my analysis too thinly. My only defence to that charge is that, in asking a series of related questions about the nature of terroir in France today, I hope to have opened up lines for more confident and in-depth enquiry in the future.

* * *

Chapter 1: Theoretical Dispositions

1.1. Introduction

How has terroir emerged, how is it articulated, and what is the nature of its interaction with sustainable modes of production? These are the fundamental questions I have sought to examine in this project. I have shared the common concern of cultural geography to interrogate a particular ‘relationship between the spatial and the social, landscape and cultural processes, past and present’ (Johnson *et al*, 2013: 2), and, although attentive to materials, technologies and ecologies through the influence of more-than-human geography (see Lorimer, 2005; 2007a; Whatmore, 2006; Buller, 2015), I have not pursued what may be seen as the physiographic elements of terroir, such as geology or slope, through any kind of quantitative natural science approach. Rather, in my methods I have shared the habit of many rural geographers to talk to farmers and other actors involved in the shaping of rural economy, culture and landscape; and in the first three empirical chapters above all, I have integrated the historical geographer’s concern to use the evidence of the past to cast light on explanations of the present.

This theoretical and methodological positioning has given shape to the kind of materials generated on fieldwork and how I write them into the thesis, and it betrays a combination of influences from three overlapping fields of enquiry: cultural geography, historical geography and the geography of food. Each of these fields are in themselves theoretically diverse and their practitioners often adopt mixed methodologies. Cultural geographers focus on the materiality of the world as well as its perception and meaning, and, through trends, turns,

schools and preferences, cultural geographers have, like Sauer (1956: 292), long rejected 'limitations of inquiry, method or thought'. This has engendered some theoretical adaptability but also means it can be difficult to precipitate clear theoretical predicates out from research accounts (Johnson, *et al*, 2013). Historical geographers too are known to work with theory suggestively rather than dogmatically (Harris, 1991), and their long-established modes of enquiry have opened up to new methods and new theoretical positions in recent years (Colten *et al*, 2003; Gagen *et al*, 2007), moving from the sometime 'arithmetical' to the 'knowingly artful' (Lorimer, 2010: 267). And the geography of food is a name given to what must be considered an eclectic field in which farming, foodways and the spaces and practices of consumption are all examined from varying cultural, economic, and political points of view.

In this chapter I will briefly outline the theoretical background to the questions I ask in this thesis and the methods I apply in seeking to answer them. This outlining will continue into the next chapter, where I explain how those methods were executed, and theory will also be discussed at appropriate moments in the empirical chapters later in the thesis. My theoretical positioning changed somewhat over the course of the thesis. As will become clear in what follows, whilst at the start of the project I was particularly receptive to the promise of more-than-human geography, as it progressed I became more and more interested in using talk and text to understand the emergence and operationalisation of terroir. This change was influenced by conversations about the nature of my project with teachers in the UK and in France, and by the French literature I was exposed to; and it was shaped by my pursuit of leads in, and making ever more space for, interviews and archival sources, as opposed to following actors and materials through more sustained participant observation.

1.2. Cultural Geography

I would locate my interest in the emergence and conceptual life of terroir at the interface of cultural and historical geography. This is a position from which a substantial amount of geographical enquiry has been carried out in other empirical contexts, and it is a position that is often well suited to narrative accounts that feature temporal progression or that reflect on the shaping of the present by the past (Meinig, 1988-2006; Matless, 1998; Starrs, 1998; DeLyser, 2001; Braun, 2002; Till, 2005; DeSilvey, 2007; Collis, 2010). I am convinced that there are themes in geography whose exploration can profitably be undertaken by reference to both past and present – cultural landscapes, the boundaries of identity, postcolonial statehood and places of memory, for instance – and I would agree with Jones' (2004) assessment of the prescience of extending our temporal scales of analysis back into the past, and Mitchell's (2013) assertion that cultural geographical explanation in particular stands to benefit from historical depth. Tracing the diachronic development of phenomena, landscapes, materials, symbols or concepts into the form familiar to us today is a compelling form of explanation, and it can produce knowledge that informs our understanding of both past and present. It allows us to interrogate and reflect upon processes of remembering and rehearsal of the past; and to think about how continuity is proposed and how things are passed from generation to generation within a culture. Indeed, working at the intersection of historical and cultural geography has shaped the originality of my contribution, in terms of putting both past and present in my analytical frame, and in critically examining the continuity and discontinuities that exist between them.

Working at this interface has presented some theoretical and methodological challenges, but I would argue that tension between the conventions of historical and cultural geography can be productive. In the empirical chapters of this thesis, I reveal and reflect upon the problems that come with projecting today's understanding of terroir onto the past. I discuss how the apparent continuity of terroir has been established over time, how it has been shaped and contributed to the shaping of France's popular geographical culture, and how it has been challenged by historical events and disputed understandings. I also build and reflect upon the challenges of using archival methods to re-animate past landscapes and enliven accounts of the past; a matter of recent debate in historical geography as discussed in Gagen *et al* (2007), Bailey *et al* (2009), and Lorimer and Whatmore (2009); and in Chapter 5 I trace different forms of archival encounter through my present-day participation in accompanying cattle up to the high pastures for the summer. Working at this interface has also facilitated engagement with extant work in francophone geography. An argument that I develop throughout the thesis is that the sense of authenticity imputed to products of terroir regularly builds upon a sense of anteriority. Terroir is shaped in and by the past. Accounts of terroir written by French geographers are frequently concerned by the marks of both past and present (consider Pitte, 1999; de Reparaz, 2007; Fumey and Bérion, 2010) and the arguments presented in the defence of geographically protected food and drink – in dossiers presented to the EU and in goods marketed to customers – almost always recount historical developments. Whilst it may be too much to say in the most general terms that 'all geography is historical geography' (Darby, 1953: 6), in the specific case of terroir historical development is I feel a necessary condition of its eventual recognition and success.

Cultural geographers use various means to find analytical purchase on the dense web that is 'culture' (Geertz, 1973). Discerning the inscription of meaning in landscape is a theme that

has interested cultural geographers for many years, and it can follow more or less material, iconographic, textual or performed paths (Sauer, 1938; Lowenthal, 1975; Cosgrove, 1984; Prince, 1984; Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Tuan, 1991; Baker and Biger, 1992; Barnes and Duncan, 1992; Schein, 1997; Matless, 1998; Seymour, 2000; Duncan and Duncan, 2001; Rose, 2002; Rose and Wylie, 2006; Whatmore, 2006; DeSilvey, 2007; Della Dora, 2009; Ingold, 2012; Wylie, 2012); as well as invite historically sensitive enquiry (see discussions in Meinig et al, 1979; Baker and Biger, 1992; Baker, 2003). But there is also the possibility of trying to prise open and trace the inner workings of prevalent cultural concepts, such as heritage (Graham *et al*, 2000), or wilderness (Cronon, 1995; Clayton, 2001), or waste (Lynch, 1990; Gregson and Crang, 2010; Gandy, 2013), or even landscape itself (Wylie, 2007). And this has some parallels in studies of the variable perception and operationalisation of concepts like independence and autonomy in farming (Emery, 2015; Stock and Forney, 2014; Stock *et al*, 2014). In using concepts as the analytical frame of reference, archival, discursive and interview-based methods are often used to help stitch together meaning, convention and contestation across time periods and geographical locales. And with a concept front of mind, it makes sense that such investigations should be concerned with epistemology, how knowledge is made about things, as well as with ontology, the things themselves.

1.3. Fathoming a Concept

As Gottmann (1973), Sack (1986), Debarbieux (1999) and Elden (2013) have developed a conceptual history of territory, so I have been interested in the conceptual history of terroir. The two concepts have much in common, not least shared etymological roots, and just as Elden saw fit to undertake a historical and conceptual investigation of territory to overcome

its apparent ‘self-evident’ meaning (*Ibid*: 3),¹ so I have investigated terroir to better understand how the concept has developed its present-day sense. The kind of ‘genealogy’ of the concept that this involves will draw upon a wide range of archival sources, as Barry (2015) recommends, and as will be seen in the first three empirical chapters of this thesis, I have followed Elden in an approach that is ‘both textual, with all references traced back to their original languages, and contextual, in which texts are resituated in their time and place’ (Elden, 2013: 8), as well as following MacClancy (2004) and Pitte (2005; 2007) in using a wide range of sources from outside the archive. Elden offers a more comprehensive defence of the theory behind the historical-conceptual method than I could hope to muster here, and I would point the reader to the introduction of his book for that account.² But a key element of this approach that I need to draw the reader’s attention to is following the transmission and effects of language, both written and spoken, both recorded and that used to record. As Hacking (2002: 22), also interested in ‘organizing concepts that come into being through quite specific historical processes,’ argues,

‘[A] concept is nothing other than a word in its sites. That means attending to a variety of types of sites: the sentences in which the word is actually (not potentially) used, those who speak those sentences, with what authority, in what institutional settings, in order to influence whom, with what consequences for the speakers.’

I would argue that attending to the presence, and shaping, of the concept of terroir in language is fundamental, and in the forthcoming chapters I have explicitly drawn upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1991), Gunnar Olsson (1991) and Michel de Certeau (1984; 1988), for whom the symbolic power of language is intrinsically related to the general distribution of

¹ That is, ‘the relatively unproblematic way in which the term is used and implicitly understood in mainstream political and geographical discussions’ (Elden, 2013: 322)

² The legacy and example of Foucault’s work on the development of conceptions of madness, the clinic, the prison or biopower is, for example, explicitly recognised by him, as it is by Sack (1986).

power in society, to theoretically frame the importance of terroir's conceptual life in and through language. If we are to better understand the meaning and effects of terroir, we need to better understand the history of its meaning and effects. If we are to 'domesticate' the concept academically or in practice (Whatmore, 2003: 92), we need first to find its semantic coordinates in its native language. This is an enterprise that will require the analysis of archival documents and, as discussed in the following chapter, that will involve mostly generating and attending to written and reported language. The historical geographer Robert Mayhew (2007: 33) has argued for the influence of the work of Brian Harley (1988; 2001) in critically examining the communicative structures of historical materials such as maps, and given that '[l]anguage is historically and geographically contingent in its meaning...we need to distinguish our understanding of terms from those they had in past times and spaces' (*Ibid*: 27). Further, the German conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck (2002: 20) extends the line of argument that '[i]nvestigating concepts and their linguistic history is as much a part of the minimal condition for recognizing history as is the definition of history as having to do with human society'. This is not to negate the importance of things, materials, affect and performance; things which have long been of import in historical and cultural geography, and which have enjoyed renewed interest in recent years (Lorimer, 2007a; Anderson and Wylie, 2009); but simply to recognise that in the archive so much vibrant action is hypostasized into text; so many volatile and affective words are congealed into writing. Koselleck (*Ibid*: 27) puts it succinctly thus:

'Even if language may – in part – have been only a secondary factor in the enactment of doings and sufferings, as soon as an event has become past, language becomes the primary factor without which no recollection and no scientific transposition of this recollection is possible.'

This has consequence for the materials one can use in fathoming the emergence of a concept. Language, written or recorded, will be the primary mode of articulation of terroir available to us in the archive. That this can pose a limitation to rebuilding the vibrant, lived worlds of the past through the texts available to us has been discussed by several geographers (see, for example, Duncan, 1999; McEwan, 2003; Gagen *et al*, 2007; Griffin and Evans, 2008; Bailey *et al*, 2009; Lorimer and Whatmore, 2009; Hill, 2011). But bringing an analytical light to bear on the emergence and reflexive change of the concept of terroir in French culture necessitated attending to terroir as part of the French language (*'langue'*) and as part of various formal (agricultural, political, mercantile) languages (*'langage'*), both of which underwent, and bespoke, historical change. Examining such change, which I do in Chapter 4, can bring to light evidence of contestation and change in the semantic dimensions of the concept, and this can be used to map reflexive relationships between the concept and the culture it is used in. Thus, as well as allowing continuity to be illustrated, such historical attention is a means to read against the grain, or as Foucault (2002 (1970): xxiii) put it, to trace 'against the current' language, perceptions, exchanges, practices and the orderings they have been implicated in; to explore epistemological changes to help 'comprehend what is old in a different way and to understand in any way what is new' (Koselleck, 2002: 37).

It would be a platitude to say that farming changes over time. But as Marion Demossier (2011b) has argued, and as I have intimated in the Introduction, there is a pressing need for more investigation of the historical development of and changes to how terroir is understood. Spending even a little time examining how that concept is talked about will allow us to see that historical work can easily be the most critical edge in terroir research, because terroir is so widely mobilised in terms of being 'local, loyal and constant' despite the vicissitudes of the relationship between agriculture and wider culture (cf. Pitte, 2007; Roudié, 2007). In

Chapters 3, 4 and 5, this is the work I will carry out. By being attentive to historical changes in the material stuff, the practical operationalisation and the imaginative vision of terroir, I will attempt to show how the nature of the concept, and the precepts of arguments for its sustainability, have a clear and crucial historical dimension. Finally, as intimated earlier, the historical dimension of terroir is expressed in, and through fundamental connection to, specific geographical, spatial dimensions. Pitte (2001) has called for more work to attend to the idiography of terroir throughout France, and my attempts to trace both historical density and geographical extent in the products I have studied will, I hope, make a contribution to work that looks not only at where frontiers exist between food cultures, but how and why they are proposed, made and maintained (Montanari and Pitte, 2010). In this way, the project has been an exercise in making the strange familiar as well as the familiar strange.

1.4. Cross-Channel Geographies

Focussing on France, the home of terroir, the place where the word first emerged from the same Latin root that produced the words *terre* (earth), *terrain* (terrain) and *territoire* (territory), has meant bringing a British geographical perspective to a matter of broad popular and academic interest that is expressed largely in French. France is not a place that has generated a large body of research in anglophone cultural geography. Clout (2005) has argued that few in British geography as a whole have taken a sustained empirical interest in France in recent years, and that this trend is to a large degree reciprocated amongst French geographers. Either our own country, or lands more exotic than France, are the sites that seem to attract most geographers' attention. There are, however, some important exceptions. A handful of historical geographers, such as Baker (e.g. 1999), Thompson (1999), Heffernan

(2005), Cleary (1989) and Clout (2006) himself have published regularly on France; and more widely in human geography Buller (e.g. 2003), Jones (2003), Ferbrache (2011) and Ogden (Ogden and Hall, 2004) have prepared important work. Elsewhere in the English-speaking world, we may note that Gade (e.g. 2004) and Bardsley (Bardsley and Pech, 2012) have also taken France as their subject of enquiry.

A good deal of work has been done on terroir by geographers in France, and there are certain geography departments that have clear strengths in this area; at the Université Michel Montaigne in Bordeaux, the Université Blaise Pascal in Clermont-Ferrand, and the Paris Sorbonne Université, for instance. I have been lucky enough in the course of this project to talk with geographers working on terroir from each of these institutions, and will occasionally cite personal communications from them. There is also a plethora of popular literature on terroir itself and matters relating to it (see, for example, Pitte, 2005; Beaucarnot, 2008; Fumey, 2010; Delfosse, 2011; Le Figaro, 2012; Balen, 2014; Legouy and Boulanger, 2015), and much of the media coverage of food and farming in which we in Britain have in recent years become so interested is, in France, communicated with frequent use of the term and evocation of the sense of terroir. The work that has been done on terroir in geography has its own theoretical undergirding in which history substantially figures; the term ‘*géohistoire*’ or ‘geohistory’ is even used as a theoretical summation of some French work on the geography of food (such as Fumey, 2013; Legouy and Boulanger, 2015). Clout (1977: 2-4) has argued that French geographers have, in the past at least, been in the habit of including history in their analyses; that ‘French geographical writing is imbued with history, just as French historical writing contains much geography.’ Certainly, French geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache’s (1903) *Tableau de la Géographie de la France* appeared as the first tome of the *Histoire de France* series, Jean Brunhes’ (1920) *Géographie Humaine de la France* appeared

as the first tome of the *Histoire de la Nation Française* series, and work by French historians associated with the *Annales* school has a richly geographical character (Le Roy Ladurie, 1969; Braudel, 1988b). More recently, Jean-Robert Pitte's (2006) *Géographie Culturelle* compendium contains a notable density of historical material, and begins with an *Histoire du Paysage Français (History of the French Landscape)*. Some have considered the approach of French geographers to the matter of terroir to be inspired by the Vidalian tradition of society-milieu relations (Courtot, 2007; Whalen, 2010b), and others have considered it to be substantially influenced by the ideas of French geographer Roger Dion (1959; Pitte, 2010). Such work is often quite pragmatically empirical, with theoretical positioning being implicit, but it would be fair to say it draws upon both cultural and historical approaches. It may well be because terroir is, as I will later flesh out, such a fundamental part of French culture, that work investigating it suffers from that more general problem of cultural geography where theory is incorporated implicitly in analysis and hard to precipitate out (Johnson *et al*, 2013).

Whilst there is the opportunity for an anglophone geographer to investigate terroir with an original theoretical lens, it is also possible to add meaningfully to work on the concept by responding to calls made by those who have already been at the coal face. The French geographer Jean-Robert Pitte (2007), for example, has called for more work to be done investigating the diversity of terroirs within France; his former student Raphaël Schirmer (2010) has called for more attention to be paid to the governance of terroir in food and wine production chains; and anthropologist Marion Demossier (2011a) has argued that there are yet few studies of how the concept of terroir has changed in its French homeland. It would have seemed to me counterproductive and to some extent academically dishonest to investigate terroir in France, in plain sight of these and other French social scientists, whilst ignoring such assessments of the direction new studies of terroir might profitably take. In the

course of this thesis, therefore, and particularly in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, I have attended to the lacunae identified by those French scholars, though my contribution is a very modest one. I have also presented some of my findings at conferences in France and have benefitted from the exchange of ideas, even if at times in this project I have sensed a tension in trying to please two audiences; an anglophone geography audience interested to learn more about what terroir means in general, and a francophone geography audience keen to discuss the lacunae and latest ideas in the ongoing work of terroir studies.

There are also anglophone social scientists who have carried out investigations into terroir, with various different theoretical backgrounds and empirical foci and often, like Ferbrache (2013), they have called for more studies to be carried out on the concept in general. Amy Trubek's (2008) study *A Taste of Place* is probably the most in-depth work that has been carried out so far. In that work, the author uses two chapters to present the development and dimensions of terroir in France, before devoting the rest of the book to how the concept has been used, and might be put to greater use, in the United States. In those first two chapters, there are several similarities with the work I have done in this thesis. But I would suggest that the materials she examines in her discussion of the development of the concept in French agriculture are, and always would be, common to any study on that topic. Referring to the emergence of the concept of terroir amongst monastic Burgundian winemakers simply cannot be avoided in a historically-informed study of terroir (compare Cerveau, 2000; White *et al*, 2009; Laferté, 2011, for instance). And there are broader differences in our work. Trubek does not examine in detail the important and reflexive cartographic development of terroir; she does not delve into the great changes wrought by modernisation in the 19th century; she argues for the wider cultural purchase of terroir through different foci (gastronomic criticism, for instance) from me; she does not elaborate the links between terroir and language, as I do;

and she does not work through empirical evidence from French production chains like I do, although she does provide valuable and interesting evidence from production chains in America. Although she is interested in the nature of terroir, like I am, our projects have quite different aims, approaches and cases. And I say this quite without prejudice to the fact that she has produced a very readable and well-researched book, which I recommend highly. Elsewhere, Marion Demossier (2011b; 2012), who is French but works in England and has written in English, has prepared two informative papers on terroir, based upon empirical work she carried out with wine producers in Burgundy in the late 1990s. I have talked to her about our projects and cite her work throughout this thesis. Tim Unwin (2012) has written an accessible paper on terroir, also partly informed by fieldwork he carried out in the 1980s (Unwin, 1991); and in the USA, Leo Loubère (1990), Elizabeth Barham (2003), Daniel Gade (2004), Kolleen Guy (2011), Philip Whalen (2010a; 2010b), Heather Paxson (2013) and Gregory Jones (2014) have all examined terroir from various geographical, historical, anthropological and oenological points of view. Finally, Høyrup and Munk (2007) undertook an experiment in ‘sociomaterial ethnography’ with terroir as their subject, and that paper is the most theoretically challenging paper of those I have come across. It is a paper that I justly cite throughout the thesis, though, as I will explain, our theoretical approaches differ in several ways.

1.5. Food’s Natural History

The subject matter of this thesis is something that has both natural and cultural dimensions. Food in general straddles the modern binary of nature and culture (Latour, 1993; Whatmore, 1999; 2002) – think only of its biological substance, its human cultivation and consumption,

and its symbolic value – and it could be justly analysed with soil science, economic geography or development studies perspectives, to name only a few. Examining the issue of terroir in France may be situated within a broadly-conceived geography of food, in which much activity is ongoing in the English-speaking world. Cook *et al* (2013) have presented an accessible introduction to this field framed in terms of cultural geography, and it is certainly an interest in the cultural value, places and provenance of food that I have developed in this project – as opposed to an interest in, for example, food security or quantitative approaches – but even within the apprehension of food and farming in cultural geography, there are several different theoretical approaches one could take.

In the wake of a series of scandals concerning food production in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s (such as salmonella, BSE and the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)), producers, consumers and governments in Britain and elsewhere in Europe have shown growing interest in products which can be trusted, traced or appreciated for certain distinctive qualities. What the European Union has discerned in terms of the ‘diversity of quality foods’ which exists alongside ongoing productivist farming activity (European Commission, 2011; cf. Buller and Morris, 2004), geographers have often investigated in terms of Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) (Whatmore *et al*, 2003; Holloway *et al*, 2007; Goodman *et al*, 2012). This has included research on matters related to the valuation and commercial development of local foods, and matters related to the organic and biodynamic approaches which attracted my interest in terms of their interactions with terroir. Instructive work has been done on: the ethical dimensions of food and farming (Whatmore, 1997; Whatmore and Clark, 2008; Buller, 2010; Buller and Roe, 2011; Richardson-Ngwenya, 2012; cf. Blythman, 1996); modes of production which differ, or are perceived to sufficiently differ from the conventional (Holloway *et al*, 2007; Tranter *et al*, 2009; Goodman and Sage, 2014); the concept of

sustainability in farming practices (Tovey, 2001; Trauger, 2009; Cid Aguayo and Latta, 2014), including how such practices are ‘attuned to the peculiarities of geography’ (Barry, 2004: 249; Harden *et al*, 2014; Bardsley and Bardsley, 2014) and how their environmental effects are communicated to consumers (Boulanger-Fassier, 2007; Eden *et al*, 2008; Gutierrez and Thornton, 2014); and how the economic and cultural values of food are established and contested through processes of qualification (O’Neill and Whatmore, 2000; Barry and Slater, 2005; Callon *et al*, 2007; Abrahamsson *et al*, 2015).

Such work on AFNs and the processual becoming of food is in one sense a close disciplinary relation to the kind of work I do in this thesis. The fact that terroir is: concerned with the qualities of particular foods in terms of where they come from; important in local and national culture; and so often rhetorically opposed to mass commodity production, would position products of terroir as part of Alternative Food Networks. I would say this especially with reference to the similarity of the subject matter of products of terroir to the local, organic, slow, Fairtrade and other quality food networks that have been investigated elsewhere and identified with the notion of AFNs, and in terms of the qualitative theoretical and methodological approach I am taking in the project (see, for example, Venn *et al*, 2006; Maye *et al*, 2007; Nel *et al*, 2007; Holloway and Halfacree, 2008; MacDonald, 2013; cf. Whatmore *et al*, 2003; Watts *et al*, 2005). But I do not say it in terms of terroir being especially unconventional *in se*. Indeed, part of what I will argue in this thesis is that terroir is treated as a convention by groups of producers, and has profoundly informed wider French culture, so it is important to stress that although it is often perceived in terms of offering an alternative to certain neoliberally governed, productivist, highly industrialised models of agricultural commodity production, terroir is not a niche without consequence for the economy and culture in which I am examining it.

There is also a degree of divergence in my thesis from some of the work on AFNs which substantially draws upon wider theoretical trends in geography concerning the vibrant materiality of being and networks of human and non-human actors. Braun (2008: 675) has argued that in geography vitalism is once again ‘all the rage’, and the trope of liveliness drawn from diverse influences including re-materialised cultural geographies, animal geographies, political ecology, Non-Representational Theory and Actor-Network Theory has allowed human geographers to develop closer engagements with non-human actors as part of a substantially more-than-human geography (Lorimer, 2005; Lorimer, 2006; Hinchliffe and Whatmore, 2006; Lorimer and Whatmore, 2009; Greenhough, 2010; J. Lorimer, 2010; Brice, 2014b; Buller, 2014; Pitt, 2015). With earlier moves away from political economic theoretical approaches to agriculture in geography, and more broadly in the social sciences (Marsden *et al*, 1989; Whatmore, 1993; Marsden *et al*, 1996), the way had been to some extent cleared for more profound and lively accounts of nature;³ accounts which attempt to recover the non-human ‘missing masses’ of much extant research in the social sciences (Latour, 1993); and accounts of farming practices embedded in both environmental *and* economic contexts (O’Neill and Whatmore, 2000; Buller and Morris, 2004). Now, sensitive to the ‘energetic and variable propensities of plant life’ (Whatmore, 2002: 111), and the ‘vital, animate and lively energies’ of animals (Lorimer, 2006: 516), recent geographical, and more broadly social scientific approaches to food production as sites of natural and cultural conjugation, or passage points in ‘nature’s long cultural career’ (Kirsch, 2014: 696), have

³ Nature is fundamental to agriculture in multiple ways, not only as the stuff transformed by production, but also as the stuff agricultural policy-makers may seek to protect from production (Buller and Morris, 2004). But it has been argued that political economy approaches have a hard time placing nature within their analysis of how society works (Castree and MacMillan, 2001; Castree, 2002; Latour, 2010; Christophers, 2014; Brice, 2014a); and sources as old as Kautsky (1988 (1899)) attest to agriculture, both in its economic pattern and in the mindset of farmers, sitting uneasily with the Marxian industrial conception of capital and its structural power.

attempted to engage with biotic life in its variegation, liveliness and ability to exceed human control (consider Ellen and Platten 2011; Paxson, 2013; Foster, 2014). In the geography of food, there are indeed interesting avenues to explore in terms of the connections to *revitalised* agricultural practices and rural communities (Benton *et al*, 2003; Hinnewinkel, 2007; Moustier and Fabre, 2007; Harper, 2012; Paxson, 2013; MacClancy, 2015; Hill, 2016b); connections to biopolitical controversies in matters of animal husbandry (Buller, 2008; Lorimer and Driessen, 2013); and connections to modes of agriculture that promote liveliness in the field and even in the food itself (Buller and Morris, 2004; Boisclair and Estevez, 2006; Roe, 2006; Rigaux, 2010; Brice, 2014c; Hill, 2016a). Investigating the putative dynamism of terroir could therefore sensibly follow some of the approaches of this kind of work and attend to the complex and ongoing interactions between people and the non-human materials and actors which are aligned in the practices of agriculture and of the consumption of food. It would invite methods that can attend to lively articulations in forms other than reported language (cf. Roe and Greenhough, 2014), and it would pair easily with an analytical focus on food solely in the present day.

Work concerned with the vibrant materiality and topological or relational dimensions of being served early on to frame my interest in farmers' operationalisation of terroir and the matter of organic facilitation of terroir, as explained in the Introduction, and I do make efforts to explore situated inscriptions and actions of the 'long cultural career' of the natural world in Chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis in particular. But this thesis, though influenced by theoretical trends in more-than-human geography, is not solely informed by them. Like terroir itself, it relates to more than just human beings, but is also tightly wound around perceptual, discursive and conceptual parts of human culture. As I will explain in later chapters, I have examined the interactions of farmers with the life on their farm using participant observation,

and I have tried to trace changes to the land cover, ecology and agricultural technology of an Alpine region of France using archival methods. But I have also expended much effort in interviewing and attending to discourse in speech, text, maps and images. Combining the influences of different approaches in cultural and historical geography has been a pragmatic decision related to the conceptual substance of the thesis.

Following both Mol (2010) and H. Lorimer (2010), I have remained open, attentive and attuned to the agency and alignment of more-than-human actors, but have also been careful not to abandon the *moda operandi* of the specifically human cultural apprehension and reproduction of terroir. One important way of mediating these two theoretical approaches has been through attending to how ideas and practices inform each other amongst farmers and other actors in terroir production chains, and the echoes they make with stories from the past, and this is recounted in the chapters that follow. Examining terroir within three specific food and drink product chains in eastern France provided the means to assess the local operationalisations of a culturally diffuse concept. It also permitted analysing how farmers manage the *combination* of terroir and organic or biodynamic modes of production using their perceptions and practices of both. On the basis of my interest in organic and biodynamic methods of production, and with the encouragement of teachers, I allowed myself to ask more open-ended questions about sustainability in terroir. As I explain in Chapters 6 and 7, my original conception of sustainability as relating above all to the environmental impact of agricultural methods was quickly challenged by the farmers I interviewed. In the dairying sector particularly, concerns for economic sustainability frequently outweighed the concerns for environmental sustainability. But even within environmental terms, there were those who argued their cases *against* conversion to organics. Although it is far from original to suggest that there are different, competing and simultaneous forms of sustainability in farming, this

broadening of focus from the singular concern with organic and biodynamic facilitation of terroir has allowed me to offer in those chapters what I hope is a more compelling and catholic argument regarding the sustainability of terroir; one that derives from the experience of those farming vis-à-vis the economic viability of their farm and its ecological status, as well as the inheritance and continued importance of the concept of terroir.

1.6. Tracing Historical Cultural Geographies

In responding to the promise of more-than-human geography, I don't feel we need to abandon the import of human experience, or the consequence of territorial divisions, or the resonance of stories, or the vital bearing of history. Whilst we might be empirically attentive to the 'multiplicity of different agents...which hold each other in position' (Whatmore, 1999: 27-28) we can also productively attend to the 'effects of established contours and boundaries that mark the social landscape' (Whatmore, 1999: 31) and, moreover, to how these things interact. This has been an especially valuable orientation for the interviews and participant observation I carried out with farmers in France. With interviews and participant observation, cultural geographers can 'follow the thing' (Cook, 2004; Pereira, 2010) and trace the 'co-fabrications' of actors and materials at close quarters (Whatmore, 2006), just as they can examine words and interpretations to understand the 'imprints people make on a place' (Myers *et al*, 2003: 89) and assess how participants in research 'construct their cultural universe' (Gade, 2001: 376). And indeed work at the boundaries of historical and cultural geography can weave these concerns together (Cloke and Jones, 2001; DeLyser, 2001; Gade, 2004; Lorimer, 2006; DeSilvey, 2007). We could imagine, in combining theoretical influences, and beginning to territorialise and historicise the combinations of nature and

culture that we encounter, that terroir consists of socially-maintained boundaries around socio-natural networks; and we could argue that the prevalence of ‘territorial grammar’ and ‘geometric habits of mind’ (Whatmore, 1999: 31) in the valuation and organisation of crops, livestock, food and drink are fundamental to what it is and why it has been so successful, especially when looking backwards through the frame of today’s system of geographical protection, as I do in Chapter 4.

At the start of this project I was interested to find out the degree to which terroir is something ‘in the making’ today through practices, materials, landscapes, images, market devices, qualification and negotiation, and this was also a question grappled with by Høyrup and Munk (2007); but I discovered early on, as did those authors, the perdurability and resonance of an ‘*a priori* order of things’ (Whatmore, 1999: 25), and instead of ignoring or working around this, I dove ever further in to it. Perhaps this focus on the way knowledge about terroir has developed and persisted shifts my project too far into the epistemological realm that Latour has expressed frustration with (Bingham and Thrift, 2000). Certainly this project could have been undertaken with a greater focus on ontology, on the physical ‘elements’ of terroir in the landscape, on the craft and work rhythms of the producers, on the fibrous and fleshy natures of the different vectors of terroir I encountered. But the epistemological realm must be traversed if we are ‘to explain, in related terms, both the persistence and the historicity of concepts’ which animate a culture (Williams, 1973: 348). And it has yielded fruit. Starting my fieldwork in Burgundy was probably a major influence on this concern for epistemology and the *a priori*, because it is there that the historical territorial notion of terroir first emerged and is now pushed ‘to the extreme’ as Rigaux (2010: 101) puts it. For instance, whilst he asserts that in Australia 98% of the country’s entire vineyard-covered surface is owned by only 10 companies, one highly-prized 15-hectare plot of vineyard in Burgundy (*Le*

Chambertin) is carefully divided between 30 different producers. The historical investment of value in these tiny territories has meant that some of them ‘haven’t changed by one square metre since their creation’,⁴ and Rigaux (*Ibid*: 101) provides the example of the Clos de Bèze vineyard, whose dimensions supposedly ‘haven’t changed since the year 630’. The operations of inscription, demarcation and classification of grape-growing land that began in Burgundy have spread to other parts of France and, to follow Rigaux’s historical argument, spread to other parts of Europe in the Middle Ages by virtue of orders of monks producing wine in the same scientific way. And this *a priori*, apart from requiring the interest of historical geography, had its own epistemological predicates which may be traced into the present day not least through the invisible, abstracting lines drawn around ‘natural’ territories:

‘These wine producing monks were Christian in their order and Aristotelian in their culture. We can trace back to Aristotle the idea that there could be natural dividing lines of the real world, therefore natural classifications, therefore naturally delimited areas; premises of the natural sciences that were born from this and loomed large during the Enlightenment, which consecrated rationality as a central vector of modernity.’⁵

Moreover, such territorial divisions structure the economic fortunes of those who inherit them; an argument recently developed in broader strokes by Murray Li (2014). To receive a portion of a vineyard in Gevrey-Chambertin, Burgundy, for instance, is also to receive a market position and a reputation that would all but guarantee considerable recompense for any wine produced there. It would thus be presumptuous, even unethical of me to ignore the lines that previous and current generations, who know the land so much better than me, have drawn

⁴ Tr: ‘n’ont pas varié d’un mètre carré depuis leur création’. Rigaux (2010 :101)

⁵ Tr: ‘Ces moines-vignerons étaient chrétiens par leur ordre et aristotéliens de culture. On doit à Aristote l’idée qu’il pourrait y avoir des lignes de partage naturelles du réel, donc des classifications naturelles, donc des délimitations naturelles, prémices des sciences naturelles qui naquirent ainsi pour s’imposer au siècle des Lumières qui consacra la rationalité comme vecteur central de modernité.’ (Rigaux, 2010 : 101) See also Pinsent and Holden (2011) on the monastic contributions to viticulture.

and continue to work within (cf. Kain and Baigent, 1992; Massey, 1995; Frémont, 1997). For this reason, in Chapters 3 and 4 especially, I have drawn attention to the lines that contain and divide France's terroirs, and examined their reproduction through cartography and other forms of communication, drawing upon a diverse set of theoretical ideas. On balance, I have focussed more upon spatial stories, perceptions and place-making than I have on the detail of the cultivation and transformation of products of terroir by reference to techniques and *savoir-faire*. But the materials of terroir and the crafting of products of terroir are reproduced discursively, and crucially with connotations of continuity, in ways that magnify the concept; and these I have sought to question through a substantial focus on epistemology and historicity. The black and white picture of the two men tasting wine in the Prologue, for instance, contains an iconography of typical Burgundian objects: the oak barrels, the tulip-shaped glass and, in the left hand of the man in the foreground, the *tastevin* – a small metal cup inherited from previous generations of winemakers and still used today for tasting from the barrel. Yet the picture is neither an innocent nor arbitrary representation of the crafting of a product at some distant point in time. It appears, from the little that is known about this picture (to be found in the Municipal Archives at Beaune; Dossier 5Fi 29 AMB), that it was staged at some point in the 1960s with the aim of promoting Burgundy wine through its continuity with the great wines of the past. Its apparent timelessness and embeddedness in place has been created in a way that dovetails with the message of authenticity in anteriority promoted in other images of Burgundy, and which will be examined later in the thesis.

The 'valorisation of particular territories and their human and natural qualities' is at the heart of terroir, and it has also spread far beyond the confines of France (Buller and Morris, 2004: 1075). In Spain, for example, the way olive oil has traditionally been appreciated, classified and marketed is by virtue of its inherent qualities; the tangible properties of density, colour,

flavour, and so on; whilst in France, conversely, the nascent olive oil industry is built upon territorial distinction above all (Moustier and Fabre, 2007). And in Germany, the longstanding classification of wine according to judgments of inherent quality, using a numerical scale, is being gradually replaced by a French-style system of geographical classification (Johnson, 2014), years after the French made wine quality labelling a factor of geography, as will be discussed in the next two chapters. Recognising the individuality of terroirs also allows us to recognise how both producers and consumers connect to the histories and environments of particular places (Cloke and Jones, 2001; Morse *et al*, 2014), and in this I see another way in which the consumer desire for products with particular qualities and from particular places in Europe, discussed in the Introduction, may be understood. I see a desire to take part in traditions and respond to compelling stories; and to share in an identity through the choosing, discussing and eating of certain ‘authentic’ or meaningful products (as discussed further in Chapter 6). In this sense I feel there is something deeper than a fetish for quality (cf. Latour, 2004), which, as Brice (2014a) found, can be easily dismissed in political economic analyses. Rather, there is a sense of identity formed in connection with food, farming and the country, in processes that have accelerated in modern France (Buller, 2003; Clout and Demossier, 2003; Frayssignes, 2008; Héritier, 2013). Comparable processes of attachment to place have been discussed in Tomaney’s (2013) forceful critique of cosmopolitanism and what he sees as the mobile, relational accounts of place such as those of Massey (1994) and Amin (2004) which have gained currency in geography. His critique builds upon other accounts which explore the persistent and sometimes troubling importance of borders, territories and inscribed definitions in place-based belonging (Pratt, 1999; Paasi, 2003; 2013; Leyshon and Bull, 2011; cf. Tuan, 1991; Elden, 2009) and connects to Trubek’s (2008) and Paxson’s (2013) idea that terroir can be harnessed in stories about places, and mobilised in arguments for ethical consumption.

In responding positively to the narratives that so often accompany local and geographically protected foods, whether at the point of sale, on the label or more widely in the media, in the landscape, or in day-to-day conversation, the purchasing consumer may well identify with the product, its place and its story (cf. Daniels and Lorimer, 2012). In many ways, this is a response to the standardizing, homogenising effects of globalization, and the global provisioning of food produced on an industrial scale discussed briefly in the Introduction, and in more detail in Chapter 5. But it is also, for me, an indication that terroir is about stories more than it is about stones in the soil. To not delve into the propositions which circulate in talk, text and image, which is to say entered into recognised systems of meaning and enabled in particular ways, would be to impede the discovery of the power and perdurability of knowledge, things and stories inherited from the past and animating still. I would contend that we should be interrogating those things, how they are articulated, and what effects they have in the world; critically interrogating historical inscriptions to cast light on how we come to understand our present (after Kearns, 2007, for example). History has a vital bearing on the present-day situations we encounter as geographers. This is hardly a novel insight (see Darby, 2002). But it is worth repeating that history has this bearing on the politics, the economy, the culture, the landscape, the modes of thought, the symbols, the beliefs, the practices we might find and map and discuss. In combining influences from cultural and historical geography, I might say that the ‘living history’ of terroir is at the heart of this project. And this is a purposeful choice, as with the formula ‘local, loyal and constant’ supporting the geographical protection of food and drink in France since its modern legal establishment in the late 1920s (Cerveau, 2000; Stanziani, 2010; Marie-Vivien *et al*, 2015) I will argue that how actors in a food chain understand, communicate and perform the history of their products is irrevocably joined to how they understand, communicate and perform their geography.

1.7. Aims and Structure of the Thesis

In this thesis, then, I aim to do four connected things: 1) Develop a critical and historically-informed account of the emergence of terroir as a fundamental part of French agriculture and culture; 2) Map the nature of its present day perception, articulation and operationalisation through three production chains in eastern France; 3) Examine the salience and sustainability of claims for the locality, loyalty and constancy of terroir within and beyond those production chains; and 4) Trace a set of empirical coordinates to understand how the innovations of organic and biodynamic farming interact with the tradition of, and might facilitate the expression of, terroir. What is driving me is the desire to investigate how claims are made for terroir and how they resonate throughout different product chains and in wider French society; and the desire to interrogate the processes and the barriers through which products of terroir become valuable and succeed in lasting through time. I hope that this study of terroir will bring anglophone and francophone, popular and academic geographical knowledges into conversation and help us to understand the history, geography and cultural import of a concept which so animates a country where the connection of product and place is arguably the most economically lucrative, widely recognised and politically structured in the world. Certainly in this thesis I want to ask a lot of questions, and some of them will only be answered with more questions, but I hope by the end to nonetheless have advanced the debate and transformed our understanding of what terroir is and does.

The plan of the thesis is as follows. In the next chapter I will explain how I attempted to deploy methods that would make sense within the theoretical predicates discussed above. I

will detail how I established the scope and field sites of the project, how I approached farmers and other respondents, and the shortcomings and problems that presented themselves once in the field. I will explain the rationale for the methods I used – being interviews, participant observation, discourse analysis and archival research – and will discuss how and why I allowed my position in the field to be one of deliberate openness. I will then move on to the five empirical chapters. In Chapter 3, I will introduce and elaborate the idea that terroir refers to agricultural territories in wider relation; that many of today's famous products of terroir are those that have historically managed to escape the limits of a peasant economy and become enrolled in government-sanctioned systems of classification. The main empirical focus for this will be the development of the wine-producing terroirs of Burgundy from the 14th century to the present day. Within that region, an opposition will be teased out between the individualist, closely defined terroirs of the côte d'Or and the co-operative, less prestigious and less internally differentiated terroirs of the Mâconnais. I will use insights from cultural geography and social theory to develop the idea that products of terroir become economic through connection to powerful external actors and abstraction from their territories of origin; and that they become better known through linguistic metonymy and cartographic definition. In Chapter 4 I will deepen this analysis of the epistemological life and the wide cultural appropriation of terroir in France. Charting innovations in how terroir has been understood, I will explore how Romanticism and the Enlightenment have influenced its cultural reception, and how the organisation of a national system of products of terroir may be understood by reference to the development of the state and its official language. I will then undertake an experiment adopting linguistic tools from elsewhere in the social sciences and humanities to build a theoretical model of how terroir is abstracted and mobilised in the apparatus of geographical protection, not only in terms of cultural geography, but in terms of the *geographical culture* of the country in which both flourish.

Then in Chapter 5 I will begin to examine how the farmers I interviewed worked with these extant epistemological predicates of terroir and tried to re-shape them to better accord with their own philosophy and practice. I will begin to explore the idiography of geographical propositions for terroir in France, through the examples of my three production chains, and unpack the different visions of terroir that were communicated to me in the field. Then I will focus tightly on one production chain in particular. Following a retelling of my journey into the Alpine summer pastures with a mixed herd of cattle and people, I will discuss how terroir can be framed and envisioned, and how attempts are made to render it as a phenomenon fixed in place. And, returning to the archive imaginatively and materially as I walk, I will detail some of the troubling changes that led to today's image of the Alpine pasturing landscape being created out of a more diverse 19th century peasant agricultural space, and question the territorial and qualitative bases of Reblochon cheese as being 'local, loyal and constant'. In Chapter 6, I will continue to put farmers' voices at the centre of multiple forms of evidence by focussing my efforts to ascertain the tensions that prevail in how terroir is put to work and related to economic and environmental sustainability. I will first chart how geological explanation is used to promote a vision of terroir as inherited and physiographically predestined, and then proceed to describe some of the practical engagements with life on the farm which trouble such propositions, and how these have themselves become the objects of epistemological controversy. I will then go on to examine the scientific developments that have adduced their own forms of evidence for terroir, and the conflicts and complementarities that have ensued, before exploring to what extent organic and biodynamic modes of production can be said to facilitate the expression of terroir. Dimensions of sustainability are further explored in Chapter 7, where I will conclude my empirical studies by casting light on the governance of terroir. This is a matter that concerns local, national, European and global

scales, unfolds differently in each of the food chains I examined, and has its own parameters in organic production. I will combine my interviews with farmers and actors involved in the governance of farming and food labelling to interrogate how terroir is used as both convention and matter of contention, and how its predicates differ and conflict in the European Union and in the New World. I will develop an idea of sustainability as related to the desires for protection and autonomy amongst farmers and expressible in the terms initially outlined in Chapter 3, of the ability of a concept to persist through time and be recognised as it is mobilised through space. I will provide evidence of how different working definitions of terroir relate to who can speak for terroir and in what ways, and argue that ultimately terroir is at much at risk, and as much sustained, in its governance as it is in the field. In the Conclusion, I will revisit the arguments made and materials presented in the preceding chapters, re-iterate what I see as the main contributions of the thesis, and outline the consequence, limitations and further prospects of what I have found.

* * *

Chapter 2: Methodology

- *Hi, I'm Rory, the student from England. Is Mr X here?*
- *Yes, that's him over there.*
- *Hello, I'm Rory, the student from England.*
- *Oh, hello. What do you want again?*

- *Well, thank you for this interview and for showing me around the farm. Could I ask you to sign this ethics form, the one I told you about over the phone?*
- *Yes, let me have a look...hang on, let me take a pen, I'm going to correct this for you.*

- *The thing is, I see all this work you're doing, I see how well the filière is structured. But I don't think many people have heard of the product in England.*
- *Well, Rory, we're counting on you for that!*¹

2. 1. Starting Points

If cultural geography, 'like any academic inquiry, is always and everywhere party to some theoretical framing' (Johnson *et al*, 2013: 6), cultural geographers, like historical geographers and other scholars, must apply methods which are more or less cognate with that framing to produce some knowledge about the matters they are interested in. In this chapter I will explain how I attempted to align the methods I used with the theoretical precepts outlined in the previous chapter. I will also relate the salient details of their execution in the field, and I will consider how they generated materials that were more or less suited to the task of writing the thesis. The methodological framework of this project was a means to create the conditions for knowledge production and to assess the plausibility of the claims I encountered. In this, I was informed by the reflexive turn (after Clifford and Marcus, 1986), by the awareness of my own positionality (after Rose, 1997), and by the need to make sense of the claimed worlds of others (after Clark, 1998). The application of my methodology, my being in the field and doing research in a particular way, also allowed for knowledge to circulate in unexpected

¹ Excerpts of conversations with farmers, taken from field notes.

directions, and for collaboration to take place alongside simple appropriation. For one thing, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, I featured in promotional literature for the Aravis mountains by virtue of taking part in an organised transhumance there. And for another, as the notes from my field diaries above suggest, I was a subject for my respondents' interest, work, research and strategy just as they had to be for me.

Whatmore (2013) argues that we as researchers should open up and put 'at risk' our knowledge claims to the participants in our research. Whilst my project was not designed as a specifically collaborative intervention, I did attempt to create the conditions for collaboration to happen by being conspicuously open to conversation, correction and co-optation both in the field and in the communities I was living in. Such 'openness of manner' is encouraged by H. Lorimer (2010: 258) as a receptive and eventually productive position to adopt in historical geographical enquiry. Occasionally in France my opinion would be solicited on something, and sometimes I was asked about the appreciation of products of terroir in Britain. And at other times I would run fermenting ideas of mine past experts, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Getting to know terroir meant getting to know people; and their getting to know me meant their getting to know what I was looking for. Living in small, often largely agricultural communities, meant participating in day-to-day life at the same time as trying, given my research aims, to examine critically the 'rhetorics and realities' in evidence (after MacClancy, 2004: 71). Whilst this helped me to better appraise the claims I encountered in France, it may have also drawn me into a vision of terroir shared and promoted by those I interviewed, and which in a more quantitative sub-discipline might see me accused of 'confirmation bias' in my findings. Yet at the same time, my foreign-ness, my adventuring in 'Cross-Channel geographies' (Clout, 2005), permitted me a certain privileged degree of access to, and distance from, my respondents and, as a couple of French colleagues pointed

out, allowed me to ask questions that they might have felt slightly awkward about asking were they in my position.

I cannot offer the reader where I was or what I saw without the intermediate steps of my interpretation and re-presentation. What I can offer is my own affected narrative account of these places and processes. Ethnography, especially since its ‘reflexive turn’ (Clifford and Marcus, 1986), and given persuasive methodological arguments for the reflexivity of evidence and researcher (Whatmore, 2003), is an enterprise that is good for attuning to research situations, and to being affected ourselves, the better to witness the effects of the processes we describe. Throughout the thesis I use excerpts from field notes where I recount events, talk, and my own feelings about the situations I was in. Moreover, using an ethnographic methodology presupposes spending time in the places one will execute those methods as a researcher. By virtue of living in the regions under study I had innumerable conversations with farmers, local government officials and individuals with various levels of investment in terroir which were, through choice or chance or brevity, off the record and cannot be enumerated along with those interviews that carried the formality of an appointment and an ethics form. Being open to the people I was living among improved the project in many, more or less tangible ways. In the most prosaic sense I obtained interview respondents as chance conversations developed. But in a less easy to define sense I think I developed some degree of ‘cultural fluency’. Gade (2001; 2004) has described this as more than just linguistic fluency, but rather a sense of learning about a mind-set, how to read situations, how to fit in, what to expect, what to do, when to do it, and so on; and this is useful in the application of ethnographic methods (see also Agnew, 2010). As this fluency developed, so my plans from Oxford would change. As shown in the second field notes excerpt above, in one interview I proffered my ethics form to the respondent, a form carefully

constructed to cover all of the ethical bases that were insisted upon by the Social Sciences division of the university. He took his pen and deftly corrected my French grammar, spelling and so on, found more sensible ways to say things, and left me with a more convincing and acceptable ethics form to use in subsequent interviews. Equally, by virtue of carrying out the interviews and talking with French people day to day, attending to what Gade (2001: 376) calls ‘the spoken routines of daily life,’ I picked up certain ways of saying things that appeared more natural and could be more effective in interview situations than those I was previously using.² And in general terms, my sense of the cultural, economic and political stakes of *terroir* was sharpened by the fact of living in a country where it is promoted, celebrated, bemoaned and *mise en cause* on a day-to-day basis. I will return to this point in the conclusion of this chapter, but first I will explain how I went about my fieldwork, from August 2012 to August 2013 (with a couple of interviews carried out later on return visits) and outline the reasoning behind the methods I used.

2. 2. Discerning the Field

The research project developed into its final shape, in terms of the scope of regions and products studied, during my first year in Oxford, and my first few weeks in France. From the beginning I knew I would look at wine production in Burgundy, because that is where *terroir*

² One example stands out in my memory: the use of the term ‘*accompagnement*’ (accompaniment). I gradually ascertained that this has quite a broad semantic range in French, and in talking to a farmer one day he mentioned that a student (not me) was coming to ‘accompany’ him for the afternoon. This seemed a very natural and normal thing. I adopted this phrase when I asked farmers if I could come and join them at work. At the start of my fieldwork I would ask if I could come and ‘observe’ them, using the academic parlance of ‘participant observation’. But I sensed this was a rather odd thing to ask, and they seemed a little uncertain in assenting. Later, when I asked if I could come to ‘accompany’ them, I got a better response. The stakes were the same; I would come and watch and do things with them, taking notes and sometimes pictures; but everyone involved had a better grip on what was going on when I talked in terms of *accompagnement* rather than of participant observation. This term is also discussed in further detail in Chapter 7.

is generally agreed to have emerged as a concept, and where it is still extraordinarily valuable to wine producers. As I read more and more about terroir, and discussed my intentions with my supervisor and other interested parties, I added walnut (Noix de Grenoble AOP) production in the Isère valley and Reblochon cheese (Reblochon AOP) production in Savoy, a region in the French Alps, to the project (see location in [Figure 2.1](#) and in the maps that follow). As mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, calls have been made to correct the paucity of work which compares how terroir is understood in different food chains and in different parts of France. My intention in examining terroir in three different product chains was not simply to compare them, but to better understand its present-day dimensions across the practices and imaginaries of different agricultural landscapes, and so as to have a broader evidence base from which to develop an argument about terroir's emergence as a nationally-recognised, protected and sustainable concept. I must concede, however, that three production chains in the east of France would not offer the widest possible range of perspectives on terroir. Walnut production is something that has enjoyed renewed popularity and profitability in the last twenty years and, as my respondents reported to me, walnut orchards have been replanted and extended in their long-established home of the Isère valley, given the decline of tobacco, wine grapes and other crops in that region throughout the twentieth century. Reblochon, meanwhile, is a valuable dairying product chain, with some similarities to the Comté chain produced further north in the Jura (Fumey and Bérion, 2008; Bowen, 2010), in that it has a wide distribution and recognition within France and overseas, but a defensive association of producers within a specific territory, and the concept, and convention (after Morgan *et al*, 2006: 19-22) of terroir at the heart of their activity. Other products could feasibly have been included in the project, such as the renascent olive production in the south of France, or any one of the many cheeses produced throughout the land, some of which are never exported. In retaining the wine, walnut and Reblochon product

chains, I dealt with products that were successful, profitable and widely-known relative to similar products produced elsewhere in France. During my time in the field, and in conversation with producers and with academics, it became clear that *terroir* was a term also used by producers selling their wares at local markets, in the promotion of regional parks of limited renown, and at the farm gate of any one of France's thousands of farms. It also became clear that Burgundy, the Isère valley and Savoy are rich and dynamic regions relative to some other parts of France (such as the Massif Central and Lozère, the Bourbonnais or Corsica, for example). If *terroir* concerns the qualities of a farmed landscape, the perspective on it that I provide in this thesis is built upon an analysis of products which have reached consumers far outside of their landscapes of production, and have done so over time. In this way, the products chosen have provided substantial support for the argument I develop of *terroir* being used in stories that mobilise agricultural territories into wider relation. It is entirely possible, therefore, that choosing other product chains would have led to a less smooth argument, though I would contend that given the national prevalence of the concept of *terroir*, built over time through the success of famous products like Burgundy wine and Roquefort cheese, all products which are promoted commercially in terms of *terroir* must aim to reach consumers as part of normal processes of exchange; and that the fate of a product reaching markets in London and New York only differs from that of a product reaching markets in the farm's surrounding villages in degree rather than in kind. In both cases, discursive and commercial efforts must be made to communicate the value of the product in terms of its *terroir* and, as will be discussed further in the Conclusion of the thesis, attending to how perceptions and knowledge of *terroir* are made, and how these circulate, is a critical academic intervention which benefits from idiographic distinction. Indeed, my last word on this matter should be that the examination I make of *terroir* within the context of the French and European system of geographical protection in food products explained in the

Introduction lends itself to retaining a focus on terroir within commercial exchange – at least where that focus concerns terroir in the present day – and not as it is used in the non-commercial cultivation and reception of food and drink.

As I report later in this chapter, time was spent in the field investigating all three of my production chains, but following the synthesis of my findings and the writing of the chapters of the thesis, wine has gained prominence in the narrative above walnuts and Reblochon. The reader may therefore be disappointed to find the limited extent to which this thesis contributes to the dearth of work that has been carried out in the social sciences on walnut production as compared to dairying and wine production. All of the products I studied, however, had labels of geographic protection (specifically AOP), and in this way served as empirical flesh for the bones of my arguments in Chapter 4 about terroir lying at the epistemological root of the system that awards those labels to products, and the arguments in later chapters concerning the synergies and conflicts of terroir and geographical protection.



Figure 2.1: Extent of area of eastern France under study (blue box).
Base map data: National Geographic.³

That being said, the fieldwork scope of ‘wine in Burgundy’ expanded faster than I could set limits around it. Early contact was made with producers at the extreme north and south of that region (see Figure 2.2, below), producing wines of different characters, with different market

³ Note the regions marked on this map have, in 2015, been re-organised by the French government. Bourgogne and Franche-Comté are, for instance, now classified as one single region.

positions and totally different AOC, AOP or IGP labels. Furthermore, among the first interviews I carried out were with wine producers in Switzerland, whose contact I had made through family connections even before the project began in earnest. Though those interviews served as useful pilots for later fieldwork in Burgundy, and as valuable sources of information and comparison in themselves, I cannot deny that there is an inconsistency in my project in that whilst the Reblochon producers and the walnut producers worked in relatively close proximity to each other, the wine producers I talked to were geographically dispersed, producing very different products, and in receipt, in total, of over a dozen different appellations, rather than just one. In my defence, I would say two things. Firstly, due to the extremely fine scale of divisions between terroirs, and what are locally also known as *climats*, in Burgundy (White *et al*, 2009; Whalen, 2010; Rigaux, 2010), a wine producer who only has a few vineyards in one village may yet produce wines with several different appellations, due to the inherited classification of the different vineyards themselves, and his or her choice to produce wines of different styles (a sparkling wine, for example) that are classed separately. So variety can be a factor of historical and commercial developments; both of which I investigate in this thesis. My second defence is that I was loath to turn down opportunities for interview and participant observation when they arose. One of the biodynamic wine producers from whom I learnt a great deal had an undertaking near Lake Geneva, which is far removed from the others I had interviewed on the côte d'Or in Burgundy.⁴ But given my interest in sustainability, and the not infrequent tension which I later discovered existed between those who pursued either organic and biodynamic certification and those who set store by the AOP system, I was willing to give up geographical consistency for more insight

⁴ The côte d'Or is a wine producing area and also the name of a *département* (department) in France. Throughout the thesis, I will use the lower-case côte (meaning hillside or escarpment) to refer to the area and the upper-case Côte to refer to the department.

into the logic and practices of producers. This also held true for one organic walnut producer (Mr N) whom I interviewed and whose farm was outside of the Noix de Grenoble AOP zone.

In total, I carried out interviews with 20 producers and with 7 other actors involved in various capacities in the product chains and their governance. The reader will note that 17 of these respondents were men, and the remaining 10 women. Apart from the three aforementioned geographically anomalous interviews that I carried out in and near Switzerland, these were all carried out in the regions of eastern France illustrated in Figures 2.2-2.5, in the pages that follow.

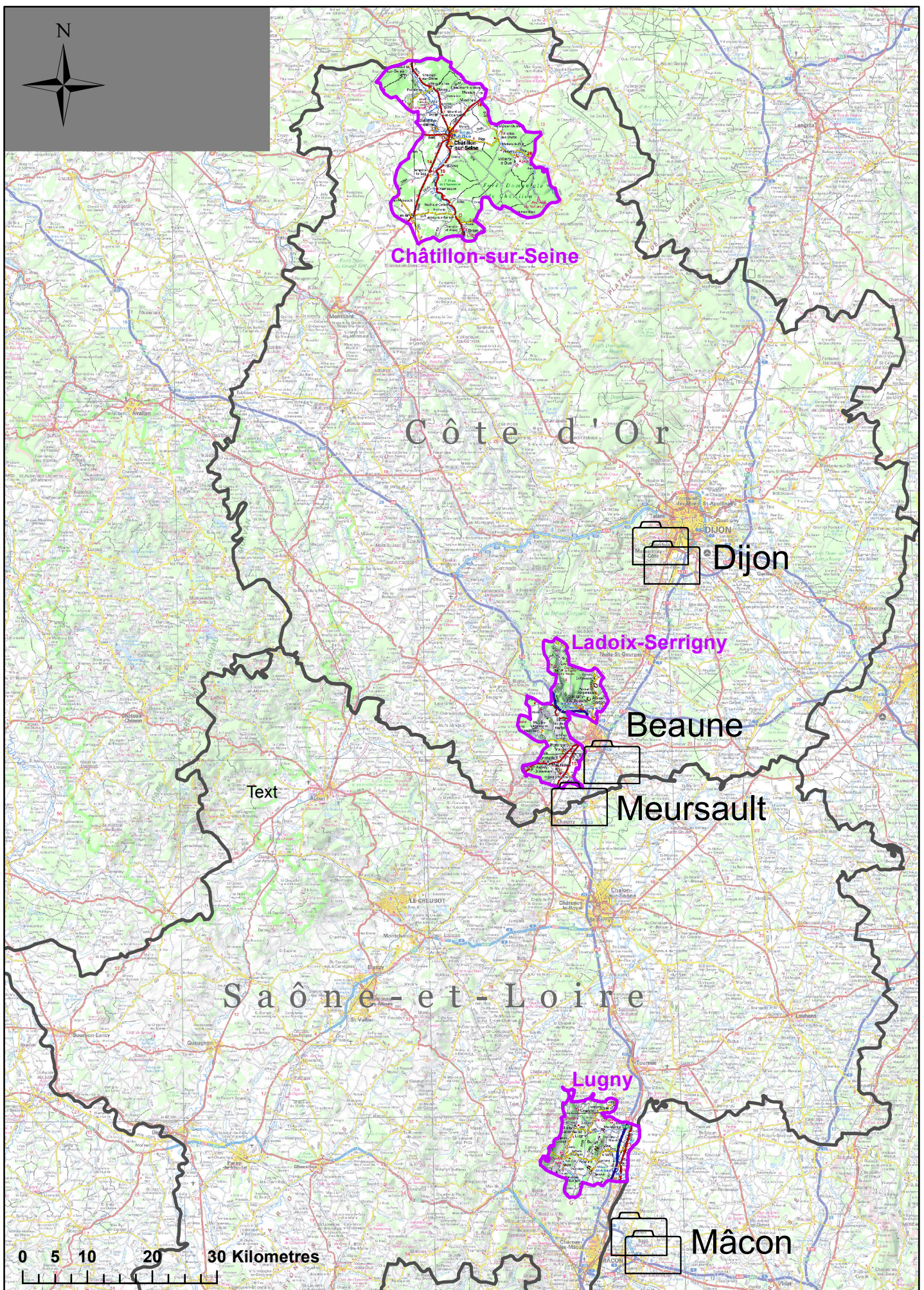


Figure 2.2: Map of fieldwork sites in Burgundy.
 Cantons in which interviews and participant observation were carried out are labelled in purple;
 archives in which materials were consulted are marked and labelled in black.
 Basemap data from IGN.

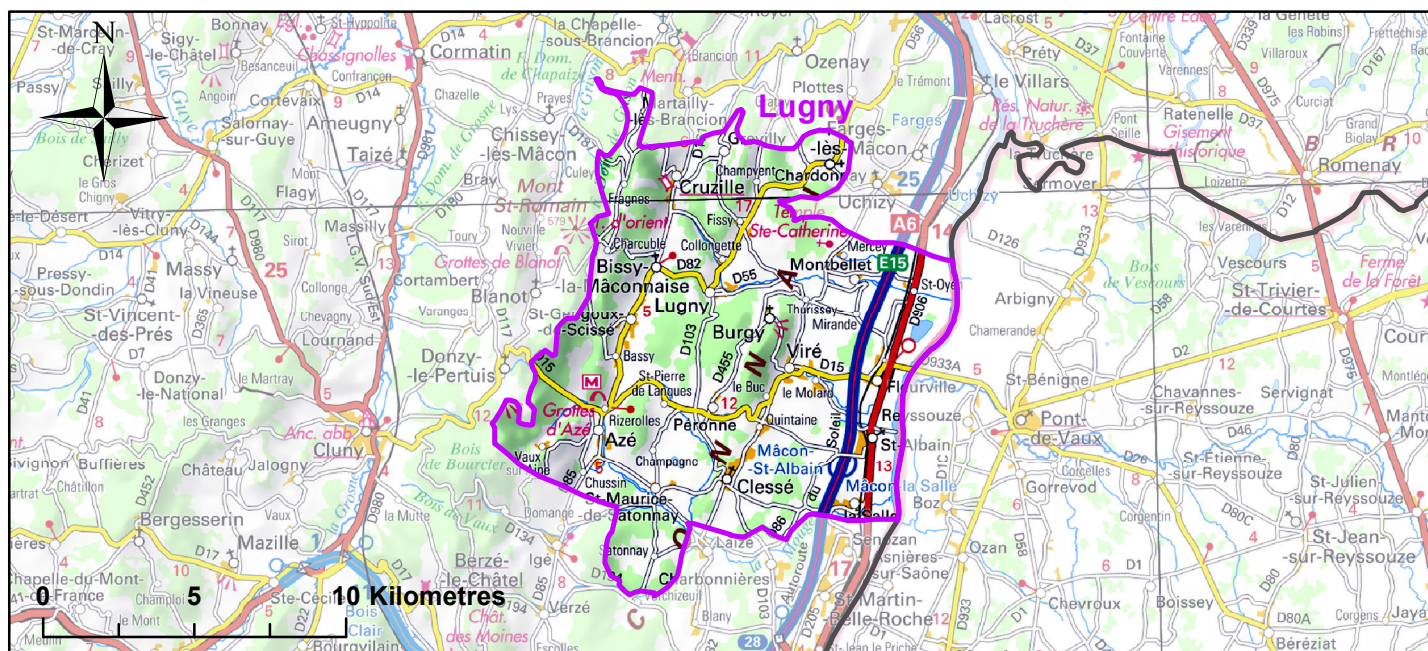
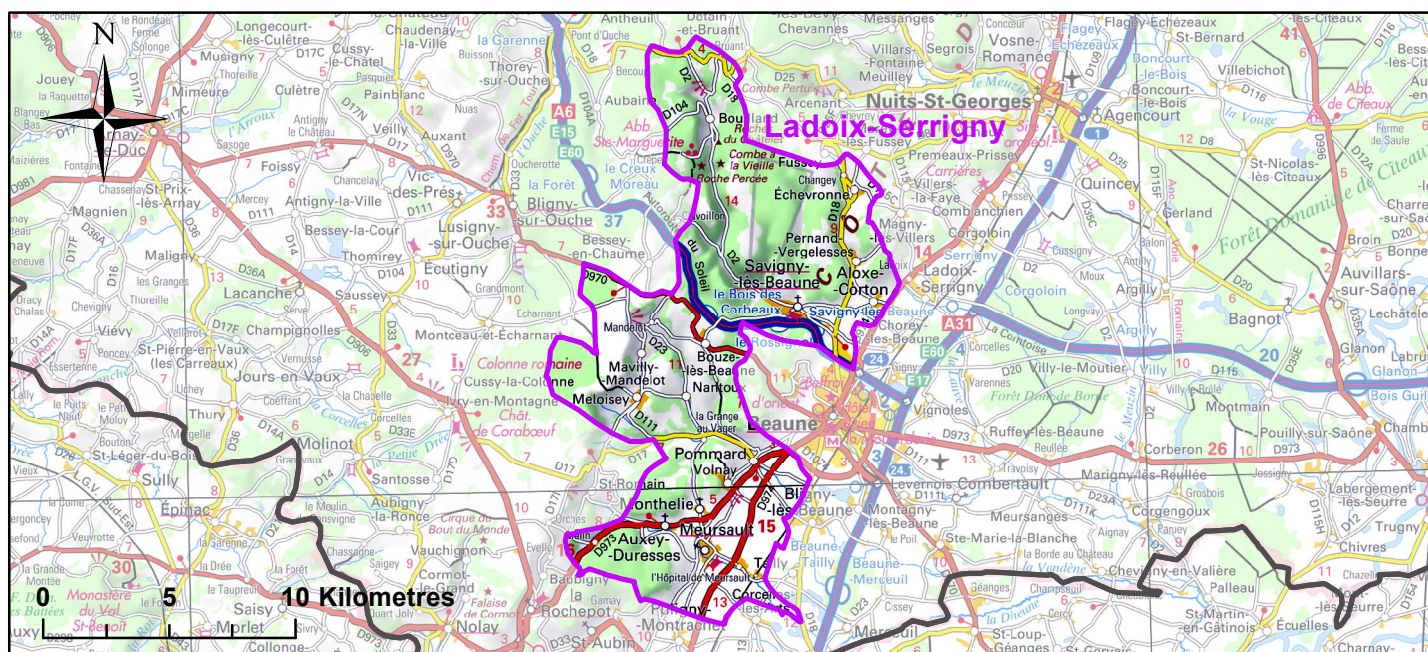
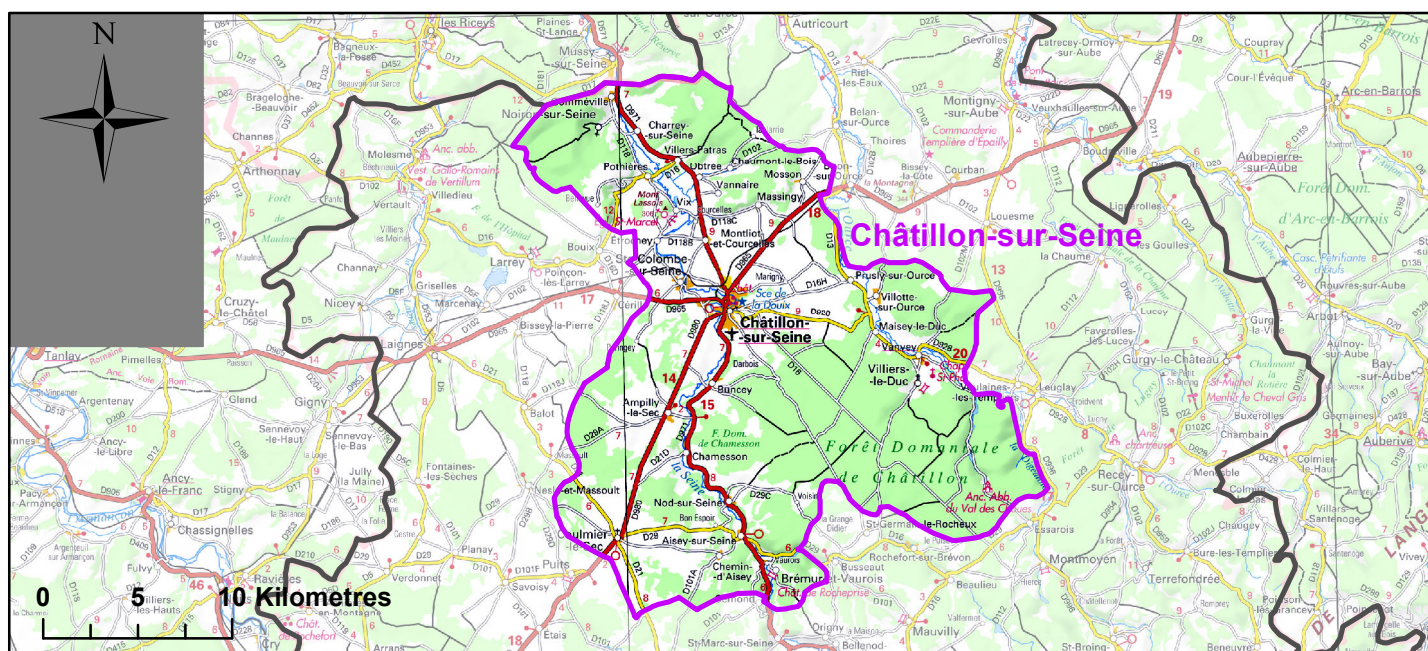


Figure 2.3: Detail of Cantons in which fieldwork carried out in Burgundy.
Basemap data from IGN.

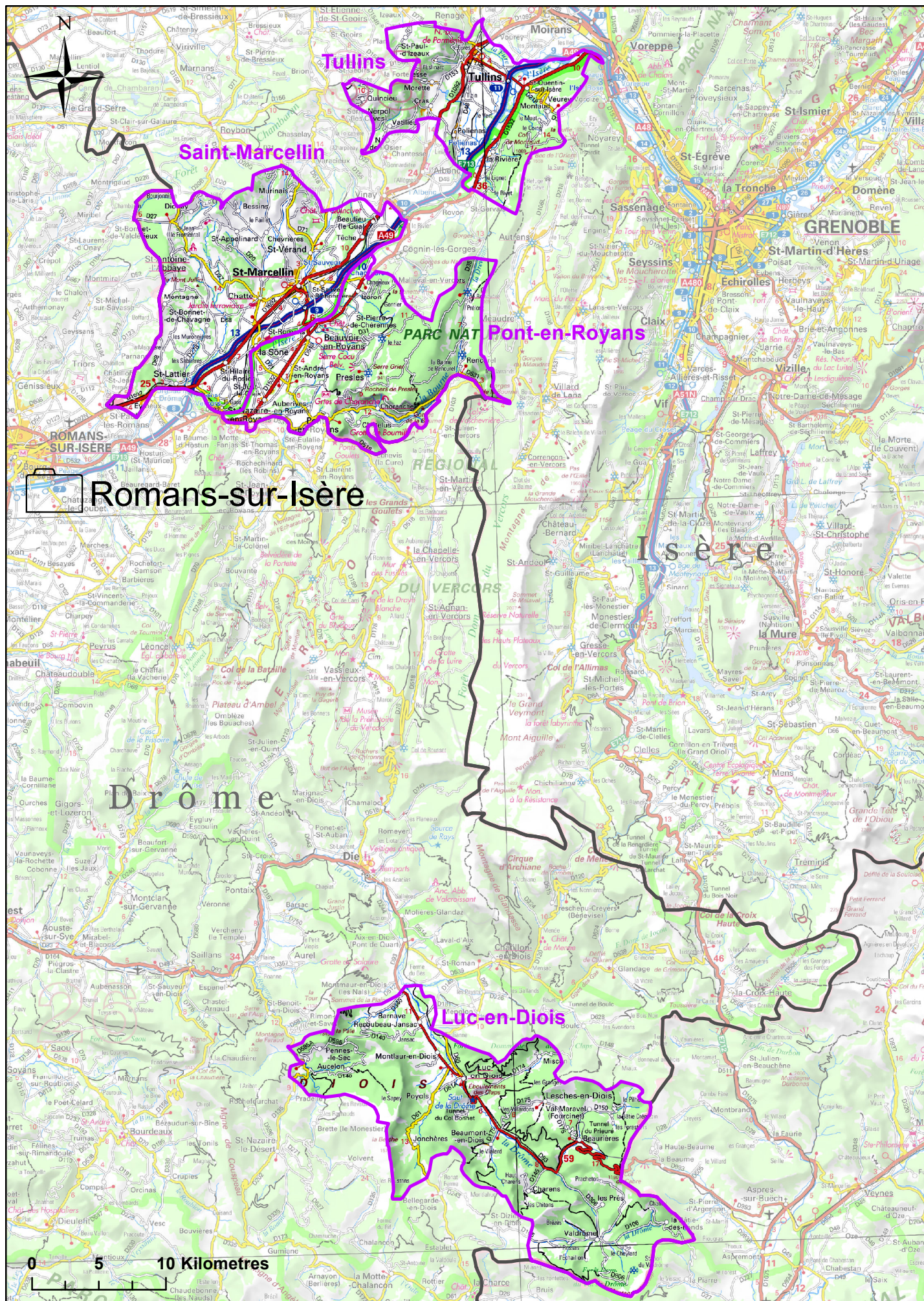


Figure 2.4: Map of fieldwork sites in the Isère and Drôme departments.

Cantons in which interviews and participant observation were carried out are labelled in purple; archives in which materials were consulted are marked and labelled in black. The three marked cantons in the northern part of the map are within the Noix de Grenoble AOP zone of production. Basemap data from IGN.

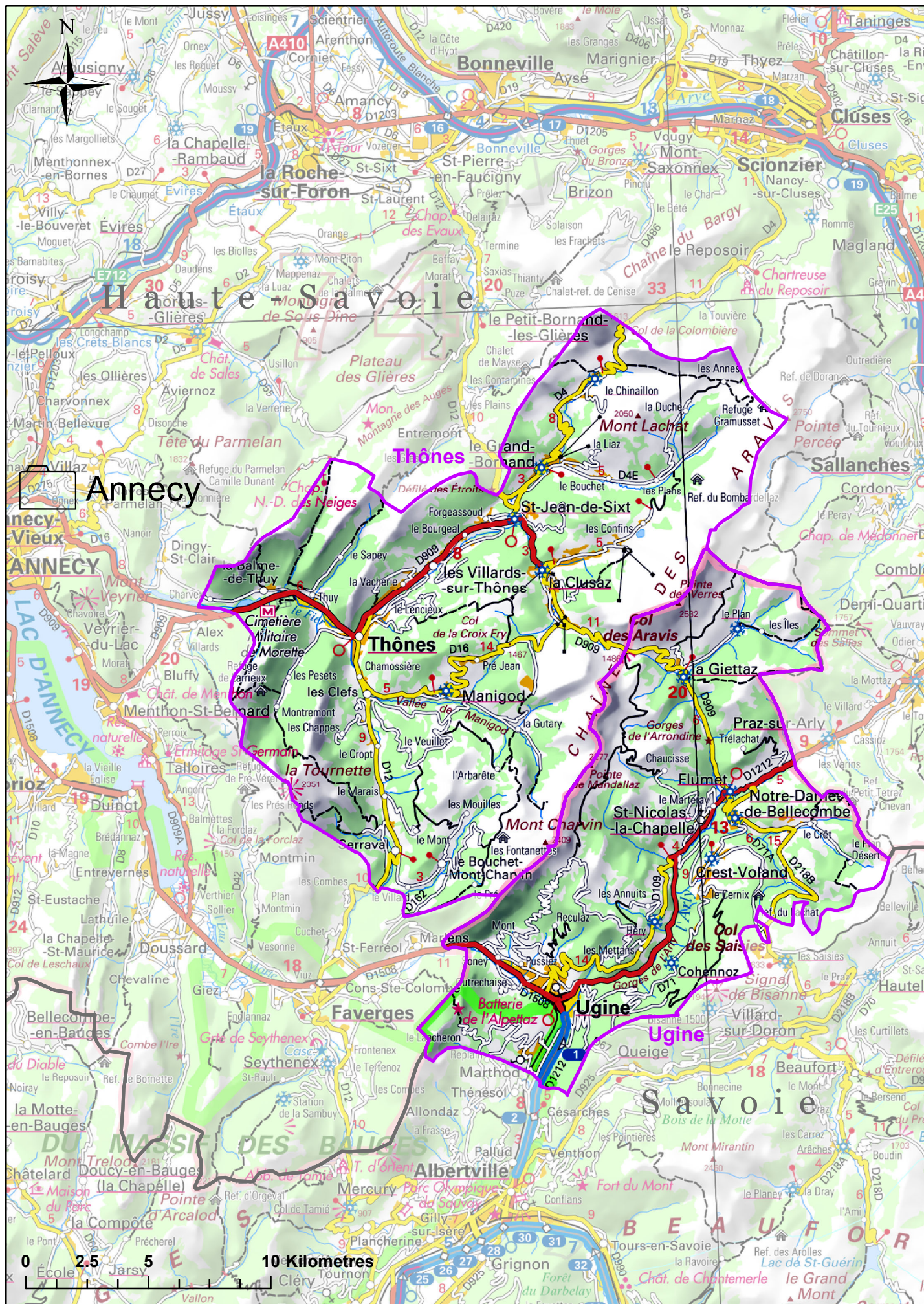


Figure 2.5: Map of fieldwork sites in Savoie.

Cantons in which interviews and participant observation were carried out are labelled in purple; archives in which materials were consulted are marked and labelled in black. Both marked cantons are within the Reblochon de Savoie AOP zone of production. Basemap data from IGN.

2.3. Making Contact and Acting Ethically

As I go on to explain in this chapter, these interviews often preceded return visits and periods of participant observation. Each respondent was given a participant information form (Appendix 1 at the back of this thesis) to supplement what I had explained to them orally about their participation in the project, and I invited them to sign a counterpart (Appendix 2) if they were in agreement. I have kept all of these signed counterparts on file. The ethical dimensions of the project consisted largely in managing commercial confidentiality (as discussed in Clark, 1998 and Brice, 2014a) and material of a personal and professional nature. After making initial contact with a potential participant, I would explain what my project was about and what I expected in terms of their involvement. Where I was then invited to meet them and carry out an interview, I would at a certain point present them with the forms in Appendix 1 and 2, elaborate their content and purpose, ask if the participant was in agreement, and if so invite them to sign their consent. I made it clear that they did not have to sign straight away, and indeed some of the participants reviewed the forms and later eMailed their consent. This request for participants to sign an ethics form sometimes created a moment of awkwardness in interviews; a moment where, even if we had spoken in a friendly and frank manner, formality intervened. In the questions that followed a presentation I gave in Paris in December 2015, I was interested to learn that such ethics forms are not used as widely in French human geography research, with the confidentiality and responsible use of the accounts of respondents being more implicitly communicated. This may go some way to explain why the transmission of an ethics form and my explanation of its necessity seemed like a slightly strange interruption rather than a natural part of the interview. Participants

were certainly interested in the outcome of their participation, however; almost all asked for me to send them the completed thesis so they could read it through.

I have chosen in the thesis to pseudonymise the participants, not because they all asked for this (some were very happy to be mentioned by name), but because it offers a consistent approach across all participants and because I wanted them to feel their confidence would be protected from the beginning and following the dissemination of the thesis. In a project of this kind, the matter of using pseudonyms for participants invites methodological reflection; Brice (2014a) decided to pseudonymise; Paxson (2013) decided not to. I also refer to the producers interviewed with reference to the canton they live in. This may seem a rather odd geographical unit to use – and it is not very common to use the cantonal scale in France (though Baker (1990) is an exception) – but for me it offered a compromise between the greater geographical anonymity of referring only to a *département* (department, i.e. a sub-regional unit roughly equivalent to, if usually smaller than, an English county) and the risk of betraying confidentiality by referring to the individual *commune* (town or village) of the farmer I interviewed. I also preferred it to the option of pseudonymising regions, as used in Harden *et al* (2013).

I established a list of approximately forty potential respondents in the first year of my project, whilst in Oxford, using directories available online of farmers who were certified by Agence Bio, the national French authority overseeing organic production (Agence Bio, 2015); and those who were members of *Terra Vitis*, a group of wine producers pursuing methods which ‘allow us to offer consumers natural and authentic wines, letting the terroir fully express

itself’¹ (Terra Vitis, 2015). Because at the start of the project I was most interested in those who were pursuing organic or otherwise ecologically sustainable modes of cultivation, I targeted those farmers first. I prepared and sent eMails to those forty potential respondents and received only five replies, of which three said they would be willing to participate in an interview. It is not uncommon to receive a small response rate to initial requests for research participation – Bardsley and Bardsley (2014), to give only one example, found the same thing in their research on farming – but instead of reflecting at length on why such small responses can happen, I would simply say that following this disappointing response I improved my technique in eMailing potential respondents by drastically shortening the length of the messages. Where to begin with I diligently fulfilled all ethical requirements of contact ahead of time, explaining at length what the participant’s involvement would entail, the full scope of the research, the kind of questions I would ask them, and so on; later I would simply eMail three or four lines saying who I was and what I was asking. Then if, and only if, the person replied showing interest, I would explain my intentions and the nature of the project more fully in a subsequent eMail, before coming to carry out the interview in person. This proved to be a more successful approach.

As the scope of the project grew, I sought out those farming in the areas of my three production chains who were *not* pursuing certifiably organic methods, as well as other actors involved in the governance of those production chains. I originally intended that the interviews arranged by eMail would ‘snowball’ into further contacts and interviews once I was on the ground, and indeed this is what happened. Farmers put me in touch with other farmers, and also with people in agricultural organizations involved in the promotion,

¹ Tr : ‘permet de proposer aux consommateurs des vins sains et authentiques, laissant pleinement le terroir s’exprimer’.

governance or certification of the food or drink they produced. Such snowballing has been recognised as a productive approach to assembling respondents in geographical projects in France and elsewhere (consider de Raymond, 2013; Johnson, 2008; Kiptinness and Darod, 2011). But in addition, interviews came to be arranged once I was living in France through little more than serendipitous encounter. As I explained at the start of this chapter, my methodological disposition was one of openness to the places I was in and the people I was amongst. Conversations about terroir, which I cannot remember a day passing without, would sometimes lead to contacts being given along with encouragement to call or eMail them. Serendipitous encounter is hardly a method that would have a chapter in a textbook dedicated to it, or a funding application predicated upon it, but it can be very important. MacClancy (2004) and Mars and Mars (2004) have, for example, both attested to its value in researching food cultures. I helped to maintain an environment for such serendipitous encounters to take place by living in the regions I was interested in, talking to people and pursuing leads. Indeed, part of this meant not taking the instructions of ethics lectures that were delivered to DPhil students in the university literally, but rather retaining them in spirit, because I had to approach people and gauge whether they were remotely interested in taking part in my project before I could explain all of the details of confidentiality, publication, and so on. Occasionally, planned interviews could not take place, due to scheduling conflicts, illness, or other reasons. And other times, two or even three interviews would be scheduled for the same day, when in the previous week there had been none. But despite inconsistencies in rhythm, in the end I had a series of interviews and return visits that formed the backbone of my fieldwork year, and provided substantial material to analyse once back in Oxford. The list of those I interviewed is provided in Figures 2.6 and 2.7 and I will refer back to the individuals on these lists in the chapters that draw upon interview materials.

Farmer (Pseudonym)	Canton and Département	Organic Certification	Interview location
Wine production			
Mr A	Châtillon-sur-Seine, Côte d'Or	Organic	Vineyards and winery
Ms B	Fribourg (Switzerland)	None	Vineyard and garden
Mr C	Ladoix-Serrigny, Côte d'Or	Biodynamic	Vineyards and van
Mr D	Ladoix-Serrigny, Côte d'Or	None	Office, yard and shed
Mr E	Ladoix-Serrigny, Côte d'Or	Biodynamic	Wine cellar
Mr F	Vaud (Switzerland)	Biodynamic (in part)	Office and vineyard
Mr G	Lugny, Saône-et-Loire	Organic	Office
Mr H	Ladoix-Serrigny, Côte d'Or	None	Wine cellar
Mr I	Sciez, Haute-Savoie	Biodynamic	Winery
Walnut production			
Mr J	Saint-Marcellin, Isère	Organic	Orchards, yard and office
Mr K	Saint-Marcellin, Isère	Organic	Office
Mr L	Pont-en-Royans, Isère	Organic	Kitchen
Mr M	Tullins, Isère	None	Office, orchards and van
Mr N	Luc-en-Diois, Drôme	Organic	Orchard
Mr O	Pont-en-Royans, Isère	None	Yard and shop
Cheese production			
Ms P	Ugine, Savoie	None	Dairy and shop
Ms Q	Thônes, Haute-Savoie	None	Shop, dairy and kitchen
Mr R	Thônes, Haute-Savoie	Organic (in part)	Office and dairy
Ms S	Thônes, Haute-Savoie	None	Terrace and dairy
Ms T	Thônes, Haute-Savoie	Organic	Kitchen and dairy

Figure 2.6: Research participants referred to in the thesis (farmers).

Respondent (Pseudonym)	Town and Département	Organisation
Ms U	Chatte, Isère	Comité Interprofessionnel de la Noix de Grenoble (CING)
Ms V	Beaune, Côte d'Or	Service d'Ecodéveloppement Agrobiologique et Rural de Bourgogne (SEDARB)
Ms W	Crest, Drôme	Association Agribiodrôme
Ms X	Thônes, Haute-Savoie	Syndicat Interprofessionnel du Reblochon
Ms Y	Annecy, Haute-Savoie	Association ADABio
Mr Z	Beaune, Côte d'Or	Bureau Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bourgogne (BIVB)
Mr AZ	Montpellier, Hérault	Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (INAO)

Figure 2.7: Research participants referred to in the thesis (other actors).

2.4. Interviews

Following instructive examples of qualitative work in human geography, interviews allowed me to ask direct questions about why the farmers were doing what they were doing (Clark, 1998; Laschewski, 2004), about how they understood terroir (Demossier, 2011a; 2011b), about why the farm's landscape looked the way it did (Ménadier, 2012; Le Caro, 2014), and about what they saw as the issues of sustainability facing them (Boulanger-Fassier, 2007; Bowen, 2010). The interviews themselves were carried out entirely in French, and only by me, with variations on the plan of pre-prepared questions shown in Figure 2.8. These questions probed, amongst other things, the history of the farm, its current production, the perspective of the farmer on terroir, their ideas, values and practices regarding sustainability, how they sell their products, how they relate to consumers and to structures of governance, and their concerns and aspirations for the future. The questions were adapted to the different

food chains (so no questions about cattle to wine producers), and their wording, order and use changed a little from the beginning of the project to the end as I found better ways to say things. Finally, the questions I asked other actors in the food chains under study overlapped to some degree (e.g. questions about the AOP system and about the future of the product), but also concerned the governance of those food chains, their involvement in the production and updating of *Cahiers des Charges* (production manuals), and their vision of their role within the food chains. These are matters I discuss in detail when I draw upon those interviews in particular in Chapter 7.

Theme	Question Asked	Translation
<u>Generalities and History</u>	<i>Parlez-moi de votre exploitation?</i>	Tell me about your farm?
	<i>Quelles sont vos productions?</i>	What do you produce here?
	<i>A-t-on cultivé des noix ici pendant longtemps?</i>	Have walnuts been grown here for a long time?
<u>Terroir and Territory</u>	<i>Qu'évoque le mot terroir pour vous?</i>	What does the word terroir mean to you?
	<i>Remarquez-vous des différences entre les vins issus de différentes parcelles?</i>	Do you notice a difference in the wine produced from different parts of the vineyard?
	<i>Le terroir est-il fixe ou vous semble-t-il qu'il peut changer?</i>	Is terroir something fixed or do you think it can change?
<u>The AOP System</u>	<i>Vous êtes dans quelle appellation ici?</i>	Which appellation are you in here?
	<i>En suivant le cahier des charges, avez-vous toujours l'opportunité d'innover?</i>	In following a production manual, do you still have the opportunity to innovate?
	<i>Y-a-t-il jamais un conflit entre les exigences de l'appellation et celles de l'agriculture biologique?</i>	Is there ever a conflict between the demands of the appellation and the demands of organic farming?
<u>Sustainable Agriculture</u>	<i>L'élevage des vaches aux pays alpins vous semble-t-il un pratique durable?</i>	Does dairying in this mountainous country seem to you a sustainable activity?
	<i>Pourquoi avez-vous choisi de tourner vers le bio?</i>	Why have you chosen to convert to organics?
	<i>Le bio vous semble-t-il une démarche innovateur ou une démarche qui tend vers le passé?</i>	Does organic production seem to you an innovative approach, or one that looks back to the past?
<u>Ground Cover and Insects</u>	<i>Que faites-vous pour gérer les problèmes éventuels liés aux insectes, aux maladies et aux mauvaises herbes?</i>	How do you manage problems that might emerge to do with insects, disease or weeds?
	<i>Avez-vous de l'herbe entre les rangs? Pourquoi/pourquoi pas?</i>	Do you have grass between the crop? Why/why not?
	<i>La diversité florale aux hauts alpages mène-t-elle aux goûts divers dans le fromage?</i>	Does floral diversity in the high pastures lead to different tastes in the cheese?
<u>Production Methods</u>	<i>Il vous a fallu changer des méthodes pour gagner la certification bio?</i>	Were there methods you had to change to gain organic certification?

	<i>Quelles sont les activités importantes à ce moment de l'année?</i>	What are your most important tasks at this time of year?
	<i>Quels défis pour travailler avec le lait cru?</i>	What are the challenges of working with raw milk?
<u>Sale of Product</u>	<i>Comment vendez-vous vos fromages?</i>	How do you sell your cheese?
	<i>Quels axes favorisez-vous dans la communication des qualités de votre produit?</i>	What do you talk about when you communicate the qualities of your product?
	<i>Recevez-vous des visiteurs ici?</i>	Do you have visitors here?
<u>The Future</u>	<i>Quels défis et quelles opportunités pour votre exploitation dans les années qui viennent?</i>	What are the challenges and what are the opportunities for your farm in the years to come?
	<i>Avez-vous l'intention d'agrandir l'exploitation?</i>	Do you intend to grow the business?
	<i>Quelles tendances voyez-vous dans le marché de vins bourguignons?</i>	What trends do you see in the Burgundy wine market?
(Questions only for other actors in the food chain)		
<u>Governance</u>	<i>Quel est le rôle de votre organisation?</i>	What is the role of your organisation?
	<i>Sera-t-il possible de changer les dimensions de l'aire de l'appellation?</i>	Would it be possible to change the dimensions of the appellation zone?
	<i>Constatez-vous des secteurs où le bio s'est plus répandu qu'ailleurs?</i>	Are there some areas that are more organic than others?
<u>Cahiers des Charges (Production Manuals)</u>	<i>Etes-vous impliqués dans la création ou la mise à jour du Cahier des Charges?</i>	Are you involved in the creation or updating of the production manual?
	<i>Quels sont les défis majeurs d'une conversion en bio?</i>	What are the major challenges attendant to converting to organics?
	<i>Est-ce que le succès de ce produit dépend de son appellation?</i>	Is the success of this product due to its appellation?
<u>Marketing</u>	<i>Cette AOP est-elle bien reconnue dans la région/en France/en Europe?</i>	Is this AOP well recognised in the region/in France/in Europe?
	<i>Que faites-vous qu'elle soit reconnue davantage?</i>	What do you do so that it might be better recognised?
	<i>Peut-on attendre à de meilleurs récompenses après la conversion en bio?</i>	Can one expect better returns following a conversion to organics?

Figure 2.8: Interview questions

In trying to develop an understanding of a foreign concept, and in trying to do the cultural geographical work of interpreting the meaning and ‘translating the stor[ies] of places’ (Entrikin, 1991: 58), some proficiency in the language used to articulate that concept and the language spoken in those places is of great importance. Anna Krzywoszynska (2015) has recently discussed in detail the challenges she faced in undertaking fieldwork with wine producers in a foreign language, and has remarked that ‘[i]t is in the context of ‘overseas’ fieldwork that language ‘issues’ become most apparent, and yet remain rarely addressed (Poblete, 2009)’. She explains the ideas that working in a foreign language – in her case, Italian – can provide an original perspective on how words are tied to practices, and that being attentive to the translations and interpretations we bring to foreign-language source material can form part of reflexive research praxis. Boulanger-Fassier (2007) and Célérier (2014) have also argued that we as researchers need to be wary of the polysemy of notions – sustainability and territory are the examples they give – in the questions we ask and the responses we receive. Direct questioning about terroir and sustainability did lead me to interesting findings about the sustainability and variable currency of those concepts, as I will discuss in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Whilst based in Oxford for the first year of my project, I took the opportunity to attend weekly French classes to maintain and improve my fluency in the language. I also built up a vocabulary spreadsheet of technical terms in farming, and especially in wine production, from articles and other materials I read. This was useful because several of those words were region or sector-specific, and not to be found in standard dictionaries.² It also improved my confidence in doing interviews on my own, without an interpreter, and this confidence grew

² For instance, ‘meuret’ as the Burgundian name for a wall built from stones in a vineyard.

as I carried out more and more interviews. The immediacy and richness of responses in the participant's native language was an advantage of carrying out the interviews in French, although it led to having to translate their words into English for use in the thesis, as Krzywoszynska (2015) has discussed. So that the reader may see the original evidence of my interviews, I will generally provide the French words in footnotes underneath my English translations.

Semi-structured interviews, so common in the social sciences, seemed right from the beginning, because I felt opening the structure of the interviews sufficiently would allow the respondents space to talk about what they wanted to talk about, what they felt was important, and not just to respond to my pre-determined questions. As well as yielding information for me, this would, I hoped, permit however small a degree of 'empowerment' of the interviewee (Mendoza and Morén-Alegret, 2012) by allowing them to recount and bear witness to things that were of value and of concern to them. This often happened, and I learnt a lot that surprised me from the tangents away from my questions that our conversations took. But I also tried to carry out interviews alongside participant observation, or at least outside of the office, so that non-human actors could prompt responses from the farmer in addition to my questions.

I hoped that engaging the farmer while he or she was working with their plants, their soil, or their machinery would allow for richly informative verbal responses that were tied to their practices; an opportunity not afforded in the same way by the office-based interviews with other actors in the production chain. It would be congruent with my desire to see how discourse and praxis connect in the perception and operationalisation of *terroir*, but in practice it wasn't always possible. When I would make initial contact with a farmer and ask if

we could do an interview, neither of us would specify a place for the interview beyond ‘the farm,’ and I didn’t want to insist on too many conditions before coming. So I would turn up, sometimes in a car, sometimes on a bike, occasionally on foot, and then it would be up to the farmer to decide where he or she would take me for the interview. Ménadier (2012) and Le Caro (2014) have argued that we need to be attentive to the spaces in which fieldwork with farmers is undertaken, and have mapped in their work the places where things were explained to them and significant elements of the landscape pointed out. Høyrup and Munk (2007) too have argued that *terroir* is evoked and constructed in many different places, and some can be more convincing to the researcher than others. I have noted these locations in [Figure 2.6](#) above, and I found there was a split; some farmers would take me to their office, others into the kitchen of their house, others still would start walking around the farm with me, and others again would invite me straight into a van and we’d drive around, observing and talking. Often, in fact, there would be a combination of the above, and what would start in their office would, as we got to know each other better, and when I felt a positive response would be likely, move on to other parts of the farm, the winery, the stable, and so on, according to the type of farm. My questions would not stop from beginning to end, so there were times when farmers were indeed reporting on things in response to prompts from the field as well as the researcher. As I discuss in Chapter 7, and as MacClancy (2004) and Paxson (2013) also attest in their work, dairy farmers would often invite me to use my senses of smell, taste and touch to better understand what they were telling me about cheese production. In a similar vein to the plants Pitt (2015) and Krzywoszynska (2015) were shown in their research, walnut farmers would answer my questions about pests in the orchard by picking and giving me walnut husks and pointing out the damage caused by the *mouche du brou* insect, and by showing me sticky fly traps peppered with little black insects. And, much to the amusement of colleagues and I suppose the disdain of some potential funding bodies, wine producers

never failed to invite me to use the epistemological tools of nose and mouth in appreciating their work.

My notebook was my constant companion in interviews, whether itinerant or stationary. But this fact is also related to what I see as one of the greatest shortcomings of the methodology of my project. That is, my decision not to use a Dictaphone to record the interviews. In ethnographic work in geography and elsewhere in the social sciences, Dictaphones are conventional tools of the trade. They permit the fullness of interviews and other forms of encounter to be recorded, and facilitate later transcription. Krzywoszynska (2015: 313), who also carried out human geographical research on wine production, recounts that: 'Throughout my research, I made heavy use of audio and video recording, which was partially informed by my less-than-fluent (Tremlett, 2009) language competency.' Although I was generally confident in the language being used during my interviews, a major problem I faced in only using paper and pen was that I could not transcribe what respondents were saying into my notebooks fast enough. It also caused problems when it came to writing the chapters of the thesis because I was limited in my use of long verbatim quotations from respondents; the 'quotations from the transcript that make an interviewee 'present' in your research account,' (Whatmore, 2003: 96) and likely contribute thereby to its credibility.

I was conscious of these problems when I planned the project, but I decided for three reasons to nonetheless proceed without a Dictaphone. In my undergraduate dissertation I had used a Dictaphone in interviews, and I felt this could create a little bit of awkwardness in one-to-one interviews with people who were often much older than me and who had invited me into their homes to talk about their past and things that were personal to them. It seemed to me that the Dictaphone imposed a degree of formality that could interrupt the friendly and trusting nature

of the relationship built up in an interview. So the first reason for not using a Dictaphone was seeking to avoid that. The second reason was recognising and attempting to allay ahead of time concerns around commercial confidentiality, which were important to producers, especially in the high-value wine industry of Burgundy. This is a matter which has been discussed in detail by Clark (1998) in terms of ‘close dialogue’ in interviewing elites in financial firms, and by Brice (2014a) in terms of interviewing employees in competitive Australian wine companies. And the third reason was simple desperation in that given so few of the farmers I originally contacted by eMail got back to me, for those who did I wished to create as few barriers to them talking to me as possible. The Dictaphone, though a common tool of social science researchers and journalists, seemed to me a barrier: hardly insurmountable, but an extra reason for a potential interviewee to turn down my request. As shown in the first field note excerpt at the start of this chapter, when I would turn up on a farm to carry out a pre-arranged interview, I would often have to quickly recount why I had come and what I intended to do. This could be an awkward moment for me as I would have to justify my presence before the potential respondent and often several other workers, who I had usually interrupted during a busy day. I would have to tread a line between friendliness and professionalism, in a second language, and always with the possibility that he or she would turn me down at the last moment. I was glad, in those situations, where I would be compelled to say that I wanted them to fill out an ethics form, that I did not have to also pull out a Dictaphone and say ‘by the way, I plan to record it all’.

Upon reflection, though, I persisted with what turned out to be the wrong decision. What started as a hindrance during interviews became an obvious weakness at the later thesis-writing stage. Farmers could have always refused the use of the Dictaphone but carried on with the interview. I could have made various excuses and jokes around its use to try to make

it less awkward. And I would have anonymised or pseudonymised their responses as I have done anyway. But above all, and quite selfishly, I would have had high quality verbatim materials with which to fill my empirical chapters. As it is, I have around fifteen notebooks filled with hand-written notes (as in [Figures 2.9](#) and [2.10](#)) as my primary written evidence from interviews. Some of the writing is in English and some in French, as I would switch between transcribing the words being fed to me in French and translating them quickly into English as they provoked further thought. I would then revisit these notes as soon as possible after the interview, to correct poorly legible parts (the words in blue in [Figure 2.9](#)) and to note down first thoughts emerging from what we discussed (the words at the end of arrows in [Figure 2.10](#)). Once back in Oxford, I typed these handwritten notes up into Word documents which I could easily search and use (as in [Figure 2.11](#)). Carrying the notebook did facilitate my drawing diagrams and rough sketches of things I was shown (such as [Figure 6.14](#) in [Chapter 6](#) and [Figure 7.5](#) in [Chapter 7](#)), and the inclusion of pamphlets, business cards and other paraphernalia collected during fieldwork. But one of the major problems is, as explained above, that paragraph-length quotations direct from the respondent are impossible for me to use, because I could never write down such long discourses before the respondent moved on to another point. I have managed to use shorter phrases that were uttered, and I have been able to join parts of discourses together using ellipses where I had not been able to write down every single word into my notebook fast enough. I have also made use of shorter phrases within tables of responses and in a map mash-up in [Chapter 5](#). But I have also occasionally had to syncopate or report speech using my own paraphrases (as discussed in [Watson and Till, 2010](#)) which, no matter how honest and representative I might protest the words are, will never seem as accurate as those transcribed directly. This presents a problem of evidence, because the reader or examiner would have, *in extremis*, to rely upon my handwritten notes instead of high-fidelity recordings if they sought to verify the claims I

recount in narrative form. In light of this, in the chapters that follow I have put directly reported speech from interviews and participant observation in “ ” double speech marks, to distinguish them from references and recollection in ‘ ’ single speech marks.

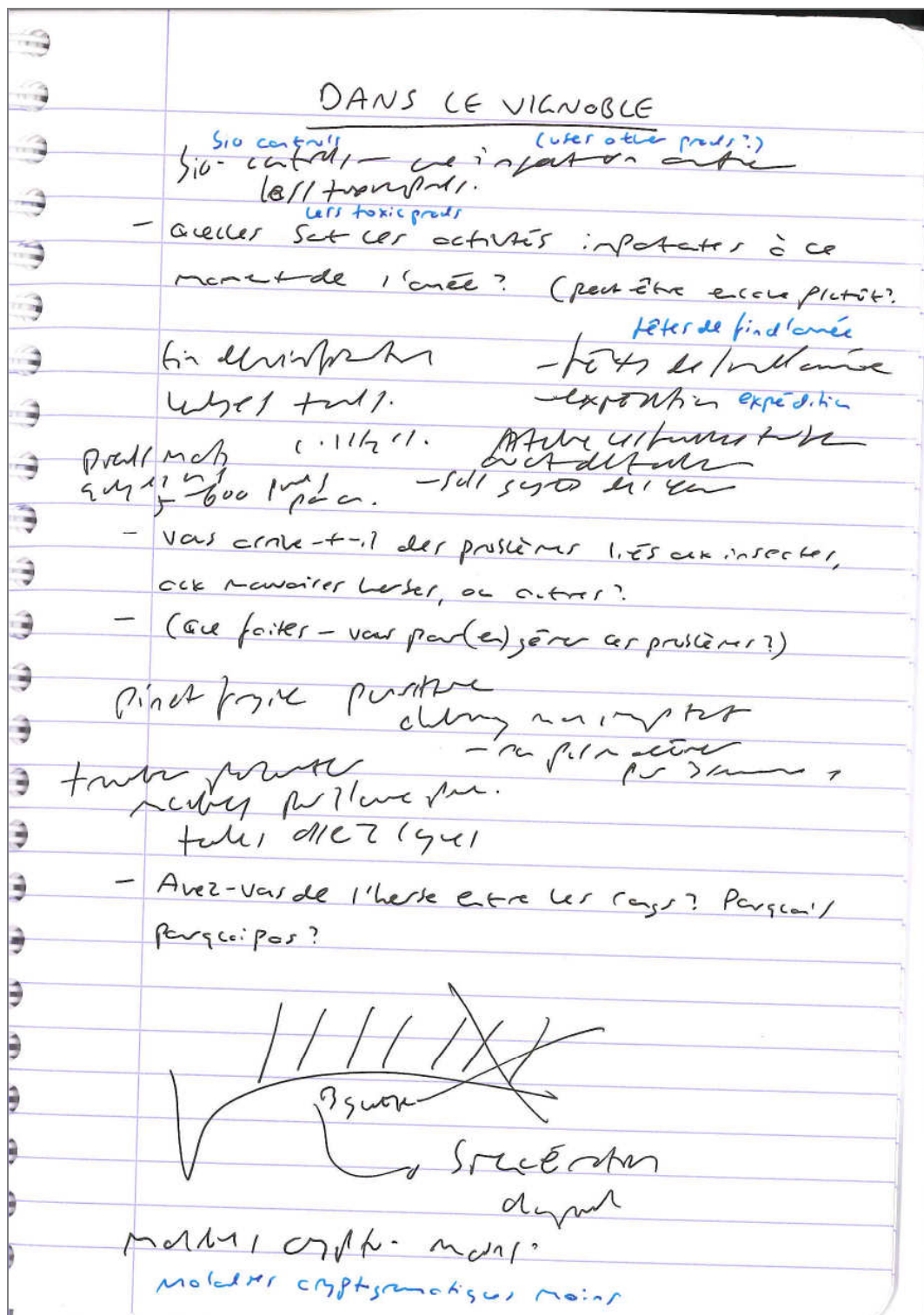


Figure 2.9: Extract from field notebook; Interview with Mr H (Wine producer).

1. TERNER

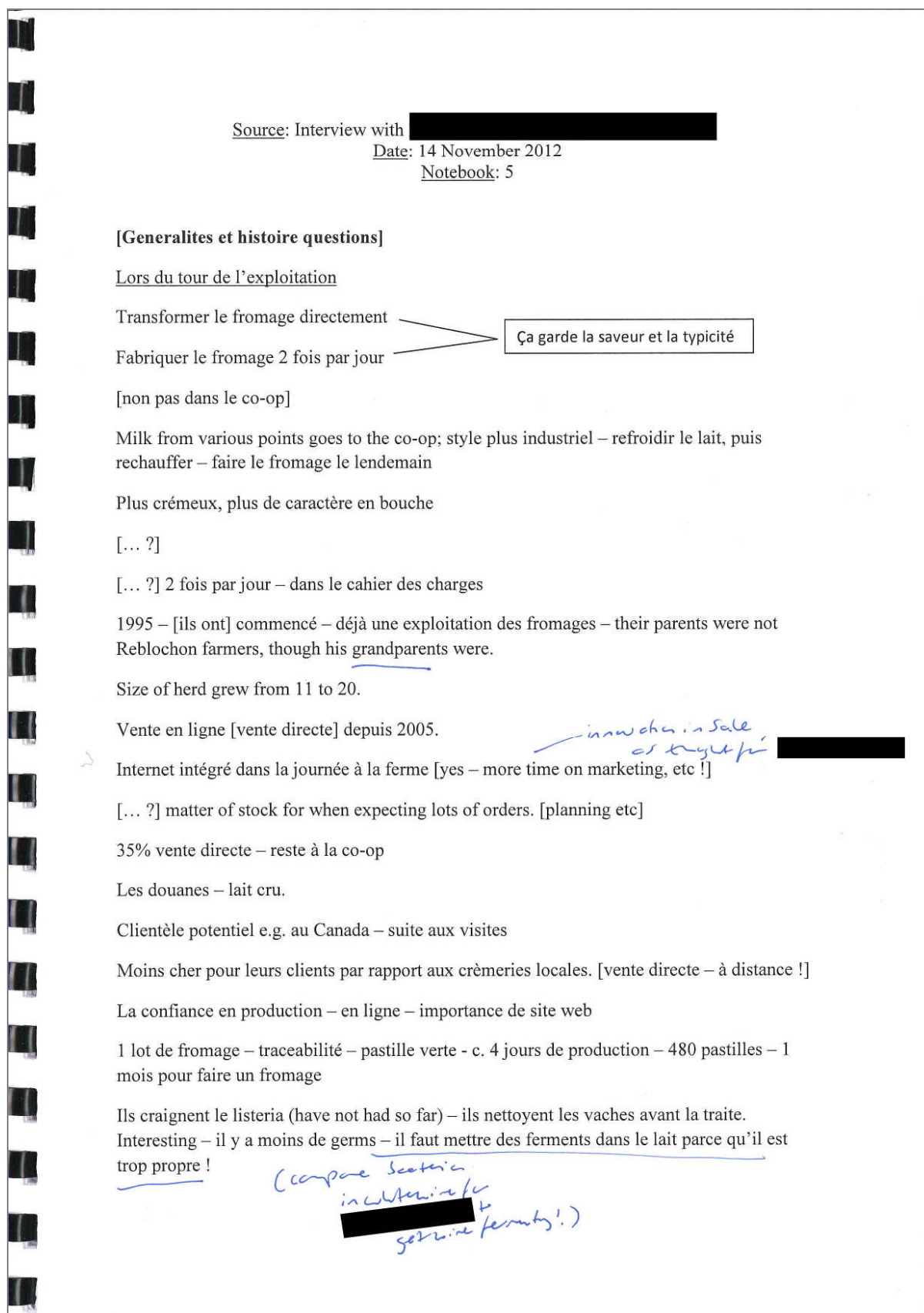


Figure 2.11: Extract of typed notes from interview; Interview with Ms Q (Reblochon producer)

2.5. Seeing, Doing

The other, closely allied, ethnographic method I used was participant observation. This also has long-established warrants in the social sciences, and has become more popular in recent years with the renewed interest in affect and more-than-human activity (consider, for example, J. Lorimer, 2010; Notzke, 2013; Foster, 2014; Roe and Greenhough, 2014; Pitt, 2015; cf. Buller, 2014; 2015). It allowed me to observe the actions or traces of action of non-humans actors such as cows that climb, vines that bear diseased fruit, and wild boar that dig up the ground. To get at the practices which are used in the field, to witness the interactions at every visible scale, and to attune to the situation through being affected myself, participant observation was a sensible way to proceed. The activities of picking grapes, tying vines, pruning trees, drying walnuts and milking cows demonstrated the practices of elaborating agricultural products; and the acts which organic certification might encourage, or which might accord with the motivations of the grower, such as leaving hedgerows intact to attract pollinating insects, or replacing metal stakes with wooden ones; were important to document in the interests of understanding the processes of sustainable production, and of examining how they relate to discourses of the same. Watson and Till (2010: 129) argue that combining interviews with participant observation is helpful because ‘interviewees cannot report on what they ‘do’ – for ‘doings’ are often unconscious or unarticulated practices.’ Boulanger-Fassier (2007) used participant observation alongside interviews to witness the importance of processes such as *enherbement* (maintaining or cultivating ground cover) in the suite of sustainable production methods, and to assess how far such processes are used amongst her other respondents; whilst Bowen (2010; 2011) also maintains that it was productive to ally participant observation with interviews in her comparative examination of embeddedness and

terroir between Comté cheese and Mexican Tequila. Other examples of the combination of interviews with participant observation in generating knowledge of food networks abound (O'Neill and Whatmore, 2000; Miele and Murdoch, 2002; Gade, 2004; Holloway *et al*, 2007; Trauger, 2009; Bardsley and Bardsley, 2014; Blecha and Leitner, 2014; Congdon, 2015), and this seemed to me a natural and apposite combination to make; even if I did not rely exclusively on those two methods as part of a substantially more-than-human methodology.

Certainly immersing myself in practices did allow, if not exactly for accomplished enskilment (Brice, 2014a: 96; cf. Ingold, 2000), at least for the acquisition of a kind of bodily knowledge and a discovery of the temporal rhythms and spatiality of practices that import to farmers in different fields. I put myself at the service of the farmers I interviewed, and indeed I asked to accompany them in their work as much as possible. Some interviews were brief and it was clear that at their conclusion no follow-up would be necessary. But in others, allies were made who would invite me to return, and indeed in some cases friendships were made which resulted in several meetings in the weeks and months that followed the initial contact. In a similar vein to what Brice (2014a) reports experiencing on fieldwork, I would from time to time play a part in the transformation of crop to product (from grape picking to racking bottles), enter the circulation of conversation among employees and others actors, be taken into their confidence, experience the rhythm of the workday and be taken on excursions. And eventually, I would face the same challenge of taking these 'realities and narratives encountered 'in the field'...and translating them into academic prose' (*Ibid*: 99).

The fact of participating in practices also brought me closer to the lived realities of the farmers I was interviewing, and improved my understanding of their work and their concerns. Krzywoszynska (2015: 313) has attested to using participant observation to better understand

the relationship between ‘the meanings employed in the discourses employed in the discourses of the organic wine industry...and the everyday practices of growing grapes and making wine.’ Because farming involves both philosophy and practice, and because both philosophy and practice are targets for change under conversion to organic or biodynamic production, participating in work on farms helped me to better understand the connection between the two. And in some ways, my capacity to habituate to the rhythms of agricultural work served as a kind of test of my credibility in the project. I remember arranging an interview with one farmer, who asked to meet him in the field shortly after dawn the next day. I was keen to turn up on time so that he would see I was serious and recognised the need for early starts in farming. I feel getting to know the ways in which things get done also helped to lend a little more credibility to my interviews, because I knew more of the specialist vocabulary, could make better judgments about situations I was asked to comment on, and had a better grasp of the issues they would discuss with me. Finally, I should note that not all of the time I spent with farmers could be called participant observation in a strict academic sense. Sometimes I would have lunch with them. Sometimes I would go out on messages with them. Sometimes I would entertain visiting customers with them. Sometimes I would engage in that simplest and most illuminating of interactions: chat. In these situations, I was not taking notes, but was rather doing the things that come naturally in a friendship, and which fill the days of an ethnographer. As I intimated at the start of this chapter, my researcher self was not sealed; rather, in being open to the worlds of my research participants, I opened myself as a person, interested in others and capable of friendship. It was a privilege to be treated as a colleague and a friend.

2.6. Doing Seeing

The third method I used in generating knowledge of contemporary situations was a flexible form of discourse, textual and landscape analysis. A good deal of work in cultural geography and the geography of food is sensitive to discourse, with a variety of textual sources discussed, even if discourse analysis is not always recognised explicitly as a method. Harvey (2005) has argued for the value of non-academic materials such as newspapers in researching geographical imaginations; MacClancy (2004) has argued that in anthropological examinations of food, materials like newspapers, cookbooks, novels and memoirs have value that has been relatively neglected; and Paxson (2013) has used producer websites as evidence of discourse concerning local and artisanal food. Furthermore, MacDonald (2013) uses conversations, promotional materials and observations to build up a picture of the discursive landscape of a *Slow Food* market; and Whalen (2010) includes wine labels in his analysis and demonstrates their importance for communicating terroir. Apart from cookbooks, I can say that I consulted all of these categories of material during my time in France, and I often refer to newspaper and specialised publication articles to witness the expression of present-day matters of public concern. Furthermore, the fact of being in a place, interviewing its people and participating and observing its rhythms constantly brings the landscape to one's attention. In later chapters, I discuss my first-hand experiences of the changing colour of the leaves on the côte d'Or and the striking beauty of the Aravis mountain range. And throughout the thesis, I use photography to illustrate points being made. The act of taking pictures was a mode of observing and recording landscape and action which made sense to my respondents. The production of a camera did not create the awkwardness I feared a Dictaphone might. Indeed, asking to return and take pictures of the farm was a comfortable and successful way

to arrange a return visit and accompany the farmers in their work. Some would even invite me back to photograph moments that they felt would be instructive and interesting, such as milking (Figure 2.12), the harvest (Figure 2.13), and the transhumance (Figure 2.14; discussed in Chapter 6). And on a couple of occasions, I sent pictures back to the farmers for their own interest and use.



Figure 2.12: Milking (Reblochon production, Savoy)
Source: Author.



Figure 2.13: Harvesting (with machine) (Walnut production, Isère)

Source: Author



Figure 2.14: Transhumance (Reblochon production, Savoy)

Source: Author

These observations may be understood as part of the project of attuning, appreciating and being affected by the field, as Ingold (2000), Claval (2001), Miele and Murdoch (2002), Wylie (2005), Rose (2007), Mol (2010) and H. Lorimer (2010) discuss, and they may also be understood as the continuation of a long tradition in geography of appraising the landscape both as a scene and as a dynamic actor in social relations and cultural expression, as something ‘itself living’ (Whatmore, 2006: 605). In this, one may consider the varied treatment of landscape in Jackson (1984), Prince (1984), Ingold (1993), Brassley (1998), Cloke and Jones (2004), Ménadier (2012), Gandy (2013), Lorimer (2013) and Matless (2014). In being in the field and in writing the thesis, I have used the influential insight of cultural geography that landscape can be understood through a discursive lens (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Barnes and Duncan, 1992); something which Anderson and Braun (2008) and Duncan and Duncan (2010) have argued can generate knowledge that still has much to contribute to the discipline and our understanding of the world. And I have been conscious of connections with the Vidalian tradition in French geography in which the landscape may be interpreted as part of the appraisal of the interaction between a culture and a *milieu* and the development of a *genre de vie*. Although in some ways superannuated and ill-suited to the study of contemporary France (Buttimer, 1971; Thompson, 1975; Van Paassen, 1981; Claval, 1984), Vidal de la Blache’s work has, as Whalen (2010) argues, left a legacy in how French geographers have appreciated landscape; being, as Claval (1975: 347) has put it, ‘sensitive to the soul of landscapes, and to the personality of territorial beings,’³. Vidal’s work can even be understood, as Courtot (2007) argues, as laying the foundation for the centrality of the cultural landscape in discourse about terroir today, and Pitte (2006: 885) has certainly proposed with Vidalian phrasing that the ‘geographic personality’⁴ of French wines

³ Tr: ‘sensible à l’âme des paysages, à la personnalité des êtres territoriaux’.

⁴ Tr: ‘personnalité géographique’.

substantially contribute to their success on the world market. Crucially for my project, attending subjectively to landscape and the people within it can be part of a modern and creative methodological engagement with the field, and one which ties cultural and historical geography together in connecting to that ‘older coinage of geographical appreciation and emotional apprehension as *genre de vie*’ (H. Lorimer, 2010: 258; cf. Baker, 2003) which has animated cultural geographic enquiry in France. Certainly in many cases, being outdoors in a farming landscape, whether vineyard, orchard or pasture, had a ‘natural’ sense as an appropriate location in which to talk about terroir – not only because it made visible the origins of what the farmer produced, but also perhaps because the farmer thought it was what I as a researcher *would want* to see.

The flexibility I refer to in analysing discourse, landscape and text is something quite evident in certain examples of French work on terroir, where methodological reflection is not extensive but rather implicit in the materials that are adduced as evidence. Rigaux (2010) for instance, uses a narrative style and roves through archival, anecdotal and personal observations, Moustier and Fabre (2007) use landscape interpretation as part of their discussion of the legacy and renewal of olive growing in Provence, and Pitte (2007) draws together ideas and facts from diverse origins in his argument about the role and resonance of terroir in France. Understanding a concept with national currency requires attending to its meaning and use at different scales, and how it has been apprehended and worked with by academics within that nation. As I progress through this thesis, I will make use of secondary materials from both the French popular media and French academia as part of the mission of developing our understanding of what terroir is and does. More than in some other essays, therefore, this thesis will treat such secondary materials to an extent like primary materials in the sense of using them to contribute to the creation of new knowledge instead of only using

them to frame and legitimise that knowledge. Such flexibility in examining and interpreting ideas and claims from different sources, contemporary, historic, academic, popular, official and fieldwork-derived, and in subjecting them to critical evaluation and reflection allows for a narrative style of argument to be constructed. For me, as for Daniels and Lorimer (2012: 7), '[n]arrative here is a cultural predicament as well as a creative opportunity'; and like Paxson (2013), I have sought to weave together stories and perspectives to explore a matter that bears considerable cultural weight. Because I do not suffer the need to present quantitative evidence, or outline the statistical significance of my findings, I can put together diverse sources of information in a kind of narrative bricolage; reflecting, I hope, the bricolage of history, practice, meaning and mediatisation (after Crang, 2003; Leyshon and Bull, 2011) that I will argue is bound up in landscapes of terroir.

2.7. Archives

Finally, using archival methods along with ethnographic ones is coherent with the idea of attending to historical textures of place (consider Lowenthal, 1975; DeLyser, 2001; Harvey *et al*, 2006), just as it is with charting the *becoming* of things economic (Barrey, 2007; cf. MacClancy, 1992) and with investigating the development of a concept over time (as per Cronon, 1995, and Elden, 2013). Lorimer and Whatmore (2009) have demonstrated how past human/non-human relations can be re-appraised through archival materials, and to historicise the 'contemporary practices, objects and territories' under ethnographic study; and Hearn *et al* (2014) have combined archival materials with oral histories to trace such relations through the landscape; even if there remain significant challenges in using archival materials to get at the lived experience of the past (see Duncan, 1999; Till, 2001; McEwan, 2003; Gagen *et al*,

2007; DeSilvey, 2007; Hill, 2011). In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I will argue for the historical geographical basis of the success and notoriety of terroir today, in Chapter 4 I will closely examine the conceptual development of terroir within French society using a range of archival materials, and in Chapter 5 I will trace the changes to the ecologies of social life in agricultural territories which were wrought through processes of modernisation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the historical dimension of terroir is rarely ignored in its academic study or its popular communication. De Reparaz (2007) has charted diachronic developments in the olive-producing territory which he studies in Provence, and connects the changing local pattern of olive and grape plantation to wider historical phenomena such as the phylloxera crisis. Clout (2003; 2004) has examined archival materials to show how the present-day image of the landscape of the pays de Bray in Normandy belies a history of great agricultural and social change. And Guy (2011) and Garcia and Labbé (2012) have drawn upon a number of historical and contemporary sources to examine discourses surrounding terroir and quality, and how the practical work of men and women in their perpetuation is marginalised. As I have indicated in the previous chapter, I see historical antecedence as an entirely necessary part of a terroir's story, both formally in terms of structures of regulation (Stanziani, 2010) and culturally in terms of tradition and recognition (Pitte, 2007; Laferté, 2011), and in Chapters 3 and 4 I will argue that much of the sense of authenticity that accrues to products of terroir is based on expressions of anteriority.

In the field, archival work took on a broader importance because it contextualised the food production chains under study and provided much useful material to discuss in, and improve comprehension of, interviews with farmers and actors in the governance of food chains. Indeed, there were even times when I could provide information to respondents about interesting events in the history of their product, in a similar vein to that DeSilvey (2003)

recounts in bringing her archival findings to her research participants. Perhaps the transmission of this archival knowledge to the field added some more credibility to my activity there; perhaps the insights of a historical geographer can mitigate slowness in grape picking and betoken some fragile expertise. In any case, the experience of carrying archival knowledge into the field was one that promoted much reflection upon the shaping and perception of the landscapes of the present-day, and the development of theory given the evidence of both past and present. I decided in Chapter 5 to reflect the emergence of such ‘hybrid archival-field spaces’ (H. Lorimer, 2010: 258) and the possibility, even inevitability, of ‘taking theory for a walk’ (Kearns, 2007), by narrating my journey up to the high pastures in Savoy through and with the materials I had discovered in the archive and the apprehension of terroir that developed on the day.

For that and the other chapters, the materials I targeted in the archive were letters between farmers and local government, letters between local and national government officials, newspaper reports of assemblies of farmers, situated histories and regional descriptions of the areas and food chains under study, accounts of the land and its production by various officials, maps and cadastral plans, advertisements, and historical journal articles. Much of this material had not received academic attention before, and had not been entered into analysis alongside similar documents from other parts of France. The archival work undertaken also furnished photography, cartography, and tables and figures that I am using in the thesis to illustrate and support textual argument, above all in Chapter 5. The archives I consulted are listed below in [Figure 2.15](#), with their locations on the maps above also indicated. For the materials from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), I have indicated in references the ‘ark’ number which can be used to access them online through their Gallica search engine.

Throughout the thesis, I use in-line referencing, but I will also use footnote referencing for archival materials.

Archive Name	Location (Map Figure)
Archives départementales de la Haute-Savoie	Annecy (Figure 2.5)
Archives municipales de Romans-sur-Isère	Romans-sur-Isère (Figure 2.4)
Archives municipales de Mâcon	Mâcon (Figure 2.2)
Archives municipales de Dijon	Dijon (Figure 2.2)
Archives municipales de Beaune	Beaune (Figure 2.2)
Archives municipales de Meursault	Meursault (Figure 2.2)
Archives départementales de la Côte d'Or	Dijon (Figure 2.2)
Archives départementales de la Saône-et-Loire	Mâcon (Figure 2.2)
Bibliothèque Nationale de France	Paris (Materials also available online)

Figure 2.15: Table of archives visited.

2.8. Synthesising Evidence

It is worth reflecting upon how the evidence I gathered was organised and brought together into the narrative arc and substantive arguments of this thesis. The degree of originality which I have argued I have pursued in this thesis through combining historical and present-day forms of evidence, and through combining academic and popular sources, meant some practical limitations in the amount of different types of evidence gathered. The 27 interview respondents listed in Figures 2.6 and 2.7 could have been added to if I had not also spent fieldwork time in the archives listed in Figure 2.15. Doing so may well have widened the variety of responses I received to the questions I posed, and thereby led to more nuanced or even different conclusions, but it would have also reduced the degree to which I could say historical things about the food chains and regions I was investigating. It is also worth repeating the point made earlier in this chapter that several of the interview respondents accorded me repeat interviews and visits during which I spent time working with them,

observing them, or taking photographs of themselves and of things happening on the farm. The number of encounters with those who work with terroir on a daily basis was thus greater than 27, and it included, as also mentioned earlier, encounters with people that cannot be listed in [Figures 2.6 and 2.7](#) due to their informality, yet which furnished information, reflection and points of debate that fed into the more formal interviews.

The variety of evidence that I assembled formed the basis for the narrative progression of the chapters that follow, but that progression was also influenced by the ideas that formed and changed during my time in the field. Beginning interviews in a new part of eastern France and focussing on a different one of my three product chains – such as when I went from Burgundy to Savoy – was always interesting because the substance of the landscape, the product and the process of its cultivation and preparation had changed from what I had grown used to seeing. New archives also cast light on the background of these things. I was sensible to the initial, fragile syntheses that came from such observations. Amongst the evidence in my notebooks are pages of reflections and inchoative ideas; a difference I perceived between ‘fossilised’ terroirs and ‘dynamic’ terroirs at one time; an idea I had of products of terroir as geographical *artefacts* produced from varied geographical *facts* at another. Reflections in the field are usually complemented by later reflections that come with writing (DeLyser, 2010), and in the subsequence of the two, observed social and spatial phenomena take shape and eventually a settled analytical substance (Faier, 2011). The work of synthesis, back in the academy, back at one’s desk, allows for trends, patterns and ideas to emerge from the range of materials recorded in the field, and these find expression in writing. I will admit that, upon my return in 2013, I was waylaid by the novel possibilities of the NVivo qualitative data analysis software. I fed my typed interview notes (as in [Figure 2.11](#)) into NVivo and it produced a list of keywords organised by frequency of appearance. I then used these as the

basis for a chapter, treating each frequently-cited keyword (such as *autonomy*, *technology* and *risk*) in turn, and relating them back to the interviews in which they appeared. This turned out (unsurprisingly) to be a rather directionless and odd chapter, with the various points made not amounting to a sustained focus or narrative progression, and the whole thing lacking a real purpose beyond recounting several different incidents. Whilst the NVivo software doubtless has many advantages, I realised after submitting and discussing that chapter with my supervisor that I was not getting the best out of it, and that it should not be used as a tool with which to *write* a chapter of a thesis, as opposed to initial analysis. So I returned to what I saw as the more old-fashioned synthetic method of reading back through my notes, marking up my notebooks with coloured labels signalling data relating to different product chains (and findings of more general use), and making notes on these. I then read through these concentrated notes, began to group them, draw connections between them, and further annotate them with ideas and recollections, and in this way more ‘organically’ created the substance of the chapters I went on to write.

Both historical geographical accounts that build upon archival work, and cultural geographical accounts that build upon ethnographic work, may be expressed in narrative form, in which the geographer relates local empirical findings to wider processes and their own theorisation (Naylor, 2008; Faier, 2011; Daniels and Lorimer, 2012). The researcher in either of those fields, having made close encounters with their evidence, and having thought about their findings over a period of time, must do the ‘tinkering and telling’ of the story in ways that are less strictly formatted than in more quantitative fields (Arreola, 2004: 143; DeLyser, 2010), and can present different forms of evidence in a kind of ‘bricolage’ at the point it is most relevant, and perhaps persuasive, within the story the researcher is telling (Arreola, 2004; Leyshon and Bull, 2011). So, in the present document, after the Prologue,

which I wanted to give an initial sense of the subject matter of the thesis, and these theoretical and methodological explanations, Chapter 3 seemed to me a necessary starting point to the exploration of terroir I undertake, in that I present some of my oldest archival materials, and make arguments about how local authenticity and continuity in terroir have been proposed, which I trace through to the present-day for the Burgundy case study, and revisit in later chapters. Chapter 4 features a deeper investigation of the logic and the history of those propositions so, although drawing upon different archival materials and more than just one case study, it allows a broader argument about terroir's epistemology to be made. In Chapter 5 I begin to use evidence from interviews and participant observation to examine how claims are made for terroir, but I also recount a particular moment of fieldwork in the Alps with reflections on what I learnt in the archive in that region. This hybrid chapter was originally two separate chapters, wherein the historical and present-day materials were treated separately for the most part. But I recombined them, as mentioned earlier, not only because I carried the findings of my work in the archive in my head when I was undertaking that fieldwork, and they prompted questions and discussions on the day, but also because doing so in the writing of the chapter allowed the connections of past and present in terroir, so explicit in the formula 'local, loyal and constant' and all the mobilisation that undergoes, to be examined in a critical, perhaps even innovative way. Then in Chapter 6, I assembled findings from interviews and participant observation to pursue the question of whether organic and biodynamic methods can facilitate the expression of terroir, and to more broadly analyse the epistemological predicates of that question; and finally in Chapter 7 I used those findings which I had grouped and noted as relevant to the governance, the day-to-day management and problems of products of terroir, including sections on organic and biodynamic production, and I related them to both debates that took place in the field and those which have taken place in the two years since I returned from the field, as reported in the popular media.

As indicated by the similar number of interviews carried out in the three different product chains and as mentioned earlier, I intended at the start of the project to dedicate broadly similar amounts of time to wine production, walnut production and Reblochon cheese production. As I progressed through the fieldwork, however, and when I grouped matters together in my notes and wrote chapters that addressed certain themes, issues emerged that seemed to be most pressing in the wine and Reblochon production chains. An example of this is the extent of official AOP areas, which were actively problematized by several of my respondents in Burgundy and Savoy, but were not disputed by those I interviewed in the Isère valley. Talking about this issue in this thesis is important because it calls into question the formal and politically regulated ‘locality’ of local, loyal and constant claims in products of terroir, and in terms of the narrative I have woven, it presages my use of theory regarding cartographic claims in Chapters 3 and 4 and *passim*. Yet on that, and other issues, the voices of people in the walnut production chain are not represented as those in the wine and Reblochon chains are. Thus I would advise the reader that in this thesis, perspectives on terroir from walnut producers are not developed as substantially as those from producers of wine and Reblochon cheese; and, in its turn, Reblochon cheese does not get as much attention throughout the thesis as wine does.

2.8. Conclusion

- *Thanks again Mr B. I’ve got plenty to write up with these notes.*
- *OK good. Come on, let’s go for a drink.*

The year I spent in France, from August 2012 to August 2013, was a time of learning and doing. I did very little of the convergent work of synthesising findings into chapters, and very

much of the divergent work of asking questions and taking notes. My ethnographic and archival methods were ‘starting points’ for research (Harris, 1991), which I used flexibly and whose execution changed as I learnt new things and encountered different situations. I have used an iterative combination of participant observation and interviews, discourse analysis, and archival research to understand the perceptions, practices, knowledges, customs and traditions at work in the operation of terroir. I say iterative because participants would teach me things that had a significant bearing on how I approached the next interview or the next region. And there was iteration also in the fact of combining those methods and their collective contribution to the narrative of my chapters. My note-taking was, as Berger (1988: 7) put it in his ethnographic account of rural life in the Alps, ‘both a link and a barrier’; providing a pretext to enter a foreign field, but remaining as a marker of my difference from the farmers and their workers. Participants formed their own knowledge of me and my intentions, and I occasionally offered information to them that may have been of interest. Some of my labour profited them; all of their insights profited me. Bit by bit I improved the efficiency of my methods by learning how to better ask questions and what kind of archival materials would yield more germane information. And I learned a lot just by virtue of being there. As well as carrying out the methods of cultural and historical geography, my time in the field was ultimately the context for gathering stories, developing perspectives and assessing the nature of what I have called France’s ‘geographical culture’ and the discursive ecology of the concept I investigate in this thesis. I circulated among situations where terroir was talked about; I spent days at agricultural fairs, on farms, at markets, at conferences, and in general roaming around the country. Often I would get chatting to people on farms without pushing for further interaction in terms that could be captured in my thesis ([Figure 2.16](#), for example). I shopped in supermarkets, frequented libraries, occasionally ate in restaurants, often ate with my hosts, travelled on trains, hiked in the country, drove a lot, took pictures,

made friends, wrote home, froze in winter and sweated in the summer. I moved constantly around eastern France and traversed the river Rhône about thirty times. Whilst in this chapter I have detailed the methods I used, it is incumbent upon me to finally make the point that fieldwork is also real life. It is easy to provide an abridged account of one's time in the field focussing only on the actions that may be classed as methods. But that would be to ignore the vernacular education in a culture, in a landscape and in a time that living, simply living, affords.



Figure 2.16: Non-participant observation.
Source: Author.

* * *

Chapter 3: The Evolution of Terroir

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I want to argue that the basis for today's public and legal recognition of terroir is to be found in historical geography. The evidence I will use for this argument consists primarily of the archival materials I consulted whilst on fieldwork in France in 2012 and 2013. The argument consists of three related propositions. My first proposition is that terroirs are territories in wider relation. They are agricultural territories whose production is not solely destined for consumption within that territory, but which rely on mediated entry to the outside world. The second proposition is that terroirs are mobilised in a specifically territorial logic of quality production. The third proposition is that the perceived existence of quality in particular territories is formalised, over time, through both cartographic and cursive language; and that these formal expressions of terroir build upon each other in the rhetorical transmission of a notion of terroir that is 'local, loyal and constant'.

3.2. Terroir's Geographical Paradox

In 1395, Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, conscious of the quality of his wine-growing territories, declared that the *Gamay* grape variety was unworthy of them. Those who had taken to growing vines of this variety around Dijon, Beaune and Chalon, instead of the more common *Pinot noir* and *Chardonnay* varieties, were ordered to dig them up within a month or

else face a fine. Being issued on the 6th of August, this decree¹ would have seen growers tearing up vines that were already laden with grapes. But it is clear that Philip wanted no further harvests from a grape variety whose supposed inferiority could damage the reputation of wine from his duchy. Later, in 1441, with France exhausted by the Hundred Years War with England, his grandson Philip the Good also turned his attention to a question of viticultural importance. Through letters patent now visible, if not easily legible, in the archives of Dijon,² he ordered that some of the region's vineyards cease to be replanted. As an 18th century archivist explains from his reading of this late medieval text:

‘The Mayor and aldermen of Dijon, having shown him [the Duke] that before the war and all of its destruction there were vines located “on good slopes, which produced excellent wine”, but that there are others situated in poor areas such as Les Grand et Petit Poussot, Le Pendant de Bray, Tulley, Gratedos, Grand Champ...which produce poor wines and take up time that could be better spent making good ones...

From which it follows that 1) the foreign merchants who used to buy wine at Dijon have been disappointed in the sense that we sold them poor wines in the guise of good ones; and having got them back home and found them to be defective in colour, quality and flavour, they have now abandoned the Dijon market; and 2) the wine, finding no more buyers, now sells at a derisory price; and 3) the wine producers have increased the cost of their labour and neglect the care of quality vines for the poor ones...³

¹ *Déclaration de Philippe Le Hardi, Duc de Bourgogne, 6 Août 1395*. Dossier N° 7, Carton 94, Archives Municipales de Beaune.

² *Ordonnance de Philippe Le Bon, Duc de Bourgogne, 12 Mai 1441*. Trésor des Chartes, Liasse 17, Cote 5, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

³ Tr : ‘[L]es Maire et échevins de Dijon lui ayant exposé qu’avant les guerres et les mortalités ils avaient vignes situées « en bonnes côtes qui rapportaient vin d’une bonne et grande excellence » mais qu’il en a d’autres situées en chétifs lieux comme Les Grand et Petit Poussot, Le Pendant de Bray, Tulley, Gratedos, Grand Champ...Lesquelles produisent de chétifs vins et occupent tout le monde au détriment des bonnes...

D’où il s’ensuit 1^o que les marchands étrangers qui jadis achetaient des vins à Dijon ayant été déçus en ce sens que seulement on leur vendait de ces chétifs vins pour des bons et que quand ils les avaient amené chez eux les trouvaient défectueux en couleur bonté et saveur ont abandonné le marché de la ville. 2^o que le vin ne trouvant plus d’acheteurs se vend à vil prix. 3^o que les vigneron haussent le prix de leurs journées et délaissent la culture des bonnes vignes pour les chétifs...’

And later again, in 1486, a report ([Figure 3.1](#)) recounted how the Mayor of Dijon and his advisors visited a series of vineyards and agreed that, ‘for the good of the town we should dig up those vines, being located on land where wheat could grow abundantly, and more cheaply.’⁴ Various of the townspeople and wine producers argued that the territories on which the vines grew – territories painstakingly delimited in longhand in the report – were more apt for wheat production; that the vines in question had been planted only some thirty years ago, and that they were now in a ruinous state. Given that wine was being produced successfully elsewhere around Dijon, as attested to by documents detailing the wine trade in the city⁵, we can assume that the amount of time invested in cultivating these partly abandoned vines would have been better spent in those vineyards where the quality of the wine produced, and its eventual market value, *did* permit ongoing cultivation.

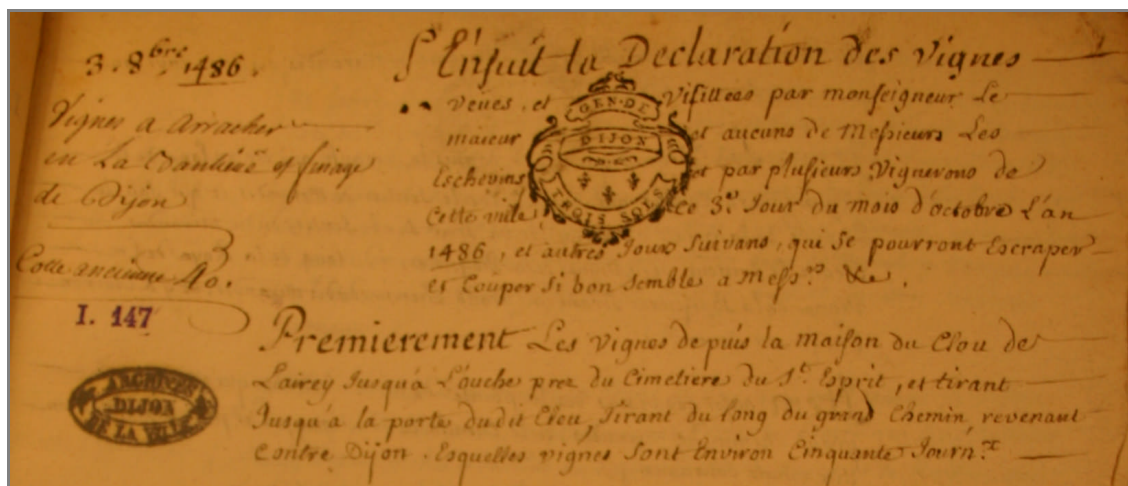


Figure 3.1: Extract of report of visit to vineyards to be turfed up, 3 October 1486 (Procès-verbal de visite de vignes à arracher, 3 octobre 1486) [Begins : ‘S’Ensuit la Declaration des vignes veues et visitees...’]. Source: Dossier I 147, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

⁴ Tr : ‘pour le bien et profit de ladite ville il convenait de couper et arracher lesdites vignes, étant situées dans un terrain, où le bled croitrait abondamment, et à moins de frais.’

⁵ See Dossier I 149, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

Here, then, in the space of 100 years we have a wine-growing region limiting the nature and extent of its vineyards in the interests of quality. Contemporaneous documents tell us that in years of poor harvests and diminished quality the price reached for wine on the market was reduced.⁶ But the market was a place in which actors from outwith the region were involved in economic exchange and in which wines *became* economic. As we saw in Philip the Good's letters patent, Dijon had a wine market that attracted buyers from overseas; merchants and later *négociants* that Braudel (1988a) identifies as key mediators in nascent processes of capitalist exchange. Given a choice of wines (at this time, wine was also being produced in many other areas of France; de Planhol, 1994), foreign buyers were prepared to abandon a particular market if they found the wines it sold to be lacking, as the Duke put it, in 'couleur bonté et saveur'. Thus the pressure was on to produce wines of a quality that would please external consumers, and the aptitude of grape-growing territories was entangled with the exigencies of an exporting regional economy.

I might now elaborate my proposition that *terroir* refers to a territory in wider relation. I feel that the key relationship is with external actors; those who have the means to obtain, the power to valorise, and the desire to consume the product that comes from a particular territory. In medieval France, this exchange didn't always happen in the context of a modern capitalist market, but it did always exceed the classical model of peasant agriculture, viz. the constant struggle of the 'subsistence ethic' (Scott, 1976: 2; Clout, 1972; Weber, 1976). The Clos de Vougeot ([Figure 3.2](#)), for instance, now Burgundy's largest single vineyard whose

⁶ In the vineyards of Dijon in 1484, for instance, there was a 'very abundant' harvest, and in the following year the harvest looked good to begin with, but then; 'il y avait eû une Eclipse, depuis laquelle le tems fut tellement dérangé par le froid, les pluies continuelles et gelées que les fruits sur la terre n'avaient pus meuroir comme il faut, et les vendanges qui avaient une belle apparence avaient été très mauvaises.' Whether or not a solar eclipse can be fairly blamed, the wine of 1485 turned out to be poor, and it sold cheaply. '*Concernant Les Bans de Vendanges*', 1454-1490. Dossier I 148, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

wines now enjoy the highest protected status of *grand cru*, was home, from the 12th century until the French revolution, to a chapter of Cistercian monks, who spent time trying to perfect their viticulture and experimenting with the grape-growing aptitude of different plots of land (which they referred to as '*climats*').



Figure 3.2: The Château of the Clos de Vougeot, côte de Nuits, France (undated: 20th century). Source : Dossier 5Fi 29 AMB, Archives Municipales de Beaune.

Morelot tells us that the monks produced three different *cuvées*, or batches of wine;

‘That batch made from the grapes from the upper part was not sold; it was so exquisite that the Prior reserved it for royalty, princes and different ministers of the Roman Catholic powers.’⁷

⁷ Tr: ‘Celle provenant des raisins de la partie supérieure ne se vendait pas ; elle était réservée, tant elle était exquise, par l’abbé, pour être offerte en présent aux têtes couronnées, aux princes et aux différents ministres des états catholiques.’ Morelot D 1831 *La Vigne et le Vin en Côte d’Or (Statistique de la Vigne dans le Département de la Côte d’Or)*. Lagier, Dijon/Huzard, Paris. Cote FL 111 2143 Bis, Bibliothèque Monge, Beaune.

Here, the most powerful external actors were not those who would use money to purchase the wine. They were those to whom the best wine would be offered in tribute; an exchange taking place in an economy more symbolic than capitalist (after Bourdieu, 1977; 1991). However;

‘That batch made from the middle part being almost the same level of quality as the first batch, was sold – and very expensively. Finally, the third batch was made with grapes from the lower part; even though it was not quite as good as the previous two, it was still very good quality, and sold well.’⁸

Thus the monks could also generate a significant income. In either case, the calibration of territory and quality took place with a view to consumption by external actors; experimentation with grape-growing territories was used ‘for the elicitation of economic properties’ in the resulting wine, whether symbolic or pecuniary (Muniesa, *et al*, 2007: 10). In other words, investment and imperative drove attention to quality in the work and output of the vineyard, and the formal organisation of grape-growing territories (cf. Gottmann, 1974). Later we will see that the territorial classification of the Clos de Vougeot first developed by the Cistercian monks was formalised through cartography; but it is enough to say here that even once it had left their hands in the late 18th century, the production of Vougeot retained external popularity and an elevated position in later systems of classification (cf. Whalen, 2010); a reputation for quality had been established.

Despite originating in a very carefully delimited piece of land, such reputation for quality is, I would maintain, dependent upon its recognition by actors from without. Indeed, it requires *ongoing* processes of mediation with the outside world. The French geographers Roger Dion

⁸ Morelot, *op.cit.*

Tr : ‘Celle de la partie moyenne étant presque égale en qualité à la première, aussi [ainsi ?] se vendait – elle est très chère. Enfin, la troisième cuvée se ferait avec les raisins de la partie inférieure ; quoiqu’elle ne valût pas les deux premières, elle était cependant très bonne et se vendait bien.’

(1959), and later Xavier de Planhol (1994),⁹ argued that the wines of Bordeaux, now so famous and so valuable, owed their success to seaborne trade with England from the 13th century onwards (cf. Pitte, 2010). In the centuries that followed, Bordeaux wines continued to enjoy the privilege of being sold to the English before Christmas,¹⁰ something prohibited to the other wines produced elsewhere in the region. De Planhol (1994: 229) argues:

‘The privilege enjoyed by Bordeaux had considerable geographical effects, for it wiped out all the quality production beyond the area of the town’s direct influence...and at the same time ensured the development of the great Bordeaux vineyards, despite a damp, foggy climate which is extremely unfavourable to vines, making a veritable geographical paradox of the area.’

Moreover, Planhol sees no special climatic benefits in the côte d’Or in Burgundy as a wine-growing region; again arguing that it was only through the construction of a reputation for quality through communication with first the Papal court at Avignon and the towns along the Rhône, and then the large markets of Paris and other northern European cities, that ‘these exposed vineyards of northern France could hope to survive.’ (*Ibid*, 231; cf. Pitiot and Servant, 2014) In both cases, in Bordeaux and Burgundy, what has been important in the development of the wine-growing terroirs is the relationships with external actors. We know that the Bordeaux system of quality classification through a set of *crus* (*premier cru*, *second cru*, etc), was designed under the aegis of Napoleon III for the benefit of international visitors to the *Exposition Universelle* of Paris in 1855 (Markham, 1998; Pitte, 2005). Furthermore, Schirmer (2012) has argued that we may assess Bordeaux as a wine region with ‘global connections’, even as a ‘*vignoble globalisé*,’ given the investments and ideas that now return to the region from the other places around the world which it is connected to, and the influence of its wine style on production elsewhere (Nossiter, 2004). And most recently, in

⁹ And, in brief, Gaston Roupnel (1932: 249-50).

¹⁰ Still the period in which most wine, and indeed walnut, sales are made.

advance of the 2014 edition of the famous charity auction of wine at the *Hospices de Beaune* in Burgundy, a spokesman for Christie's announced they were keen to 'sustain the globalisation of wine sales'.¹¹ It is the forging of such connections with actors at a distance (and at a global distance) that I will argue separates the notion of *terroir* from the notion of mere *territory*.

3.3. Terroir's Relational Achievements

Muniesa *et al* (2007: 5) have argued that the 'qualities of goods and services are the output of complex operations of qualification, of framing and reframing, of attachment and detachment', and this is essentially how such goods and services become economic, how they enter economic relationships (O'Neill and Whatmore, 2000; Barrey, 2007; Kama, 2014; cf. Bourdieu, 2005). Murdoch *et al* (2000) have also argued that many successful food products from specific areas undergo simultaneous processes of embedding and disembedding from their territories of origin. These are operations by which a product like wine attains a particular economic constituency through reference to its geographic origin but also by virtue of escaping it. I want to bring together several under-studied 19th- and early-20th-century archival sources to witness specific negotiations, actions and controversies through which wines from particular places were related, discursively, materially and commercially, to other places in which they were assessed, valued and consumed.

If Bordeaux wines received the limelight at the 1855 *Exposition Universelle*, Burgundy received more attention in the following years. First a *Concours Régional Agricole* was held

¹¹ Tr: 'Christie's essaie de pérenniser la mondialisation de la vente'. Reported in *Le Soir* (2014)

in Dijon in 1856, and then an *Exposition Internationale* in the same city in 1858. In both of these events, the region's wine-growing terroirs were transmitted in various ways out to the wider world. On the 13th of April 1856, a quorum of wine growers from the côte d'Or met with the Mayor of Dijon and persuaded him to organise a wine exhibition that would coincide with the *Concours Régional Agricole* taking place the following month. It is very interesting to note that Burgundy's terroirs had not yet been officially classified according to quality, as was done for Bordeaux the previous year, and perhaps a little anxiety prevailed amongst the growers at the meeting in Dijon in that:

‘It is decided that there will not be a judging panel, no prizes are to be awarded, no classification is to take place.’¹²

There was a desire, however, that the exhibition, and the array of wines within it, should be widely communicated:

‘...that all the efforts of the commission will be spent to advertise the wine exhibition, especially in light of the wines that will be provided by the producers...’¹³

And, instead of an *a priori* classification, it was decided that the recognition of quality should be facilitated by explicit reference to the grower, territory and year of harvest of each wine:

‘It is suggested that the producers be allowed to mark on the bottles they provide their name, the vineyard of origin, and the year...’¹⁴

¹² Tr: ‘Il est décidé qu’il ne sera pas établi de jury apprécateur, aucune récompense ne devant être accordée, aucune classification ne pouvant avoir lieu.’

¹³ Tr: ‘...que tous les efforts de la Commission tendront à obtenir une grande publicité relative à l’exposition de ces vins, et notamment au rapport sur l’ensemble des produits envoyés par les propriétaires...’

¹⁴ Tr: ‘La proposition est faite d’autoriser les propriétaires à inscrire sur les bouteilles qu’ils fourniront, leur nom, le climat et l’année...’

It was settled that the forum in which the tasting, and inevitable judgment, would take place would be a banquet, presided over by the Mayor, to which the growers would send their wine, and at which they could be present to communicate with those consuming them.

There followed a kind of general mobilisation. Wine growers from all over the region began sending wine to Dijon, and invitations were sent out across the country, and overseas, for influential actors who could come to the banquet and communicate what they had found. The press was a particular target, and the railway a favoured conduit. In a letter dated May 7th, 1856, the Director of the *Compagnie des Chemins de Fer de Paris à Lyon* explained that in response to the request made by the Mayor of Dijon, he would allow the free passage of journalists from Paris down to the event, providing he received written authorisation from their respective editors.¹⁵ Elsewhere in the archive, many ‘*laisser-passer*’ and despatch notes are present which respectively allowed and attested to bottles of wine being sent on the rails to the event at Dijon.¹⁶ Indeed, on the 9th of May, the Mayor of Merceuil, a small village on the edge of the côte d’Or, wrote to his counterpart at Dijon:

‘Dear Mayor, I delivered today a five-bottle case of Pouilly-Fuissé at the train station, to be used at the wine exhibition of the Concours Regional...’¹⁷

More and more bottles came in from Chassagne, from Vougeot, from all over the region. Charles Viénot, a wine producer at Prémieux, wrote to the Mayor on headed paper decorated with the medals that his product had won the previous year at the Paris Expo. He lists each of

¹⁵ Dossier 3F 50, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

¹⁶ Dossier 3F 50, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

¹⁷ ‘Monsieur le Maire, J’ai déposé aujourd’hui à la gare du chemin de fer une caisse contenant cinq bouteilles de vin blanc Pouilly-Fuissé que je destine à l’exposition du concours régional...’. Dossier 3F 50, Archives Municipales de Dijon. These bottles do indeed appear on the list of wines consumed at the banquet.

the wines he is sending, amounting to ‘10 bottles of these renowned and rare products.’¹⁸ In the absence of a formal classification, unlike Bordeaux, this grower was unafraid to display the value of the medals he had won at the last national judgment. Indeed, in the absence of classification, quality became a controversy, something to be discussed and debated; and as it turned out, something to be considered in terms of both the specific vineyards or ‘*climats*’ the wines came from, *and* the ability of those wines to travel.

The events and judgments of Paris were not far from anyone’s memory. In the report that followed,¹⁹ the banquet claimed that its purpose, apart from promoting the various wines of the region, was to test ‘the glorious accolade of ‘world’s best wines’ which was recently given to them by the Commission at the *Exposition Universelle*’²⁰. In this there was a notion, whether inflated or not, of quality; but the scale at which it was expressed – the scale of *le monde*, the world – was one that inherently required the expedition of Burgundy’s wines beyond its frontiers. So, while the particular *climat* and year of origin of each wine was noted down for the purposes of comparison and judgment ([Figure 3.3](#)), it was also noted that:

‘A question of great interest was to find out whether, as some people think, wines from the côte d’Or are only fit to be sent to our neighbouring countries; that they are incapable of enduring long voyages and of standing up to the climates of distant regions.’²¹

¹⁸ Tr : ‘10 bouteilles de ces renommés et rares produits.’ *Letter from Charles Viénot, Propriétaire à Premeaux, to the Mayor of Dijon, 5 Mai 1856*. Dossier 3F 50, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

¹⁹ *Banquet du 15 Mai 1856: Rapport de la Commission de Dégustation des Vins*. Dossier 3F 50, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

²⁰ Tr: ‘la qualification si glorieuse de premiers vins du monde qui leur a été donnée naguère par la Commission de l’Exposition Universelle’. *Banquet du 15 Mai 1856*, op.cit.

²¹ Tr: ‘Une question d’un intérêt capital était de savoir si l’exportation des vins de la Côte d’Or devait se borner, comme le prétendent quelques personnes aux pays les plus voisins des lieux de provenance; s’ils sont incapables de supporter de longs voyages & d’affronter les climats des latitudes lointaines.’ *Banquet du 15 Mai 1856*, op.cit.

Vins offerts au banquet du 15 Mai.

	<u>Exposants.</u>	<u>Domiciles.</u>	<u>Noms Des Climats.</u>	<u>Années.</u>
1.	André (Charles) —	Nuits —	Nuits —	1848-1849
2.	Un Anonyme —	" —	Couchy —	1842.
3.	Arvisenet (D ^r) —	Champgille —	Champgille —	1825-1846.
4.	Bahuz (D ^r) —	Nuits —	Les Echignaux —	1822-1842
5.	Barat —	Marsannay-la-Côte —	Marsannay —	1854.
6.	Bestillon —	Plombières-lès-Dijon —	Plombières —	1846-1849-1854
7.	Beurband (D ^r) —	Chassagne —	Château-Montchaet —	1818-1822-1832
	Id. —	Id. —	Clos D. la Vallée —	1824-1842-1846
	Id. —	Id. —	Clos Saint-Jean —	1806-1818-1825
				1842.
				1832-1846.
8.	Bizet —	Moray —	Clos D. la Roche —	1846-1848-1849
9.	Bizonard —	Dijon —	Violettes —	1846-1849-1854
10.	Bironard —	Marsannay-la-Côte —	Marsannay —	1846-1854-1855

Figure 3.3: Extract of the list of wines presented to the banquet at the *Concours Régional Agricole*, Dijon, 15th May 1856. Source: Dossier 3F 50, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

The attempt to resolve this question centred on comparing wines which had rested in the caves of Burgundy with those from the same bin that had travelled halfway round the world. Three wines were presented: a Pommard that had travelled to Calcutta; a Volnay that went to Bahia (Brazil); and a Romanée-Conti that had made an arduous overland passage to Khiakhta on the Russian/Mongolian border. In the report it is recounted that the banqueters assembled found ‘no difference’ in the ‘essential quality’ of those wines which had travelled so far, when compared with their stationary counterparts. The only appreciable change was a slight loss of colour, as might occur in an aged wine. In this, it was felt that the global reputation of the wines of the côte d’Or, built upon their successful transport out of the territory, was justified. After describing the rough transit through desert and tundra, through blistering heat and falling snow, that the third wine had experienced, and survived with such integrity, it was asserted:

‘What other argument could establish as clearly that the wines of the côte d’Or are apt to undergo long voyages and to withstand the most intemperate climates without changing?’²²

But this convenient appraisal is not all that it seems. I mentioned that the *Concours*, and the banquet, was purposely opened to members of the national and international press. A reporter from London’s *Daily News* (later *News Chronicle* and then the *Daily Mail*) took up his invitation and provided the newspaper with a lengthy and somewhat sardonic report.²³ His findings on the fitness to travel of the wines tell a rather different story:

‘The first specimen was a Pommard of 1842, belonging to M. F. Coste, which had been to Calcutta and back. The difference between this wine and that of the same year which had remained at home was very great indeed. The Calcutta wine was much paler, less full flavoured, and in short appeared fully ten years older than the other. In my opinion it was not so good; and this, although no formal vote was taken on that issue, was evidently the opinion of the great majority of the meeting.’²⁴

Space stood in for time; travel could prematurely age the wine, potentially at the expense of quality. The consequences of reporting this finding weighed on the assembly, however:

‘A gentleman proposed to vote that the wine which had been to Calcutta was better than that which had remained in the proprietor’s cellars. This proposition was received with loud cries of “No, no,” and “We come here to speak the truth.” As the chairman was about to put the question, the mover said with great excitement, “You are about to vote that Burgundy wines will not travel.” A desultory and somewhat excited conversation followed, during which the old Marquis de Cordoue exclaimed, “I think this wine has been playing *à qui perd gagne*,” meaning that, in his opinion, the Calcutta wine had gained in certain qualities what it had lost in others. Ultimately it was agreed that the question should not be put in the original form, and the company was asked whether they found the Pommard that had come from Calcutta “a good

²² Tr: ‘Quel autre argument pourrait établir d’une manière plus péremptoire que les vins de la Côte d’Or sont apte à supporter sans s’altérer les plus longs voyages comme à affronter les climats les plus opposés?’ *Banquet du 15 Mai 1856*, op.cit.

²³ Anonymous 1856 *Great Wine Congress of Burgundy: By Our Special Reporter*. *Daily News* (London), Monday May 19th, 1856, Issue 3121.

²⁴ Anonymous, op.cit.

and excellent wine,” a question which they answered unanimously and conscientiously in the affirmative.’²⁵

The delegates were conscious of the need to be honest in their judgments, but also acutely aware of the need not to besmirch the reputation of the Burgundy wine they were consuming. Failure in the wine’s essential properties was emphatically not formalised with a vote; the language recorded was very carefully considered. In this lively consideration of the products of terroir that have travelled, we cannot escape the fact that their reputation was built at the interface with the wider world. To have voted, as was conveyed with great excitement, that ‘Burgundy wines will not travel,’ would have been to reverse the basic project of the *Concours*: to promote the terroirs of the region to a wide and international audience.²⁶ The imagined value of this object was not lost on our British reporter, who remarked that the holding of a banquet to which the foreign press was invited had echoes of ‘following out the traditional policy of the Dukes of Burgundy in the old warlike times, which was, by taking every opportunity to prove to the foreigner the excellence of Burgundian wines, to open new markets for the staple commodity of the duchy.’²⁷

Throughout both reports, the comparisons with wines from elsewhere betoken international frames of reference. ‘An interesting fact worth noting,’ the official report asserts, on the topic of the white wines of the region, ‘is that these wines, which come from the same grape varieties as Madeira wines, have a lot in common with the latter: indeed, wine connoisseurs

²⁵ Anonymous, op.cit.

²⁶ On the other hand, we find later in his report that the other two wines which had been exported and returned to France did not suffer as badly: the well-travelled Romanée Conti was inferior to its sedentary counterpart, though still ‘marvellously good’; whilst the Volnay was considered even better than the one which had stayed at home, in the sense that travel seemed to have sped up the ageing process, and in this case that had brought this particular wine to the peak of its maturity. The level of detail provided in this news report is still enlightening when compared to the brief treatment in the official report, however.

²⁷ Anonymous, op.cit.

put both kinds of wine to the same uses.’²⁸ Our reporter concurs : ‘The fifty-four year old Corton was of the colour of a fine Madeira, quite as bright, and very like Madeira in taste. Nobody but a connoisseur would have recognised it as a Burgundy, but it was still a magnificent wine.’ He also noted that the Clos Vougeot of 1826 (‘a moderate year’) was ‘found to be coloured with beeswing like port, and in perfect drinking order.’ Madeira and Port were, in the mid-19th century, imposing figures in the global wine trade. Though today the value of their production is, on average, nowhere near the value of the wines of the côte d’Or (cf. [Figure 0.1](#) in the Introduction); at the time, it appears these Portuguese wines – eminently transportable, like those of Bordeaux – would have served as a challenge to the reputation of the wines of Burgundy, which would remain without an official classification for another five years.²⁹ When the wines of the Cote d’Or left their territory of production, they entered a world of exchange, and, as we have seen from the example of the banqueters, their essential qualities had to be negotiated within it.

This question of global competition became one of national importance. As one century turned into another, France held further *Expositions Universelles* in Paris in 1889 and 1900, and sent delegations to World’s Fairs and exhibitions in St Louis, Missouri (1904); Liège (1905); Milan (1906) and Buenos Aires (1910). Each was considered a valuable opportunity to communicate the character of French wines and to contribute in this way to the reputation of the terroirs that lay at their foundation. World’s Fairs were sites of exchange in which national strategies, such as the marketing of terroir, could be performed, and in France they

²⁸ Tr: ‘Un fait curieux et utile à indiquer... c’est que ces vins provenant des mêmes plants que les vins de Madère présentent avec ces derniers une analogie sensible: aussi les amateurs les appliquent-ils indifféremment aux mêmes usages.’

²⁹ When this was achieved in 1861, by the *Comite d’Agriculture* at Beaune, it was with attention drawn to its use at an upcoming *Exposition Universelle*.

attracted considerable political support. In a letter sent from the Minister for Agriculture to the departmental Prefects,³⁰ for instance, regional councils (*conseils généraux*) were encouraged to give money (*'crédits'*) to farmers and others in the food and drink business to help them make the journey to St Louis and exhibit their wares. Given that many of the visitors in the USA were not able to come to the Paris expo in 1900, the Minister wrote;

'I thought there is a real opportunity for our growers, our wine producers, our flower-growers, our makers of agricultural machinery to present samples of their work to a large public which has not yet had the chance to appreciate their superior quality.'³¹

This was especially pressing given the growth of wine production in the new world:

'If we take a look at what is going on overseas, we will see, according to the intelligence we receive from our consular staff, that the cultivation of grapevines is spreading further and further every day. As such, there are at present a large number of vineyards in Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, Australia...'³²

Vineyards which would, in time, represent:

'Competition to old Europe, which had until now been the sole supplier of wine on the world market.'³³

³⁰ Letter from the Ministre de l'Agriculture to the Préfet of the Saône-et-Loire, 14 August 1903. Dossier 3139 (*Expositions Internationales*), Archives Départementales de la Saône-et-Loire, Mâcon.

³¹ Tr: '[J]'ai pensé qu'il y aurait un intérêt réel pour nos éleveurs, nos viticulteurs, nos horticulteurs, nos constructeurs de machines agricoles à présenter des spécimens de leur production au nombreux public qui n'a pas encore été à même d'apprécier leur supériorité.' Tisserand E 1889, *Rapport sur les Travaux Administratifs entrepris contre le Phylloxera (Extrait du Bulletin du Ministère de l'Agriculture) 'A la Veille de l'Exposition Universelle'*. P.8. Dossier 3F 38, Archives Municipales de Romans-sur-Isère.

³² Tr : 'Si nous jetons un coup d'oeil sur ce qui se passe à l'étranger, nous voyons, d'après les renseignements que nous adressent régulièrement les agents consulaires, que la culture de la vigne tend à prendre une extension de jour en jour plus grande. C'est ainsi qu'au Chili, dans l'Uruguay, dans la République Argentine, en Australie, un grand nombre de vignobles sont, quant à présent, constitués...' Tisserand, op.cit.

³³ Tr: '...[de la] concurrence à la vieille Europe, qui jusqu'à présent approvisionnait seule le marché du monde.' Tisserand, *Ibid*.

Indeed, by the 1930s, a decade where France was enshrining its terroirs in the legal apparatus of geographical appellations, the wine-growing union of the Côte Dijonnaise expressed its anxiety that :

‘In England, our wines cannot compete with the wines from Australia and the Cape...’³⁴

And that :

‘The American market has not given our wines the place they deserve.’³⁵

The competition of the new world to France’s wine production is a matter of ongoing concern, and will be discussed in Chapter 7. But to finish this discussion of the importance of negotiating external connections in the recognition of terroir, I want to return to the site of production, and the wine producers’ union of the village of Meursault. Here in 1889, when the crisis of phylloxera³⁶ had ravaged most of Burgundy’s vineyards;

‘A certain number of wine producers, with the idea that an association of practitioners interested in reforming the vineyard with new vines would be a great help to the region, have come together, with this aim, to form a union.’³⁷

³⁴ Tr : ‘En Angleterre, nos vins ne peuvent pas lutter contre la concurrence des vins d’Australie et du Cap...’ *Bulletin du Syndicat Viticole de la Côte Dijonnaise*, March 1934. Dossier 3F 16, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

³⁵ Tr : ‘...le marché Americain n’a pas fait à nos vins la place qu’ils méritaient.’ *Bulletin du Syndicat Viticole*, Ibid.

³⁶ Phylloxera was a disease of grapevines caused by infestations of the insect *Daktulosphaira vitifoliae*. It spread throughout Europe from the 1860s and by the 1890s had destroyed most of the continent’s grapevines. The most common means of redress was to replace affected vines with new ones which had been grafted onto resistant American rootstocks. See Garrier (1989); Campbell (2004).

³⁷ Tr: ‘Un certain nombre de vigneron, pensant qu’une association de praticiens ayant intérêt a la reconstitution du vignoble, par les nouveaux cépages, serait d’un grand secours pour la région, ont décidé, dans ce but, de se former en syndicat.’ *Syndicat Viticole de Meursault, Procès-Verbal*, 3 Fevrier 1893. Dossier 3F 1, Archives Municipales de Meursault.

With over 100 members, the union spent time and money researching and planting new grapevines to replace those they had lost to phylloxera. Four years later, their work was beginning to bear fruit, and this led thoughts to the next step: establishing a market for the sampling and sale of the wines of the village and its surrounding region. Describing the village as having put itself ‘at the head of the reformation of the vineyard through new vines’³⁸, foreseeing ‘an abundance of wine very soon’³⁹ and wanting to ‘facilitate trade between the wine producer and the merchant’⁴⁰, the union voted in its general assembly of January 8th, 1893, to establish a wine market, to be held quarterly in Meursault’s town hall. The first of its kind was to take place the day after the famous wine auction at the Hospices de Beaune. This move shows optimism on the part of the wine producers, and to some degree solidarity with their counterparts elsewhere on the côte (their wines being invited to participate); but I feel it also shows an anxiety to return to the market after the destructive work of phylloxera. Above all, what I see here is a need to restart the terroir, not just in the vineyards themselves, but in the market too. The links with the outside world needed to be re-forged to allow the carefully defined vineyards to be valorised once more and the wine to become economic for its producers. The image of Meursault’s terroir needed to be revived along with its withered vines; both needed to *become* economic again. In this case, the first step in this process was to invite wine merchants to the village to sample the products and attempt to convince them as to the *continuation* of the reputation that had been established before phylloxera hit, and to persuade them of the suitability of the wine to be once again sent far and wide.

³⁸ Tr: ‘à la tête de la reconstitution du vignoble par les nouveaux cépages’

³⁹ Tr: ‘une abundance de vin à une époque assez rapprochée’

⁴⁰ Tr: ‘faciliter les transactions entre le Propriétaire et le Négociant’

Thus, the ‘geographical paradox’ which de Planhol (1994: 229) identified in Bordeaux can, I feel, be understood in more general terms as a paradox of seeking foreign connections for terroirs which become locally ever more carefully defined; and whose value over time becomes cloven from that of the production which surrounds it. It is a paradox that rather troubles the question of transport, as we will now see, but it is one that renders sensible the *formalisation* of terroir, which will be discussed in the following section.

It would be relatively straightforward to argue that the success of Burgundy’s wines has been built upon their capacity to be transported. But this belies a division of economic opportunity that has long prevailed within the region’s vineyards. From the medieval period onwards, as well as the movement south to Avignon in the symbolic economy of religious society, Dion (1959) and de Planhol (1994) identify the growth of towns and cities in regions on the North Sea coast as driving the movement of wine from Burgundy *north* in the growing economy of capital. For both of these movements, shipment was viable thanks to inland waterways, and Burgundy enjoyed riverheads that connected it to Paris and points north; and to Lyons, Avignon and points south ([Figure 3.4](#)).⁴¹ The river Saône continued to play a key role in the sale and movement of wines from the Mâconnais: in the late 1920s, for instance, in the establishment of a wine co-operative for the region, it was noted that Mâcon would be the ideal location as it was a ‘port fluvial’.⁴² Once the co-operative opened its doors, it advertised its ‘Raccordement direct par FER et par EAU’ (capitals in original).⁴³ Indeed, today’s

⁴¹ De Planhol also identifies an early movement of wine from the region of Nevers, in the far west of Burgundy, along the Loire river and out west; and a later movement of wine from Arbois, on Burgundy’s eastern frontier, east to Geneva and eventually up into Flanders, then under the influence of the Duke of Burgundy. Finally, we may note that a canal was completed in 1832 to connect the Seine and Saône rivers.

⁴² Tr: a ‘river port’. *Letter from the Fédération des Caves Coopératives de Saône et Loire to Mr. Boulay, Engineer, 13 November 1929*. Dossier 2F 12, Archives Municipales de Mâcon.

⁴³ Tr: ‘direct connections by RAIL and RIVER’. *Letter from the Cave Coopérative Intercommunale de Mâcon to Mr. Boulay, Engineer, 31 July 1930*. Dossier 2F 12, Archives Municipales de Mâcon.

Archives Municipales in Mâcon, in which I consulted these documents, are built on the site of a former wine stockist from where wine was sent down the river (Metrot, 2012, pers. comm.). Yet, despite their greater ease of transport, the wines of the Mâconnais have never enjoyed the same degree of fame, or attracted as high a price, as their counterparts further north on the côte d'Or. As Lanexrie puts it:

‘The reputation of the wines of Mâcon is less ancient than that of Upper Burgundy [the côte d'Or]. Those latter wines were already famous in the 14th century. At that time, the wines of Mâcon and the Beaujolais were almost unknown.’⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Tr : ‘La réputation des vins de Mâcon est moins ancienne que celle des vins de Haute-Bourgogne [la Côte d'Or]. Ceux-ci étaient déjà célèbres au XIVe siècle. A cette date, les vins de Mâcon et du Beaujolais étaient encore presque inconnus.’ Lanexrie F 1924 *Les Vins de Mâcon et du Beaujolais. L'illustration Economique et Financière – Numéro Spécial : Saône et Loire (Supplément)*, 31 May 1924. Cote 302 BH 199, Archives Municipales de Mâcon.

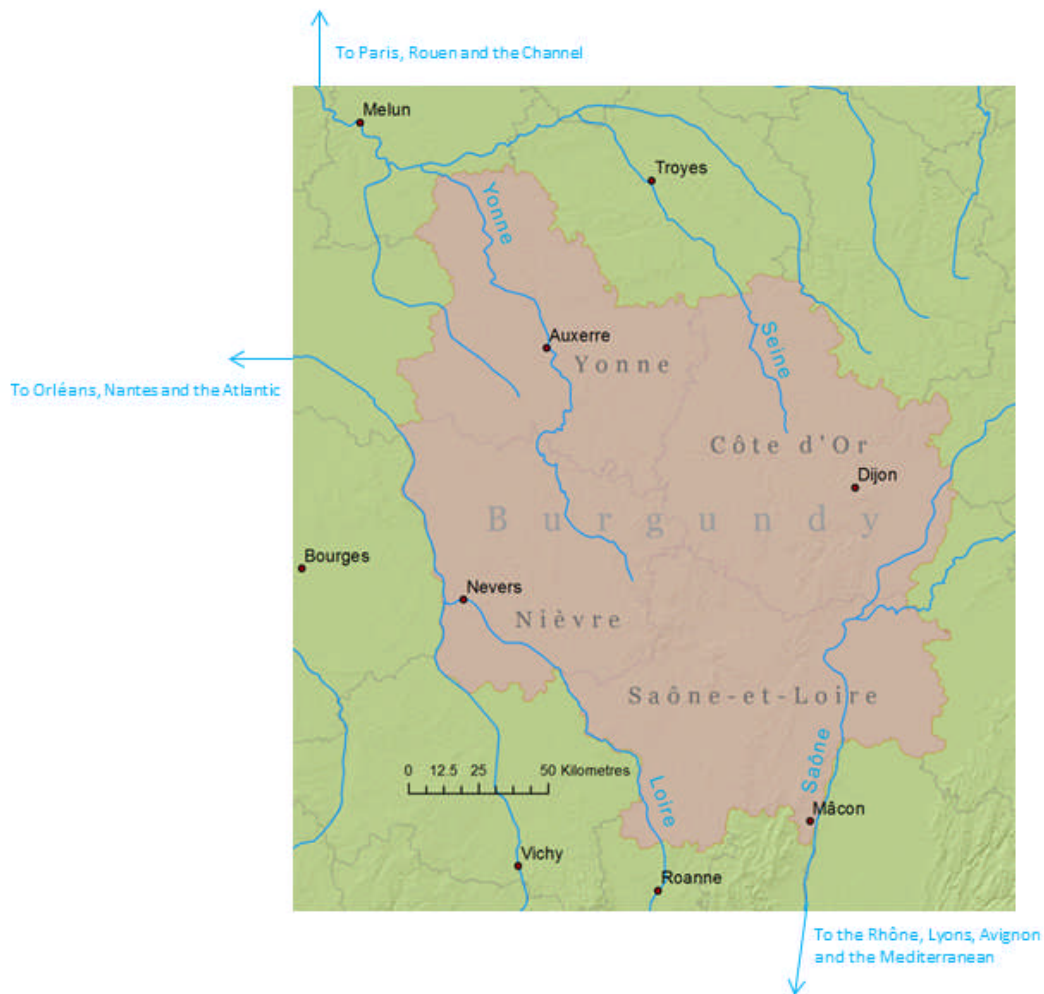


Figure 3.4: Map of Burgundy showing major rivers used for transport.
 Drawn by Author. Base map data from IGN.

Even though records indicate the presence of vines around Mâcon since the year 751, even though their territories are seen by some as ‘the natural continuation of the côte d’Or’⁴⁵, and even though they are planted in large part with the same grape varieties, the wines of the Mâconnais ‘don’t have any pretence at all of rivalling the nectar’⁴⁶ of their northern counterparts. The fact that it was on the côte d’Or that quality was first heavily concentrated upon, under the imperatives of powerful external actors figuring in symbolic or capitalist exchanges, is what led that territory to build its reputation and augment its value. Its wine-

⁴⁵ Tr: ‘le prolongement naturel de la Côte d’Or’. Lanexrie, op.cit.

⁴⁶ Tr: ‘n’ont nullement la prétention d’égaliser le nectar’. Lanexrie, op.cit.

producing territories were more quickly recognised as, and discussed in terms of, *terroirs*, even though the territories further south had much in common in terms of physiography, climate and grape variety. Indeed, Lanexrie makes an interesting point with reference to the wines of the Chalonnais, an area in between the Mâconnais and the côte d'Or:

‘Before the delimitation and the labels of origin these wines were highly sought-after by merchants who sold them on under more famous names.’⁴⁷

The means by which the products of a region became economic, the practices through which their entry to markets was negotiated, and the names under which they were sold, created divided territories. In many ways, geographies of economic practice and imaginative evocation were more consequential than physical geographical facts. Morelot also makes the point that lower quality wines in Burgundy were not exported as much as those of the côte d'Or.⁴⁸ But we can trace this pattern of geographical discontinuity, of geographical ‘paradoxes’, further south; indeed, down the same river that Mâconnais wine was sent down; to the vineyards of the Drôme region, on the banks of the Rhône. Writing in the mid-19th century, the authors of the *Annuaire de la Drôme* argue that whilst ‘Our wines from the Hermitage, from Crozes and from Gervans are amongst the most reputed and sought after on the market,’ and whilst, ‘...the sparkling wines of Die and Saillans can rival those of Champagne; [on the other hand] our ordinary wines supply the needs of the Haut Dauphiné,

⁴⁷ Tr: ‘Avant la délimitation et les certificats d'origine ces vins étaient très recherchés des négociants qui les livraient à la consommation sous des noms plus réputés.’ Lanexrie, op.cit. Documents from Beaune bear out this sort of practice: one from the 17th century recounts the punishment inflicted upon a Mr Domino and his associates, wine brokers whose crime was to bring Mâconnais wine into the town, repackage it and then sell it as wine from Beaune. One way to make a successful trade in Beaune's international marketplace was to cash in on the repute of a particular area; in this case, geographical difference was simply lied about. ‘*Courtiers, 1642-1690*’. Carton 4, Dossier 1. Archives Municipales de Beaune. Cf. ‘*Procédures au sujet des fraudes qu'ils [les courtiers] commettent dans le commerce des vins*’, 1731-32. Carton 4, Dossier 5. Archives Municipales de Beaune.

⁴⁸ Morelot D 1831 *La Vigne et le Vin en Côte d'Or*, op.cit.

the Vivarais and the Velay.’⁴⁹ That is to say, their best wines compete on the national, even international scale, whilst their more ordinary wines only go as far as the surrounding region. In another 19th century agricultural survey of the Drôme, the authors discuss the Valence plain, whose vineyards do not benefit from the cachet of Hermitage on hilly terrain further north. ‘Those wines had to be drunk there [‘sur place’],’ they argue, ‘because they were not transportable, except those from certain terroirs, around Livron, Montélimar and Donzère.’⁵⁰ The question is, with each of these regions lying on the same river, why were the wines not *transportable* ?

I would contend the answer is once again that the wines of the Hermitage had built a reputation earlier than those of the Valence plain. They had reached powerful actors and powerful institutions at a distance (from King Henry IV and Russian Tsars, to the writer Alexandre Dumas⁵¹ (Inter Rhône, 2014)), were described in a 1920s survey as ‘one of the glories of the Rhône valley and of all French winemaking’⁵² and enjoyed a degree of physiographic difference from the plain to the south that could be used as a basis for distinction *notwithstanding* any inherent quality of the wine. Thus, given the same process of feedback as the côte d’Or (capital returns from external clients promoting the concentration on quality production), the wines of the Hermitage would sail down the Rhône and pass

⁴⁹ Tr: ‘Nos vins de l’Hermitage, de Croze, de Gervans, sont au rang des plus estimés et des plus recherchés par le commerce... les vins mousseux de Die et de Saillans peuvent lutter avec ceux de Champagne ; nos vins d’ordinaire...fournissent à la consommation du haut Dauphiné, du Vivarais, du Velay.’

⁵⁰ Tr: ‘Les vins devaient s’écouler sur place... car ils n’étaient pas transportables, sauf ceux de quelques terroirs, aux environs de Livron, de Montélimar, et de Donzère.’ *Statistique Agricole de la Drôme*. Dossier 30 FLR 44, Archives Municipales de Romans-sur-Isère.

⁵¹ We may also note that the Hermitage wine is mentioned by name in the historical fictional depiction of early 19th century British Naval captains’ mess supplies. See: O’Brian P 1978 *Desolation Island*. Collins, London.

⁵² Tr : ‘une des gloires de la vallée du Rhône et de la viticulture française’. Faucher M D 1925 *Les Régions Agricoles du Département de la Drôme*. Dossier 30 FLR 44, Archives Municipales de Romans-sur-Isère, p.14.

vineyards whose production would only serve local consumption. Despite the presence of a river, there was no commercial infrastructure to transport the wines of the Valence plain; a geographical discontinuity had become established and was aligned into the service of those wine producers who could afford to prioritise quality over quantity through the service of an external clientèle. Today, the reflection of this is that Hermitage enjoys its own *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC; equivalent to AOP) and appears as a sort of grape-growing monoculture ([Figure 3.5](#)), much like the côte d'Or; whilst the vineyards of the Valence plain diminished throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and those few that are left now figure only as one part of a much less specific appellation – that of the Côtes du Rhone. We may note in the 19th century quotation above the use of the word *terroir* to indicate those wine-making territories whose wines *did* succeed in exceeding the territory's limits; *terroir* was in this way a sort of relational achievement. I feel this is consistent with my first proposition that *terroirs* must be seen as territories forged into wider relation.



[Figure 3.5](#): The vineyards of the Hermitage on the river Rhône. Source: Inter Rhône (2014).

3.4. Recovering Quality: Burgundy's Divided Loyalties

The establishment of such a correlation between geographical specificity, quality and price took time, however, and it could be contested. In an inventory from the *Bourse des Vins* (or wine market) in Mâcon in 1927,⁵³ there are prices for 'superior' and 'ordinary' reds, and differentiation among whites on the basis of their grape variety (*Gamay* or *Chardonnay*). Ordinary Mâconnais reds typically start at 350 Francs (per barrel) and can reach 400; superior reds start at 400 and can reach 450. *Gamay* whites start at 350 Francs; *Chardonnay* at 550. But the highest starting price on this list, at 700 Francs, is commanded by the white wines of Pouilly-Fuissé. These are wines from a small area in the west of the Mâconnais which had already established a reputation that distinguished it from its surrounding areas. Indeed, only five years earlier, the wines from this area had received an 'appellation juridique' as part of the system of geographical protection in force at the time. The most geographically specific wine was the most expensive. This is a continuation of the pattern of geographical differentiation by which terroirs, such as those of Meursault or Hermitage, achieved earlier recognition. From the mid-19th century, and especially in the years that followed the phylloxera crisis of the late 19th century, I want to argue that a divergence emerged in the means of pursuing quality and adequate (in some cases more than adequate) remuneration. One way was through co-operation in wine production, the other through its individuation. It is through the latter that I feel differentiated terroirs separated from undifferentiated territories and developed their own reputations.

⁵³ *Bourse des Vins de la Ville de Mâcon, Cours du 17 Decembre 1927*. Dossier 2F 12, Archives Municipales de Macon.

By 1970, there were three classifications of wine in France; an entry level of *Vins de Consommation Courante* (VCC), an intermediate level of *Appellation d'Origine Simple* (AOS) and *Vin de Qualité Supérieure* (VDQS), and a top level of *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC). What is interesting here is that there are two intermediate stages of quality; one based on a specific geographic origin (AOS); the other on a notion of quality as a property of the finished wine (VDQS). These were later consolidated into one category, that of the *Indication Géographique Protégée* (IGP) (See [Figure 3.6](#)).

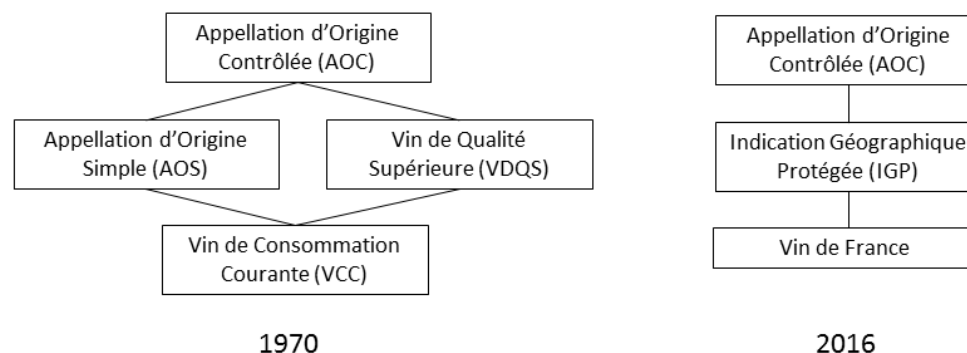


Figure 3.6: Comparison of labelling categories for wine in France in 1970 and 2016.

The supposed geographic basis of quality trumped the sense of quality established from the inherent properties of the wine. This predilection for geographic quality is part of a long trend which began with specific wine-producing territories establishing reputations, and was organised through the legal framework of geographical protection in the 1920s and 1930s. This is more or less the system that stands currently, with a very loose correlation of specificity, quality and price, in which *Vin de France* is at the bottom, *Vin de Pays* with an IGP (Indication Géographique Protégée) is the next step up, and wines with an AOC (or in the process of obtaining one), are at the top. The strategic direction of traffic, as intimated by Gardelle earlier, is *up* the scale; from the wine produced in an area, consumed not far from it, and not heard of further beyond; to the wine produced in a clearly defined area, and

consumed in the various foreign places where it has managed to extend its reputation. Value is associated with ever more territorially specific origins. As we have seen, it was the strategy of the late medieval Dukes of Burgundy to isolate and concentrate labour upon their best vineyards, within an agricultural space that could potentially support a sea of vines and produce quantities of '*vins chétifs*'. The wines of the Hermitage were also distinguished from the 'ordinary' wines produced on the surrounding Valence plain. Today, Valadier (2012) has argued that the production of AOC wines in France is growing within a broader landscape of viticultural decline. And Pitte (2001) has argued that quality wine production, built upon terroir, transmitting 'geographic personality' (Pitte, 2006: 885), is France's future. Judging by the number of geographical appellations within France, and its large proportion of geographical appellations within Europe, it appears that quality recognised through geographical protection is now established as a national strategy for success in wine, and many other products (see [Figures 0.1 and 0.4](#) in the Introduction); and as Girard (2014b) has pointed out, France now sells more wine and makes more money from it than any other country in the world. In all of this, the concept of terroir serves to anchor claims about geographical specificity and to impute notions of quality, and it allows economic networks to be made for 'luxury and semi-luxury goods' such as wine, just as they were in, for example, 18th century Bordeaux (de Planhol, 1994: 215). But the rise of terroir as a means of communicating value across the wine-growing regions of France was not inevitable, just as the attachment of quality to specific, finely-differentiated territories was not always perceived as feasible.

It is the vineyards of southern France that in many ways served as a warning of the risks involved in pursuing undifferentiated quantity over quality in the 20th century, and as the motor for the development of the AOC system in the 1920s and 30s. Where the vineyards of

Bordeaux and Burgundy had already been sub-divided along lines of quality by the 1860s, as discussed in the previous section, and enjoyed global recognition, at the start of the 20th century the vineyards south of the Hermitage entered a period of crisis. Overproduction, fraudulent practices and competition from overseas led to strikes, mass protests and misery in France's southern regions; in particular in the Hérault (Languedoc) region which hosted vast swathes of vineyards at that time, as shown in [Figure 3.7](#). Increasingly a distinction was made between '*vins naturels*,' and other wines which had been adulterated, often with excessive quantities of sugar. Following the unrest across the south of France, laws were passed throughout 1907, prohibiting the adulteration of wine, reducing the tax liabilities of suffering wine producers, and organising the combat of fraud in the years to come. Trade unions of wine producers sprang up across the south, adopting the repression of fraud amongst their aims, and '*vins naturels*' as their rallying cry. But this particular threat to wines did not exist at the top end of the market. This was a threat in terms of the constitution of the product rather than its geographical specificity, and the response a quest for survival rather than riches.

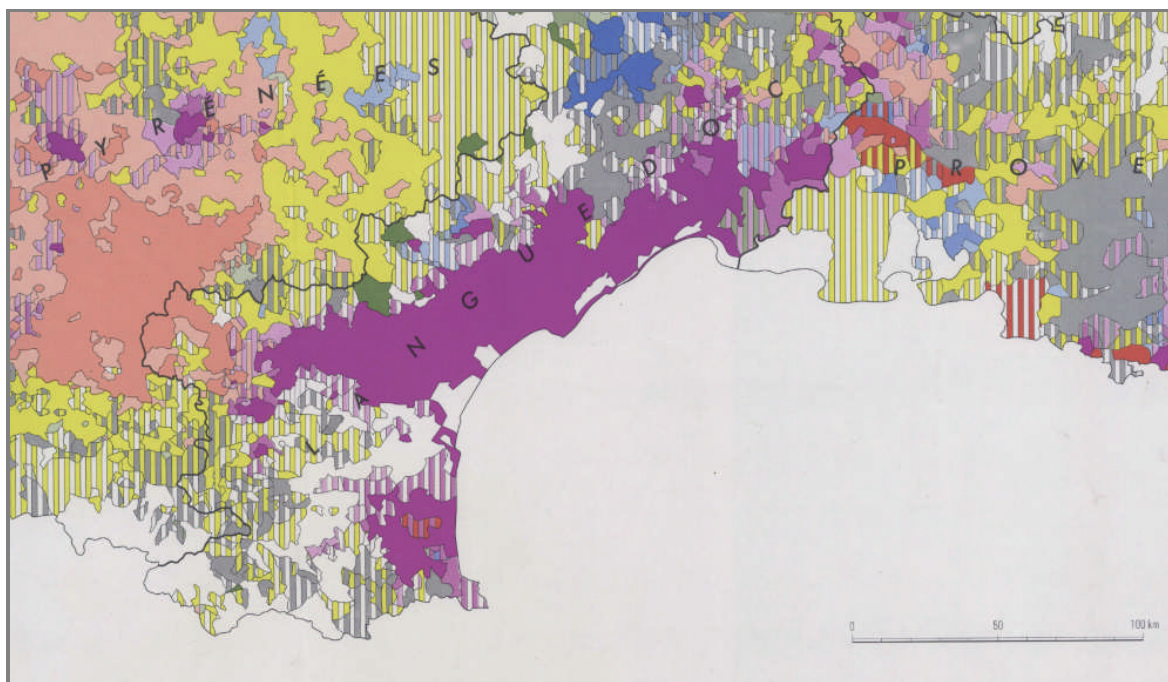


Figure 3.7: Extract of Perpillon's (1977b) map showing usage of agricultural land in the first half of the 20th century (c. 1907); the areas shaded in purple are those areas with over 31% grapevine cover, here covering much of the Languedoc.

The scandals and crises in southern France did not escape the attention of countries who imported wine. In a letter of the 4th of July, 1907, a wine merchant at Belleville, south of Mâcon recounts the advice he has just received:

'Don't omit to mark the consignment : 'Natural wine of less than 15 degrees alcohol,' the Swiss customs are currently very strict since the unrest in the south.'⁵⁴

Sure enough, a letter of the 17th of July from Geneva's Chamber of Commerce confirms the following protocol, which had been instituted by the Swiss customs :

'1 – The natural wines of Austria-Hungary, Spain, France and Italy, where certified by laboratories recognised in Switzerland, will be admitted into the country as natural wines...

⁵⁴ Tr : 'N'omettez pas d'indiquer sur la lettre de voiture: Vin naturel du moins de 15e, la Douane Suisse est actuellement très sévère depuis l'agitation du Midi.' *Lettre de Maison d'Achats à Belleville (Rhône), 4 Juillet 1907*. Dossier 2F 12, Archives Municipales de Mâcon.

2 – All other wines imported into Switzerland will undergo an analysis by the Swiss customs [in Berne] and treated as either natural or artificial wines according to the result of this analysis.’⁵⁵

In a letter of the 20th of July, the president of the *Chambre Syndicale des Négociants en Vins et Spiritueux de Mâcon* expressed his anxiety that this measure ‘could immediately endanger all of our exports to Switzerland.’⁵⁶

The measures which France was taking against fraud in wine were one of the driving forces behind the later development of the AOC system (Stanziani, 2010). Given the scandal of pouring excessive quantities of sugar, and sometimes other products, into vats of wine, a system of certification was required to ensure that the wines being sold were solely made from grape juice and not unduly or unsafely adulterated (cf. Atkins, 2013). Laboratories could help with this. Indeed, in the months that followed the crisis in the Midi, wine-producers in the Mâconnais sought to establish a laboratory which could be used to analyse and certify their wine. At the June 16th 1908 meeting of the local Chamber of Commerce, it was noted that the proposed laboratory ‘makes more sense with each passing day given the number of seizures of food and drink made by the fraud inspectors.’⁵⁷ But I would remark that given the scandal of French wines being cut with stronger *Algerian* wines, and, as we saw earlier, wines from the Chalonais being sold *under the label* of the *côte d’Or*, another

⁵⁵ Tr : ‘1° Les vins naturels d’Autriche-Hongrie, d’Espagne, de France et d’Italie accompagnés de certificats d’analyse émanant d’établissements œnotechniques reconnus par la Suisse, seront admis à l’entrée en Suisse comme vins naturels...

^{2°} Tous les autres vins importés en Suisse seront soumis à un examen par les autorités douanières Suisses [à Berne] et traités comme vins naturels ou vins artificiels suivant le résultat de cet examen.’ *Lettre de la Chambre de Commerce de Geneve, 17 Juillet 1907*. Dossier 2F 12, Archives Municipales de Mâcon.

⁵⁶ Tr : ‘peut menacer au premier moment toute notre exportation en Suisse.’ *Lettre du Président de la Chambre Syndical des Négociants en Vins et Spiritueux de Mâcon*. Dossier 2F 12, 20 Juillet 1907.

⁵⁷ Tr: ‘se justifie de jour en jour par l’importance des prelevements effectues par le service des frauds sur les boissons et denrees alimentaires.’

major driving force behind the AOC system was the desire to delimit specific geographical areas.

Despite the advent of new laws in 1907 against the adulteration of wine, the south of France experienced recurrent problems and crises in the decades that followed; problems associated at root with an imbalance of supply and demand. Though ordinary wines were drunk frequently by much of the working population,⁵⁸ the vast monocultures of the Midi produced so much wine that the price it reached made life difficult for most of its wine producers. Co-operatives were formed as a means of insuring producers (cf. Baker, 1999), but the wines themselves could never achieve the sort of reputation, and commercial remuneration, of the wines from particular terroirs that had been delimited elsewhere. We can examine this divergence in strategy at close quarters in Burgundy.

I have noted that the Mâconnais and the côte d'Or, though both forming part of the historic region of Burgundy, and though sometimes considered part of the same geological formation,⁵⁹ had differing degrees of success in the reputations of their wines. The lady I debated with at the wine stall at the Salon de l'Agriculture in Paris was certainly sensible to the contemporary resonance of this. Wine-producers in these two parts of Burgundy disagreed on the cataloguing of terroirs being drawn up for Burgundy as a whole in the 1920s and 30s (the '*Statut Bourguignon*'), and in many ways the structure of their wine-producing industries was different. Nowhere is this better illustrated, I would contend, than in the establishment of a wine producers co-operative at St-Gengoux-de-Scissé, in the heart of the Mâconnais in 1926; and particularly in the rhetoric used to support further co-operatives in the region. Two years after it was founded, a Mr Boulay, President of the Confédération

⁵⁸ Such wines generally being of a lower strength than that of the bottles we consume today.

⁵⁹ 'the natural continuation of the côte d'Or'. Lanexrie, *Les Vins de Mâcon et du Beaujolais*. Op. Cit.

Générale des Associations Viticoles de la Bourgogne, and of the co-operative society at St-Gengoux, sent a report to the Mayor of Dijon extolling the virtues of such ventures.⁶⁰ He noted that one of the first to be established was at Maraussan, in the Hérault region, in 1905. Figure 3.8 shows the building as it stands today; no longer in use, but with its painted messages of ‘One for all and all for one,’ still evocative of the co-operative, even socialist spirit that animated its foundation. And this makes sense, as it opened in the southern region of France that was experiencing the problems of overproduction that would result in the unrest of 1907 and ongoing precarity. But Boulay sees the value of the co-operative model in Burgundy and its surrounding regions. He felt that:

‘In our wine-growing regions of central France, up until recently, there was little appetite for the co-operative movement, even in light of the numerous individual struggles, - even in light of the market prices which, two years out of three, were below the cost of production, - and even in light of the higher costs of making one’s own modern wine cellar, and the costs of repairs to the wine-making equipment.’⁶¹

⁶⁰ *Rapport de M. Boulay sur la coopération en viticulture [sent to the Mayor of Dijon]*. Confédération Générale des Associations Viticoles de la Bourgogne, 19eme Congres Confédéral, Villefranche, 5 Août 1928. Dossier 3F 17, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

⁶¹ Tr : ‘Dans nos régions viticoles de la France Centrale, jusqu’à ces dernières années, on était resté réfractaire au mouvement coopératif, malgré les déboires individuels nombreux, - malgré les prix de vente qui, deux années sur trois, étaient au-dessous du prix de revient, - et enfin malgré les prix élevés d’une installation de cellier particulier à la moderne, ainsi que des réparations du matériel vinaire.’ *Rapport de M. Boulay*, op. cit.



Figure 3.8: The former co-operative winery at Maraussan, Hérault (southern France) in 2007.
Source: WikiCommons/Claude Roma (2007).

Furthermore, co-operatives could offer:

‘A minimum wage to their members, offering to them and theirs complete financial security.’⁶²

This would certainly have been attractive to growers in the context of overproduction. But there is also, Boulay feels, an argument for co-operatives on the basis of quality. After the establishment of the co-operative at St-Gengoux, and others that have followed in its footsteps⁶³, he contends that:

‘Experience has shown...that the co-operative makes wine better than all the individual members; the rapid filling of the vats and the anaerobic fermentation makes for a higher degree of alcohol [in the wine]...[and] given professional and robust equipment, the grape crushing is done as perfectly as

⁶² Tr : ‘[U]n salaire minimum à leurs adhérents, leur appartenant à eux et à leurs, une parfaite sécurité d'existence.’ *Rapport de M. Boulay*, op.cit.

⁶³ See ‘*Liste des Caves Coopératives avec date de création (1926-1930)*’. Dossier M4329, Archives Départementales de la Saône-et-Loire, Mâcon.

possible; all work is carried out cleanly, all of which results in the general quality of the wine being tangibly improved.’⁶⁴

His proposition is that a better quality wine is produced through co-operative rather than aggregate individual effort. But, crucially, the basis for this quality is measured in terms of alcoholic strength and cleanliness.⁶⁵ What is missing is any hint of the unique character of a specific wine-growing territory. Indeed, he then goes on to say something of particular interest:

‘The blending of grapes gives a coherent and complete wine, with the different terroirs correcting each other.’⁶⁶

Here, the identity and quality of the wine is explicitly cloven from its terroir. The story that could be told about a particular piece of land, the vines that grow on it, and the character they lend to a wine under the hand of a winemaker is lost to a more general production of a standardised product, mindful of principles of quality that concern the constituents of the liquid wine. Boulay *recognises* the concept of terroir as a territory with a unique character, but here he propounds a model of wine production that *does not* concentrate upon this for its success; indeed, he remarks that from the mutual effacement of their territorial characters, a level of quality is achieved. This, I maintain, diverges from the model that was being developed contemporaneously through the *Statut Bourguignon* and the national AOC system;

⁶⁴ Tr : ‘L’expérience a démontré...que la cave coopérative vinifie mieux que l’ensemble des particuliers ; le remplissage rapide des cuves et la fermentation à l’abri de l’air assurent un degré plus élevé ...Par un matériel perfectionné et puissant, le pressurage est aussi parfait que possible ; tous les travaux sont effectués proprement : ce qui fait que la qualité générale du vin est sensiblement améliorée.’ *Rapport de M. Boulay*, op. cit.

⁶⁵ cf. Lanexrie’s description of the wines of the côtes Mâconnaise and Chalonnaise as ‘des vins de table particulièrement hygiéniques et agréables.’ Lanexrie, *Les Vins de Mâcon et du Beaujolais*. op. cit.

⁶⁶ Tr : ‘Le mélange des raisins donne un vin unifié et plus complet, les différents terroirs se corrigeant mutuellement.’ *Rapport de M. Boulay*, Ibid.

a model which sought above all to formally delimit a terroir and anchor the character and quality of a wine within it.

The fine-scale delimitation of terroirs on the côte d'Or took place through active negotiation with demand from powerful actors and capital at a distance. But with the iterative creation of *national systems* of appellations in 1919, 1925 and 1935, the formalisation of terroirs took on a new urgency, just as it demanded closer monitoring of what was produced within them.⁶⁷ In the early 1930s, Burgundy witnessed many debates about how it should be sub-divided in the new system. There were efforts to create a '*Statut Bourguignon*', a sort of catalogue wherein the terroirs that saw 'local, loyal and constant' practices of wine production could be recorded. But differences in the prevalence of such practices in different parts of Burgundy led to conflict. For example, wine producers of the Mâconnais disagreed with others on the côte d'Or about which grape varieties should be included in the catalogue. One variety in particular, known as '*teinturier*', and grown in the Mâconnais but not on the côte d'Or, generated protests amongst growers when it was excluded from the varieties that could be turned into wine simply labelled 'Bourgogne' (i.e. 'Burgundy'). But discord in this region risked jeopardising the wider project of agreeing upon and protecting the constituents of France's diverse terroirs. The Minister of Agriculture, Henri Queuille, wrote to Senator Joseph Capus, who was leading the parliamentary commission working on the new AOC law, and warned him that the situation needed to be remedied 'without delay', as:

'The resolution of this question is important not only for Burgundy but indirectly for all vineyards with *grands crus*. The fact that the 'Burgundy' label might not be universally considered as being well-defined...would tend to discredit our system of legal geographical protection and to render more

⁶⁷ See Letter from the Prefect of the Côte d'Or department sent to the mayors of each commune of the department, 6th of August 1919. Dossier 3F 32, Archives Municipales de Dijon. Cf. Stanziani (2010).

difficult the conclusion of agreements that would guarantee the recognition of those geographical protections overseas.’⁶⁸

But it seems that there were irreconcilable differences in the practices, outlook and habits of rendering wine economic between producers in the Mâconnais and those on the Cote d’Or. The distinction is implicit in one of the criticisms of the wider project of a renewed AOC system for wines across France, a criticism levelled at a meeting of Burgundian wine-producer unions in 1925:

‘The Capus Project...is rather biased, because it gets rid of everything that is unfavourable to fine wines and at the same time gets rid of everything that is favourable to ordinary wines.’⁶⁹

The project of legally enshrining the abstraction of wines with reputations built upon closely defined territories would always cause problems for the grape-growers and wine-producers of the Mâconnais, who in many cases supplied co-operatives; whose wines did not enjoy the same prestige as their counterparts on the Cote d’Or; and whose vineyards were not individuated to the same degree. But with the eventual passing of the new AOC law in 1934, the direction of travel was set, and protections against fraud would theoretically be attendant upon fine delimitations (cf. Stanziani, 2010; Cerveau, 2000). Careful work was required in the attempt to separate one territory from another, or to group several together under one

⁶⁸ Tr: ‘La solution de cette question intéresse non seulement la Bourgogne, mais indirectement tous les vignobles des grands crus. Le fait que l’appellation « Bourgogne » ne soit pas considérée comme définie au regard de tous...est en effet de nature à jeter le discrédit sur notre législation protectrice des appellations d’origine et à rendre plus difficile la conclusion de conventions garantissant d’une façon efficace la protection de nos appellations d’origine à l’étranger.’ Letter from the Minister of Agriculture to Senator Joseph Capus. 19th February 1934. Reproduced in part in Dalloz M 1937 *Recueil Periodique et Critique de Jurisprudence, de Legislation et de Doctrine en Matiere Civile, Commerciale, Criminelle, Administrative et de Droit Public* (1er Cahier 1937). p.43-44. Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Identifiant: ark:/12148/cb344196239/date / Notice n° : FRBNF34419623.

⁶⁹ Tr: ‘[L]e projet Capus...est quelque peu partial, car il élimine tout ce qui est défavorable aux vins fins et écarte également tout ce qui est favorable aux vins ordinaires.’ Progrès de la Cote d’Or 1925 Le Congrès des Associations Viticoles de Bourgogne *La Terre de Bourgogne* No. 33 – Samedi 15 Août 1925 p.524-29. Bibliotheque Nationale de France, ark:/12148/cb328768600/date / Notice n° : FRBNF32876860.

name, with one person noting with frustration the ‘lack of jurisprudence’ that existed on the matter. But at a March 1934 meeting of the *Syndicat Viticole de la Côte Dijonnaise*;

‘Union members are asked to take the initiative immediately and call meetings of the members of their local unions and of all the wine producers of their respective villages, with the aim of delimiting the cadastral plots of land and premiers crus [etc], if applicable, which have the right, according to local, loyal and constant practices, to the appellations defined in the Statut Bourguignon law discussed and approved by the Assemblée générale on the 25th of February 1934.’⁷⁰

The call continued ;

‘The zones need to be well defined, well demarcated, either by roads or paths designated on the cadastral plan, or through the names of climats recognised in each appellation if the roads or paths are not suitable for this.’⁷¹

Among the first to heed this call were the wine producers of an area to the north-west of Dijon. Though this area did appear briefly at the end of the 1861 classification of the côte d’Or by the Comité d’Agriculture de Beaune, no time was wasted in seeking a detailed historical and geographic basis for the recognition of this area in the new statutes. A handwritten document shows that the municipal archives of Dijon were consulted, and an extract from Camille Rodier’s 1920 book *Les Vins de Bourgogne* was copied out by hand, wherein it is mentioned:

‘In the 19th century, [?? – illegible] noted that the wines of the Crais de Pouilly, les Poussots, les Roses, les Perrières are light and delicate. He

⁷⁰ Tr: ‘MM. Les Syndics sont priés instamment de prendre l’initiative de convoquer à une réunion les syndiqués de leur groupe et tous les propriétaires viticulteurs de leur commune respective, afin de délimiter les climats cadastraux et crus classés, s’il y a lieu, ayant droit selon les usages locaux, loyaux et constants, aux appellations définies dans le projet de loi du statut bourguignon élaboré et approuvé par l’Assemblée générale du 25 février 1934.’

⁷¹ Tr: ‘Il est nécessaire que les zones soient bien définies, démarquées, soit par des chemins ou sentiers cadastraux désignés ou la nomenclature des climats reconnus à chaque appellation, si les chemins ou sentiers ne peuvent servir à ces démarcations et toute restrictions à faire désigner.’

considered the wines of the Violettes and the Marcs d'Or as excellent and good for sending abroad.'⁷²

And that :

'The Marcs d'Or, les Violettes and les Montreuil have remained about the only [terroirs] that reflect the ancient reputation of this vineyard.'⁷³

This was followed by a hand-drawn map of the terroirs in question, in relation to each other, in relation to Dijon and in relation to the canal that separates them ([Figure 3.9](#)). On the basis of this assembled (and to some extent subjective) historical and geographical information, the Mayor of Dijon saw fit to return to the Syndicat on the 9th of April a declaration that the named terroirs could enter into the Statut Bourguignon.⁷⁴ Ultimately, despite all the necessary archival and other work involved, as Jean Vacher, Secretary-General of the *Conseil General Vinicole et Agricole de la Bourgogne*, put it, before a general meeting of the *Syndicat Viticole de la Côte Dijonnaise*, 'Which wine producer would refuse to abide by the rules of the National Committee [on AOC], who are trying to introduce some order and balance to the current chaos!'⁷⁵

⁷² Tr: 'Au siècle dernier, [?? – illegible] signale les vins des Crais de Pouilly, les Poussots, les Roses, les Perrières, comme vins légers et délicats. Il considère les vins des Violettes et des Marcs d'Or comme excellents à la 3e et 4e feuille et susceptibles d'être expédiés au loin.' Anonymous, 'Statut Bourguignon – Lieux-dits ayant droit aux appellations d'origine pour les pinots – sur Dijon'. Dossier 3F 16, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

⁷³ Tr: 'Les Marcs d'Or, les Violettes et les Montreuil sont restés presque seuls à témoigner de l'ancienne réputation de ce vignoble.' Anonymous, 'Statut Bourguignon', op.cit.

⁷⁴ Letter from the Mayor of Dijon to the President of the Syndicat Viticole de la Côte Dijonnaise, 9 April 1934. Dossier 3F 16, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

⁷⁵ Tr: 'Quel vigneron refusera de se soumettre au contrôle du Comité national qui poursuit l'introduction de l'ordre et de l'équilibre dans le chaos actuel!' Anonymous, 'Le nouveau régime des appellations d'origine contrôlées : Les conférences de MM. Thiéry et Vacher à l'Assemblée générale de la Côte dijonnaise', *Terre de Bourgogne*, 1936, p.86-87

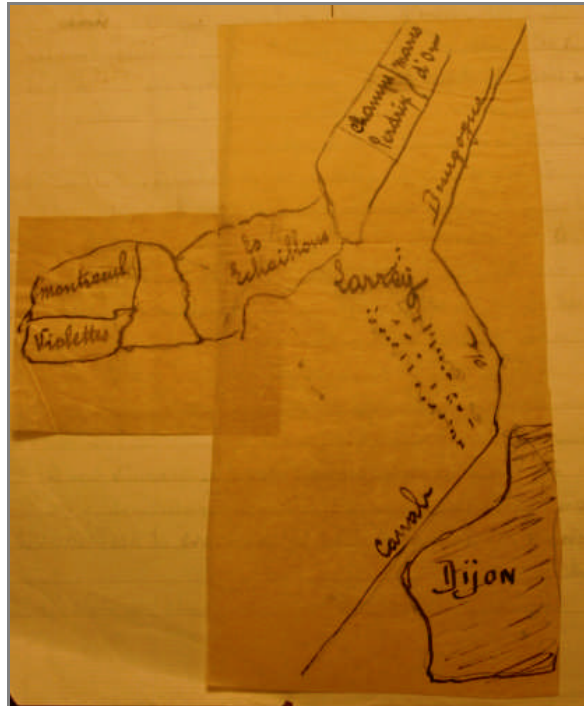


Figure 3.9 : Hand-drawn map adumbrating certain terroirs to the north-west of Dijon. Accompanies letter from the Mayor of Dijon to the President of the Syndicat Viticole de la Côte Dijonnaise. Source: Dossier 3F 16, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

Before concluding this section, I want to return briefly to Boulay and his case for the co-operative model of wine production. He was aware that some wine producers were attached to their terroirs, and to the sense that not all wine-growing territories were created equal. He notes that some ‘hesitations’ might thus arise in the mixing of grapes from different vineyards that he had proposed. It is interesting to note how he sees this potential problem being resolved:

‘Whether it is by a chemical analysis, followed by a bonus according to the quality found, or by the classification of certain lands, you will be able to safeguard the interests of all – which is absolutely necessary.’⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Tr : ‘Soit par le prélèvement mustimétrique suivi d’une prime à la qualité, soit par la classification de certains côteaux, vous arriverez facilement à sauvegarder les intérêts de tous – ce qui est absolument nécessaire.’ *Rapport de M. Boulay*, op. cit.

Again, the recognition of quality is considered important, and here he proposes two possible ways of gauging it; one through using technology to measure certain properties of a batch of grape juice from a particular territory, the other through the spatial delimitation of territories in which quality is assumed to inhere. What I find so interesting here is that, despite the technological ‘perfection’ of a co-operative winery which he advertises, and its ability to produce quality out of the effacement of difference, he still gives credit to the opposing notion that quality may reside in particular territories, and that through classification, quality may be delimited along spatial lines and remunerated accordingly.

In the divergence of potential molecular and cadastral quality, here seen in the propositions for remunerating wine producers under co-operative vinification, and itself seen in the context of the different frauds of adulteration and geographical impersonation that led to the legal redress of 1907, 1919 and 1925, I feel *terroir* emerges as a key epistemological and ontological precept in cultural and political *processes* of differentiation. For all of its potential ambiguity and subjectivity, *terroir* was formalised; defined in name and circumscribed in space. It could be enrolled in discourse as *quality by another name*; a defined name; the name of its territorial base. I would argue that Boulay, in propounding co-operation amongst the wine producers of the Mâconnais, felt that the reputation of their area of Burgundy did not, and would not, allow for profitable wine production on the basis of individual *terroirs*. On the other hand, it seems unlikely that the Mayor of Dijon, to whom Boulay’s report was addressed, was convinced the same would be true in his area: because as we noted above, a few years later, in 1934, he had given his approval to the geographical protection of several *terroirs* to the north-west of the city. The names and spaces of some territories could be

distinguished; quality could be imputed therein; the reputations of some terroirs could be lucrative.⁷⁷ In the next section, I want to examine the means by which such claims were made.

3.5. Terroir's Geographical Rhetoric

As *geographic* specialisation became the prominent means for quality to be communicated under the terms of the AOC system, I would argue that cartography was the most appropriate idiom for such claims to be expressed, and to take on legal force. Thus a map (Figure 3.9) accompanied the written apologia for the protection of several vineyards around Dijon to which the mayor signed his approval. But this mapping could be imaginative and cursive, as well as cartographic. The elements of colour, line and point which are assembled in maps also exist in other forms of language (Olsson, 2007; MacDonald, 2010; cf. Harley, 1988; Tuan, 1991; Gerlach, 2014). For example, the *côte d'Or* itself was named for the golden colour it takes on in the autumn as chlorophyll retreats from the leaves of its hundreds of thousands of grapevines; and lines and points form the grammar that structures language, made visible in the evocative toponymy of the same *côte*. In interrogating the means by which the central claims of *terroir* take rhetorical form, I propose now to bring a critical perspective to bear on the apparent self-evidence of several pertinent extracts of cursive, and then cartographic, language.

In April 1891, the *Syndicat Viticole de Meursault* communicated a request for a handful of vineyards to the north of the village to be added to the Meursault classification of the time.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Indeed, Demossier (2011a) has recounted the idea, from her own interviews with wine producers on the *côte d'Or*, that 'Unity would be the death of Burgundy.'

Known by the name of ‘Les Santenots,’ the argument ran that wine from this particular terroir ‘has a great reputation,’⁷⁹ and accordingly they asked for it to be known by the name of ‘Meursault-Santenots’. The context for this request was a wine-growing region that was just beginning to exit the phylloxera crisis. Indeed, as discussed earlier in this chapter, two years later, this union was asking to establish a quarterly wine fair to put its wines back on the map. What is interesting to me in this request for *Meursault-Santenots* is the line that connects the two words. It amounts to a rhetorical device. In the act of hyphenation, the territory of Santenots is proposed to be not only near to those of Meursault, but contiguous. It expands the frontiers of Meursault to include it. Further, the notion of quality that is assumed to reside in Les Santenots is asserted to be worthy of, and connected to, the reputed quality of Meursault; such that they can be evoked together as one product. In asking for this cursive union, the wine producers of Santenots were redoubling efforts towards the recognition of their terroir through the sense of place-based quality.

Hyphenation, in fact, is a device that has been used to increase the recognition of particular terroirs and to communicate the notion of a village being home to excellent wines. But through attention to cartography in my archival work, I have also been able to witness certain villages of the côte d’Or actually changing their names as a result of toponymic marriage. Three maps of the côte can serve to make this point. [Figure 3.10](#) is an extract of the map of the region prepared by Arnoux in 1728. [Figure 3.11](#) is an extract of the map of the region prepared by Cassini, as part of a national mapping project carried out in the latter half of the 18th century. [Figure 3.12](#) is a present-day map of the wine-growing territories of the côte,

⁷⁸ Letter from the Syndicat Viticole de Meursault, 17 April 1891. Dossier 3F 1, Archives Municipales de Meursault.

⁷⁹ Tr: ‘possède une grande renommée’.

issued by the *Bureau Interprofessionel de Vins de Bourgogne* (BIVB). In all three maps, though their orientations differ, the *côte* is marked out by points representing towns and villages running from Dijon in the north, past Beaune in the centre, to Meursault and on to Santenay in the south. Almost all of the settlements on this line today enjoy great reputations for wine (Johnson and Robinson, 2013), and most of them have cadastral sub-divisions of their territory into *climats* or *terroirs*. Some of them are further differentiated into *premiers crus* and *grands crus*.

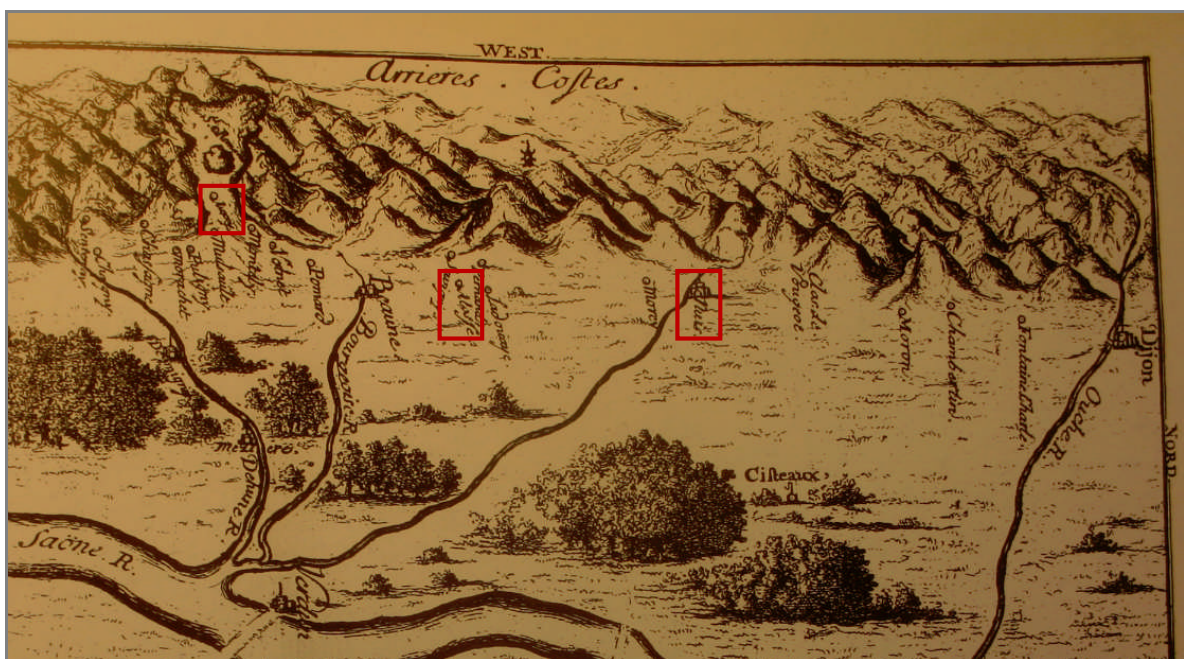


Figure 3.10: Annotated extract of Arnoux's 1728 map of the *côte d'Or*.
Source: Poisot (2001).

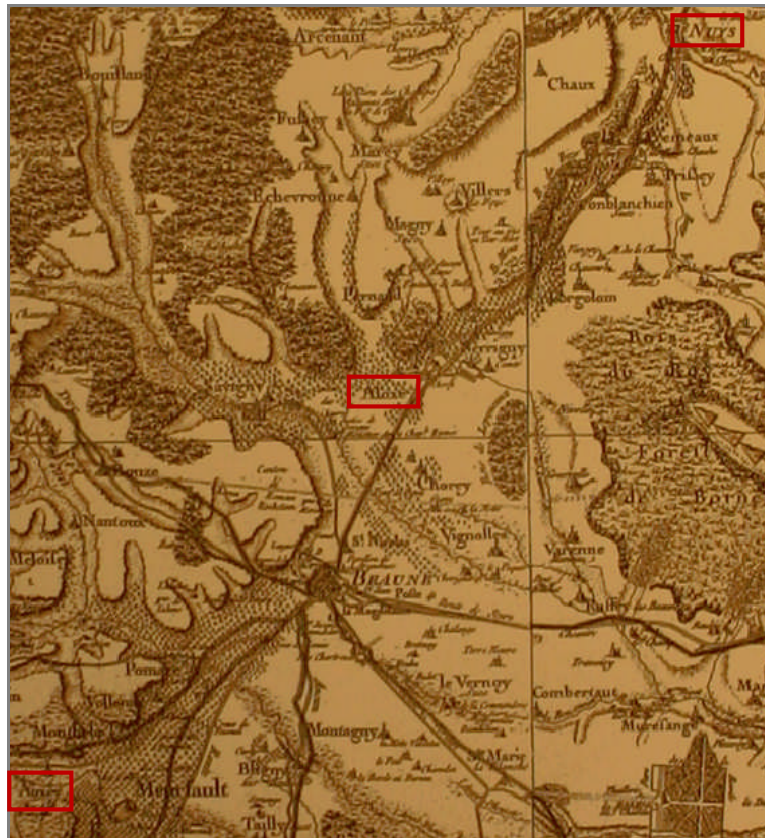


Figure 3.11: Annotated extract of Cassini's (late 18th century) map of Burgundy.
Source: Poisot (2001).



Figure 3.12: Annotated extract of the BIVB map of the wine-growing regions of Burgundy.
Source: BIVB (2014) (www.vins-bourgogne.fr).

I have highlighted with red boxes three villages which are shown in each of the maps: Aloxe, Auxey and Nuits. We may note that there are slight variations in spelling (Alosse/Aloxe,

Nuys/Nuits) between the 18th century and present-day maps, but the most striking toponymic difference is that Aloxe has *become* Aloxe-Corton, Auxey has become Auxey-Duresses, and Nuits has become Nuits-St-Georges. This is not accidental, nor does the hyphen convey the coming together of two growing, or equivalent, settlements (as is the case elsewhere; for example, Pouilly-Fuissé). Rather, in each case, the work of the hyphen is to anchor the name of one of the village's most famous terroirs within the name of the village itself. It is to honour the reputation of one with that of the other; it is a form of simultaneously economic and geographic ontogenesis. The evidence is the same in each case: Figures 3.13, 3.14 and 3.15 are present-day maps of the terroirs of each village. In every one, we note that the name of the terroir appended to the original village name is one recognised as amongst its most prestigious (indicated by the darker colouration of the territory, referring to the label '*grand cru*' or '*premier cru*'); *Le Corton*, *Les Duresses* and *Les Saint-Georges*, respectively (I have marked them out in blue). One might argue that the value of the terroir is in each case worth renaming the village for; it reflects the economic importance of the product of that plot of land to the village, and it allows some of the fame accumulated in that one *cru* to be applied to all the other crus that could take the village's original name. The hyphen serves as a formal and symbiotic means to further build the reputation of both a vineyard and a wine-growing village – and then by extension all of its vineyards – and the collective value of these terroirs is apprehended every time the hyphenated name is communicated outside of the territory by word of mouth, on wine bottles, on road signs, or on the map.

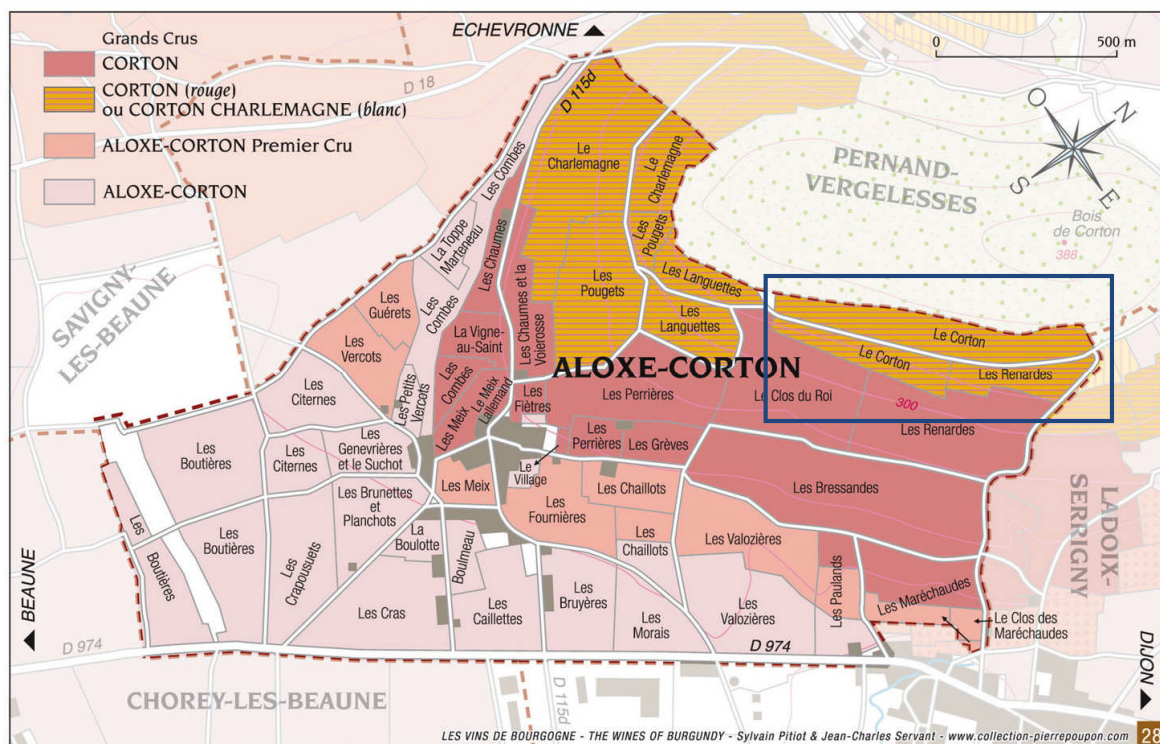


Figure 3.13: Annotated extract of the wine classification map of Aloxe-Corton. Source: Extract from Pitiot and Servant (2011)/Collection Pierre Poupon used with permission; please see notice in Bibliography.

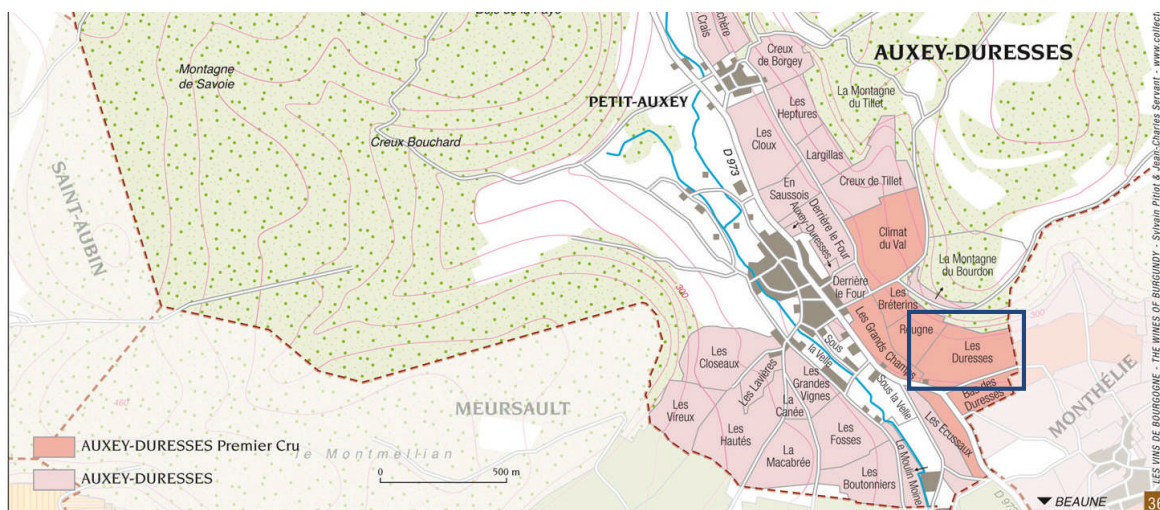


Figure 3.14: Annotated extract of the wine classification map of Auxey-Duresses. Source: Extract from Pitiot and Servant (2011)/Collection Pierre Poupon used with permission; please see notice in Bibliography.

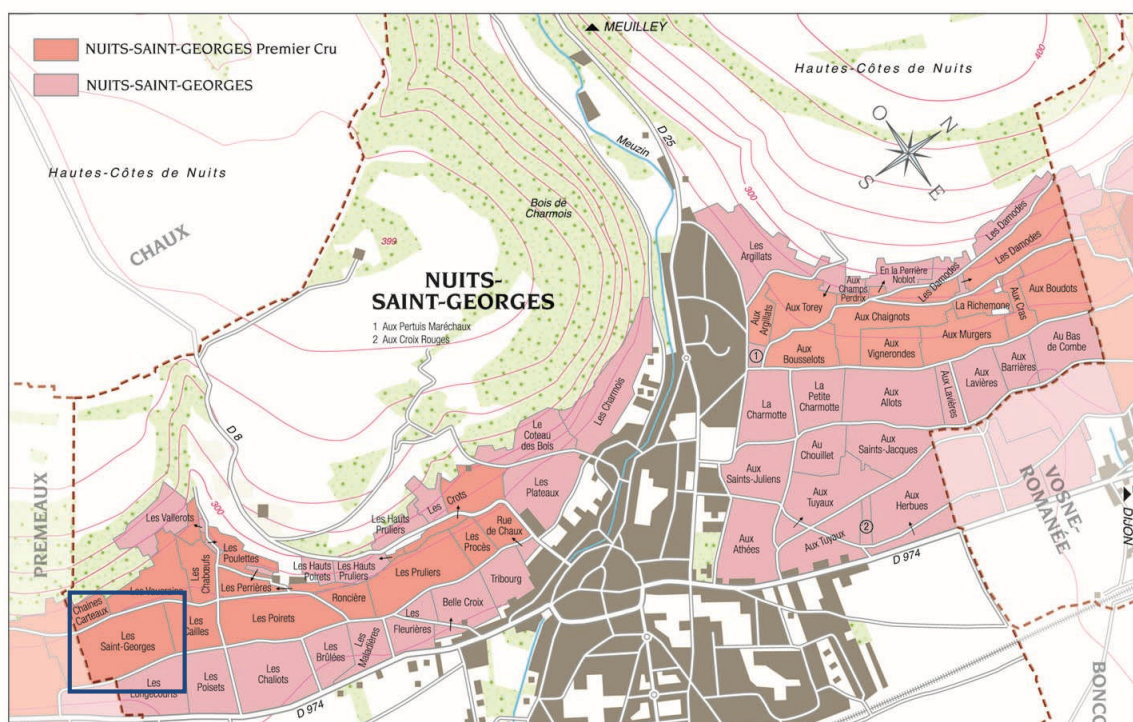


Figure 3.15: Annotated extract of the wine classification map of Nuits-St-Georges. Source: Extract from Pitiot and Servant (2011)/Collection Pierre Poupon used with permission; please see notice in Bibliography.

Indeed, it is in the combination of cursive and cartographic language that I feel the territorial basis of quality can be most forcefully communicated. A Mr Budker, a high ranking engineer, prepared a map in 1874 of the *Côtes Beaujolaise, Mâconnaise and Chalonnaise* (Figure 3.16)⁸⁰ and was awarded a medal at the Concours Regional in Mâcon for his efforts. The first thing we might notice about this map is its peculiar west-east orientation, which allows the reader to follow the progression from one côte to another as one would in reading a line of text. We will see later that this was a device also used in maps of the côte d'Or. The second thing we might remark upon is the diffusion of vineyards throughout the area covered by the map; especially throughout the villages of the Mâconnais. This is a much looser distribution of wine production activity than would have been the case on the côte d'Or. And the third

⁸⁰ Budker A 1874 *Carte de Vignobles Mâconnais-Charolais-Beaujolais*. Dossier 1 Fi 27/19, Archives Départementales de la Saône-et-Loire, Mâcon.

thing to which one's attention is drawn is Budker's five-step classification of the vineyards represented on the map. It is on these two latter points that I wish now to focus my argument. In 1874, Mâconnais vineyards were not yet ravaged by phylloxera. The consolidation and concentration on quality that followed the phylloxera crisis had not yet been undertaken. Thus, most of the villages in this region are shown as having a small amount of vines under production; vines described in rustic scenes of rural life by the poet Alphonse de Lamartine (1839). We may remember that I mentioned the typical prices attained on the Mâcon wine market in 1927, wherein Pouilly-Fuissé was the most sought-after. Here on Budker's map, 'first class' whites are indeed to be found in Pouilly and in Fuissé, and they are listed in a table of classes at the bottom of the map. But we are also told that:

'A large number of other villages produce 5th class white wines that it would be superfluous to mention.'⁸¹

The supposed *superfluity* of naming those fifth-class wines demonstrates that the act of naming is reserved for terroirs of quality. I would argue that a copular relationship between quality and place is enacted through this process of cartographic identification. First-class crus are communicated to the reader by reference to a *commune* (village or town) and often a *lieu-dit* (named plot of land). Further, the author notes that at the scale of his map, he can only show the 'principaux lieux-dits'. Thus, where a plot of land is identified on this map (such as *Les Buissonnats* or *Les Jonchayes*), the reader can *infer* that quality resides therein. Those plots that are not named, and those areas that are not coloured in the tones of first or second class, betray by their absence or coloration their superfluity in a necessarily

⁸¹ Tr : 'Un grand nombre d'autres communes produisent des vins blancs de 5e classe qu'il sera superflu de mentionner.' Budker *A Carte de Vignobles*, op.cit.

competitive scheme of classification. As with the darker colouration of the *grands* and *premiers crus* in Figures 3.13-3.15, the guidance of this cartographic legend is propositional in nature, and *represents* a hierarchical system even as it *reinforces* the bases of that hierarchy through the peculiar authority of cartographic colour, line and point (cf. Harley, 1988; MacDonald, 2010) We may note that today, many of those villages which only produced wines of third class and below, no longer host any vineyards at all (take, for example, Ameugny and Taizé, which produced ‘third class’ reds at the time of Budker’s map). We may well assume that their reputations did not make for sustainable returns throughout the twentieth century.

Elsewhere, physiographic features were transformed through cartographic language into signs of quality. This is one of the more remarkable propositions of the 1861 map of the côte d'Or (Figure 3.17), drawn under the aegis of Beaune's *Comite d'Agriculture*, to accompany its tabular classification of 1861. In this publication, three colours are used to represent the now formalised categories of first, second and third class wines: pink, yellow and green.⁸² But the map is not simply a choropleth; it uses hatching to illustrate the contours of the hilly côte itself. The pattern that emerges across the length of the map is that the lower slopes of the côte are generally coloured in pink, to distinguish first class terroirs; the lowlands at the bottom of the côte and some of the steeper slopes are marked in yellow; and finally those low vineyards at a distance from the côte, and those very steep vineyards near its crests, are marked in green to indicate their supposedly inferior position in terms of quality. This layered belt of colour stretches across the map in a way that more or less closely follows the contours of the slope along the côte's long axis. This map propounds the idea, through a very effective and topographically consistent use of colour, that the lower slopes are where the best wine is made.

⁸² A lighter green and grey are used to mark out the few lieux-dits outside of these classes.

or less continuous south-east facing manifestation of the escarpments of the côte itself in this part of Burgundy. In the west-east orientation, such that the côte is framed in the landscape by the edges of the map, there is a reflection of Arnoux's 1728 map ([Figure 3.10](#)); though where Arnoux underlines his with the river Saône, Lavalley shows the recently-built railway line along the bottom of his map. This is not insignificant. This railway would have allowed travellers to gaze upon the côte in exactly the same orientation that Lavalley proposes; indeed, he prepared a number of lithographs to illustrate his book⁸⁵ from the point of view of a train on this line, such as [Figure 3.20](#). The railway is important, as we have seen earlier in this chapter, to allow the wines to be exported, but it also permitted those who were aware of the reputations of Meursault, Beaune or Vougeot to visit, and to look upon them and reconcile their presence on the côte with their cartographic representations and their own geographical imaginations.



[Figure 3.18](#): Lavalley's 1855 map folded out to its full extent in the reading room of the Archives Municipales de Dijon, 11th September 2013. Source: Author.

⁸⁵ Lavalley J 1855 *Histoire et Statistique de la Vigne et des Grands Vins de la Côte d'Or*. Dusacq, Dijon. The map forms a fold-out supplement.

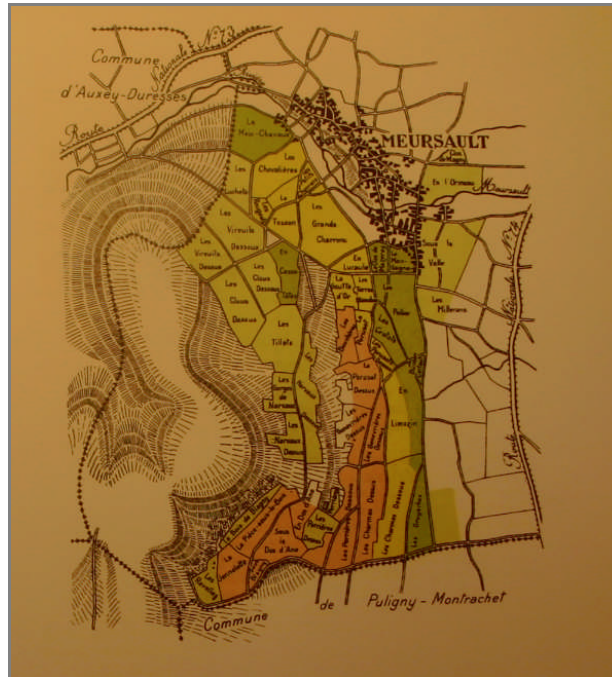


Figure 3.19: Extract of Rodier's 1948 map of Meursault. Source: Poisot (2001).

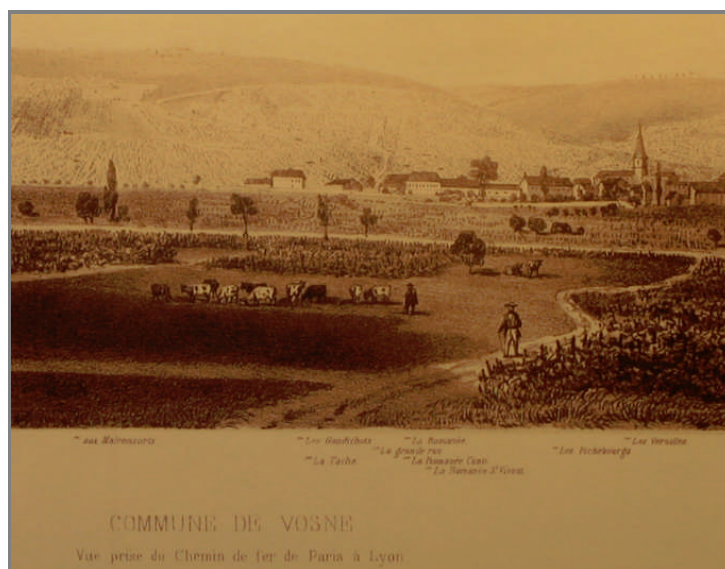


Figure 3.20: Extract of an illustration of Vosne [later Vosne-Romanée] – the view taken from the railway towards the village and the Côte d'Or. Source: Lavalley (1855) op.cit. Note the positions of several grape-growing *climats* are indicated directly underneath the image.

Indeed, the final point I want to make in this section is that geographical representations of the terroirs of the côte d'or following their formalisation in the mid-19th century succeeded one another without major changes and in so doing, cemented the reputations of these

territories in the eyes of the public even, perhaps especially, where they had no other means of judging them. Their continued reference to coloured legends containing more or less fixed classifications operated as a kind of self-contained epistemic truth (Gerlach, 2014). Henri Poisot has assembled many of the historic maps of the côte d'Or in his 2001 *Historique de la Cartographie des Grands Vignobles de Bourgogne*. What is striking is the very gradual development of representational style. The naming of specific *climats*, the use of different colours to indicate degrees of quality and their reference to the slopes of the côte is a constant – compare, for instance, [Figure 3.17](#) and [Figure 3.19](#). But I would argue that this constancy is itself a rhetorical device; one that allowed a succession of images to propound the locality, loyalty and constancy of the region's terroirs. As we know, phylloxera ravaged the côte, as it did most of France's wine-growing regions between 1860 and 1890, and it resulted in a nationwide replanting of grapevines on American rootstocks. If the popularity of *produits de terroir* is propelled today by a society 'in search of its roots' (Frayssignes, 2008), we must say, without any desire to be facetious, that in the case of wine those roots are of fairly recent, and foreign, origin. What invisibly separates the idiomatic continuity of [Figures 3.17 and 3.19](#) is therefore a very grounded discontinuity. But we might understand this in the sense of the re-creation of the image of a terroir, or the (re-)invention of tradition (after Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983, Laferté, 2007 and Garcia and Labbé, 2012). As we saw earlier with the case of Meursault's quarterly wine fairs, wine producers sought to revive the reputations of their terroirs once they had revived the grapevines themselves. Reputations, it would seem, once classified and expressed cartographically, can endure. Thus it may come as no surprise that when Larmat turned to Burgundy in his 1941 project of an *Atlas de la France Viticole*, he made it clear that he drew inspiration from the 1861 map of Beaune's Comite d'Agriculture, and proceeded to use its colour and classificatory scheme. Further, when Rodier updated his

1920 book *Le Vin de Bourgogne (La Côte d'Or)*⁸⁶ for the third time, in 1948, he continued to pay tribute to the 19th century work of Lavallo and others, and Poisot notes tellingly that:

‘There are practically no changes, even though we could have expected him to have mentioned something about the entirely new regulations concerning the appellations of origin as he listed the villages. But this was not his aim. He wanted simply to produce a new edition of a book that had had much success. He was not looking to make a new classification.’⁸⁷

In this way, I feel we can understand that geographical representations transmitted ideas of locality, loyalty and constancy which may have been more perdurable than the reality on, or rather in, the ground.⁸⁸ Though changes may have been made little by little to the classification laid down in 1861 by Beaune’s *Comité d’Agriculture*, its cartographic patterning, both in the sloping gradations and what their colours confer, is broadly the same today. Ultimately, maps were a key means of establishing a copular relationship between product and place. They were a highly visible, and legally enforceable, means of delimiting and classifying terroirs; but they were also means for the reputations of those terroirs to be built through the imputation of quality. The fact that some terroirs are today so famous as to be perceived as ‘mythical’ (Bravo-Maza, 2010), and that their histories are commonly transformed into myth (Roudié, 2007; cf. Detienne, 1981), owes a lot to the work that has been done to distinguish their reputations by marrying their names to territories, putting both within more or less historically fixed schemes of classification, and communicating them in

⁸⁶ The book to which reference was made in the drafting of the claim to AOC protection that was signed off by the Mayor of Dijon in 1934.

⁸⁷ Tr: ‘Il n’y a, pratiquement, pas de changements alors que l’on aurait pu s’attendre à ce qu’il ajoute, avec l’énumération des villages, quelques notes sur la toute nouvelle réglementation concernant les Appellations d’origines. Mais, ce n’était pas son but. Il voulait simplement rééditer un livre qui avait toujours du succès. Il n’a pas cherché à faire un classement nouveau.’ Poisot H 2001 *Historique de la Cartographie des Grands Vignobles de Bourgogne: Côte de Beaune et Côte de Nuits*. Cote BH IV.3.1.2 POI, Archives Municipales de Dijon.

⁸⁸ In Larmat’s case, it may have been that there was an appetite to recover the terroirs as a sort of stable national treasure after the privations and tragedies of the Second World War (cf. Brace, 1999).

imaginatively compelling ways. In this, we might observe an operation of using spatial definition to stand in for historical uncertainty, and geographical rhetoric to divert attention from episodes of environmental rupture.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to use archival materials to make an argument for the development, formalisation and rhetorical communication of the notion of terroir; a notion which has gone on to form the basis for claims to geographical protection in food and drink throughout Europe. I argued first that the recognition of terroirs emerged through the forging of relations between wine-producing territories and powerful external clienteles. The forging of these relations involved active processes of mediation, communication and transport between producers and consumers across multiple sites. I then argued that the model of quality being attributed to particular terroirs formed a major basis for systems of geographical protection in France in the first decades of the 20th century, and drove changing geographies of wine production throughout that century, where territorially delimited quality became more profitable for some growers, and went on to set the direction of travel for others. Terroir counted as an attribute that made wine tradable in important export markets (after Muniesa, *et al*, 2007), but its valuation and formalisation did not occur without controversy and opposition from those who produced wine in areas with less finely delimited territorial origins and with attention on measurable characteristics of the liquid wine. I finally made the argument that maps served as a kind of entelechy of the operations of geographical protection, and continue to function as a compelling and legally privileged means of propounding the copularity between product and place.

The achievement of classifying and formalising terroirs not only helped to stop fraudulent practices in wine-making, but allowed quality and reputation to be easily and consistently communicated, supported, as we have seen, by the ‘ground truth’ of cartographic rhetoric (cf. Pickles, 1994). Though in the 1920s, Boulay saw the co-operative movement as being ‘the rising tide...the rolling torrent; whoever tried to stop it would be certainly submerged’⁸⁹, it emphatically did not flood the côte d’Or, where wine producers remained attached to their individual plots of land and their inherent qualities. Indeed, the echoes of this divergence in the pursuit of quality in two neighbouring wine regions may be witnessed today in the fact that while around 80% of the wine production of the Mâconnais comes through co-operatives, the 3,000 or so individual *climats* or terroirs that make up the côte d’Or are considered so important that they were put forward to, and approved by UNESCO for protection, and celebration, as a world heritage site (Reynaud, 2015). The stories woven together in this chapter illustrate how terroir is mobilised in discursive and economic forms, and how its earthy ontological predicates enter systems of epistemological consistency, judgment and contestation. Whether or not the lively materials and lived practices of terroir are built upon foundations and actions that are local, loyal and constant, I have argued that the representation of terroir through cursive and cartographic language frequently is. As Harley (1988: 278) put it, ‘maps are never value-free images’; and as Olsson (2010: 88) argues, ‘every map is an interweaving of picture and story; of present, past and future; of indicative and imperative.’ Communicating terroir through maps and toponymic union is a rhetorical move that serves to naturalise the classification and anchoring of quality in specific, delimited places, and to obfuscate the controversies and discontinuities that troubled those processes.

⁸⁹ Tr : ‘le flot qui monte...le torrent qui roule; quiconque voudrait l’endiguer, serait infailliblement submergé’. *Rapport de M. Boulay*, op. cit.

In the next chapter, I will explore this epistemology of terroir in more depth, and flesh out the link I , and so many others, have proposed exists between the concept of terroir and the legal framework of geographical protection. I will continue to attend to the territorial logic and geographical rhetoric in use in the promotion of products of terroir, but I will take the nation of France as the scale of analysis rather than any one of my three production chains on its own. In charting key trends in the articulation and apprehension of terroir in French culture, and in identifying key epistemological operations in the passage from terroir to geographical protection in food and drink, I will establish some analytical coordinates with which to begin to examine in subsequent chapters how terroir is perceived, contested and reshaped by those who work with it today.

* * *

Chapter 4: Terroir's Epistemological Life

‘Our [Britain’s] move off the land had been very extreme, much more so than in France, Italy or Germany [...] We had early industrialisation, and two world wars, which effectively ended the idea of local food. It didn’t used to be polite to have an interest in food. Food was regarded as vulgar.’ (Dillon in Millard, 2015)

‘If there is one country in the world where gastronomy and culture are indissolubly linked, it is this France whose geography has dictated its dishes just as it has moved its writers’ pens.’ (Légasse, 2015)¹

4. 1. Introduction

If we accept that *terroir* is a word not yet ‘fully naturalized’ into English (OED Online, 2015), it would make sense to situate an investigation of its substance, meaning and use within the philosophy of the culture from which it comes. There is certainly a lot at stake. Although *terroir* is often proposed as the basis of the system of geographical protection in food and drink in which France leads the world (see Pitte, 1999; Trubek, 2008; White *et al*, 2009; Paxson, 2013; Légasse, 2015), few have attempted to explain in detail how one gives rise to the other. As Perrin (2010: 326) puts it: ‘we can understand how difficult it is to apprehend *terroir*, because it has been used in very different ways at different times, and its nomadic, multidisciplinary character makes it even harder to figure out’². Furthermore, as Bowker and Latour (1987: 741) argue, critically examining mentalities and modes of producing knowledge is in itself vital: ‘epistemology in France is the only real way of talking politics, of delivering what holds us all together – that is to say, the *concept*.’ *Terroir* is a concept that is invoked in a wide array of cultural domains, but which has retained a privileged position in

¹ Translation : ‘S’il est un pays au monde où gastronomie et culture sont indissolublement liées, c’est cette France où la géographie a dicté les plats comme elle a tenu la plume des écrivains.’

² Tr : ‘on comprend combien il est difficile d’appréhender le *Terroir* car il a correspondu, selon les époques, à des usages bien différents et son caractère pluridisciplinaire et nomade le rend encore plus difficile à cerner’.

the explanation of quality in wine and other food and drink. ‘So what is it,’ geographer Jean-Robert Pitte (1999: 86) asks, ‘that has fascinated the French for so long about this word and above all about what it refers to?’³

France has over 200 food products (Figure 0.4) and over 300 wines (Vin et Société, 2016) which bear labels of geographical protection known as AOC or AOP (*Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée* or *Appellation d’Origine Protégée*) and inasmuch, their producers hope that the place of origin of the product will be understood as consequential by its eventual consumers. Certainly, consumers want to know where what they consume comes from, and exploring the matter of provenance in supply chains is not limited to scholarship in cultural geography (see, for example, New, 2009; 2010; Mancini, 2013; Medway and Warnaby, 2014). But getting to grips with terroir requires attending to the specificities of a particularly French epistemology and the intellectual history that lies behind it. As Perrin (2010: 326) argues about terroir; ‘The different shifts in meaning have never been properly studied, which has often led to confusion in its usage, but also in the representations of the concept.’⁴ And where Medway and Warnaby (2014: 164) argue that critically examining product provenance requires ‘an understanding of an array of discipline areas and perspectives – such as history, geography (both human and physical), linguistics, and politics,’ I would contend that given terroir’s broad cultural valency, we will need to be similarly willing to make use of insights from multiple disciplines. In this chapter in particular, I have favoured linguistic approaches because of their pervasiveness in French intellectual life (Sloterdijk (2015), for instance, talks of the continued legacy of a post-war mixture of philosophy of language in the analysis of

³ Tr : ‘Qu’est-ce qui fascine donc les Français depuis si longtemps dans ce mot et surtout dans ce qu’il recouvre ?’

⁴ Tr : ‘Les différents glissements sémantiques n’ont jamais été véritablement étudiés, ce qui a souvent entraîné des confusions dans les usages, mais aussi dans les représentations du concept.’

society) and also because I will be using diverse literature from the public realm and archival texts as my primary sources.

The plan of this chapter is as follows: in the first section I will trace key moments in the historical trajectory of the concept of *terroir* in agriculture and broader culture in France. By following innovations in how *terroir* has been understood, I will explore how the public appreciation of nature has been shaped by literature, and how the image of farming has been influenced by the scientific progress of the Enlightenment. I will then argue that products of *terroir* may be understood by reference to a programme of abstracted forms used in the service of the modernising French state; and that in the process of its abstraction, *terroir* is comparable and closely connected with the French language. In the final section I will examine the rhetorical basis of, and the means by which claims for *terroir* are organised in AOP recognition. This examination will turn upon an argument for the simultaneous horizontal (geographic) and vertical (historic) consistency of *terroir*, itself made epistemologically coherent by the inheritance of ideas from the Romantic movement and the Enlightenment. It will expand the historical analyses of Chapter 3 and situate them within what I identify as France's geographical culture. Then in the brief conclusion, I will draw together my model of the processes through which *terroir* can be mobilised in the system of geographical protection before I go on to examine how epistemological issues are raised today through the performance, convention and contestation of *terroir* in the next three chapters.

4.2. The Adventure of a Concept

In the previous chapter, we examined how terroir, as the productive aptitude of an agricultural territory, was mobilised in commercial exchanges as an index for the quality of a comestible product. We briefly examined how what was seen as terroir could be changed by technological, commercial, political and agronomic articulations of modernisation, and in more detail we examined how representations, especially cartography, could be used to propose continuity in the valuable properties of terroir. I now want to look at a broader set of texts to substantially deepen our understanding of the development of the epistemology of terroir in France. This will require being attentive to three overlapping movements which, whilst often studied by different disciplines in terms of the processes of modernisation, will need here to be put in conversation. They are: the Enlightenment, the agricultural ‘revolutions’ of western Europe, and the Romantic movement. Each of these are broad sets of ideas and events, and attempts to fix the start and end dates of these movements, and the geographies of their expression, have occupied scholars and will probably continue to do so (see, for example, Hampson, 1968; Renaut *et al*, 1999; Withers, 2007; Augé-Laribé, 1955; Kerridge, 1967; Kautsky, 1988; Overton, 1996; Turner *et al*, 2001; Oerlemans, 2002; Blanning, 2010) What is important is the order in which they are generally agreed to have taken place, viz. the Enlightenment beginning in the late-17th century, the agricultural revolutions of the Low Countries and Britain accelerating in the mid-18th century, and the Romantic movement beginning in the late-18th century. Each movement has been described as implicated in the development of the modern world. Each movement took root in and had multifarious consequences for France. And each movement had a significant, though hitherto little studied, bearing on the conception of terroir in French society.

The growth of France's national territory, through annexation, acquisition, ascension and other means, from the period of the French Revolution onwards, may be seen as part of a modern desire; the furtherance of a project of a nation state, and a means of consolidating territory as a political technology (see Elden, 2010; Gottmann, 1978; Kain and Baigent, 1992). Making that territory better connected and known, especially its more remote and peripheral parts, is also a modern impulse (Weber, 1976; Clout, 1980; Plessis, 1985; Massey, 1999; Swyngedouw, 1999); one that is coherent with the Enlightenment, and Napoleonic, desires to expose, understand, calculate and render territorial facts both intelligible and comparable (Withers, 2007; Godlewska, 1995; cf. Foucault, 2002 (1970)). Yet illustrated texts in the 19th century could promote essentially timeless visions of remote landscapes that were in fact undergoing profound material changes. A compelling example is the 1866 work *La Haute Savoie*.⁵ This compendious account of the region was published following the French annexation of part of the duchy of Savoy in 1860, and dedicated to the Emperor Napoleon III, with the aim to make this mountainous area⁶ better known to the rest of France. The English landscape painter Henry John Terry was commissioned to draw lithographs to accompany the text prepared by French philologist and historian Francis Wey, and amongst other intensely Romantic images of ruined abbeys, castles, promontories, rustic chalets and rivers flowing under verdant boughs, the village of Sixt ([Figure 4.1](#)),⁷ near Chamonix, was, for instance,

⁵ Wey F 1866 *La Haute Savoie: Récits de voyage et d'Histoire: Illustrée de 50 Lithographies par H. Terry* Hachette, Paris -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Fonds Payot: 88.02.267)

⁶ '[L]a région des glaciers, des rochers et des neiges éternelles' ('[T]he région of glaciers, rocks and eternal snow') as it is described in the *Enquête Agricole* of 1867. (Ministère de l'agriculture, du commerce et des travaux publics 1867 *Enquête agricole: Deuxième série: Enquêtes départementales: 25e circonscription: Hautes-Alpes, Haute-Savoie, Savoie, Isère* Imprimerie Impériale, Paris -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Identifiant : ark:/12148/bpt6k6205550v / Notice n° : FRBNF34079249))

⁷ Now known as Sixt Fer-à-Cheval.

depicted with a serene, even Palladian quality in which the work of modernisation and agricultural revolution is entirely absent.



Figure 4.1: Illustration of Sixt.
Source: Wey 1866, *La Haute-Savoie, Op. Cit.* (p.77)

The animating force of the Romantic movement is often characterised as a reaction to the modernisation and industrialisation of Europe; and, especially but not exclusively in America, a celebration of wilderness and solitude (Bate, 1991; Buell, 1995; Cronon, 1995; Oerlemans, 2002). Rural spaces were key sites of emotional investment and philosophical argument for Romantic writers and artists, and such writers and artists exerted a great influence on French society throughout the 19th century, not only through their work, but also through their involvement in political activity and agitation. A satirical image from 1842 (Figure 4.2) depicts some of the leading figures in French intellectual, artistic and political life gathered together behind the Romantic writer Victor Hugo in a work entitled '*Le Grand Chemin de la*

Postérité’ (‘The Great Road to Posterity’). Though obviously a caricature, the image communicates something of the importance of the figures included.



Figure 4.2: Le Grand Chemin de la Postérité
Source : Musée Balzac du Château de Saché/ Wikimedia Commons

Carrying books on his back in the centre of the image, we see the writer Alexandre Dumas, who favoured Hermitage wine; just behind him in top hat and cane, the writer and social commentator Honoré de Balzac; and in a blue coat astride Pegasus’ tail, we find Francis Wey, historian and author of the 1866 illustrated book on Savoy mentioned above. We also find, carried by a cloud behind Victor Hugo, one of the early figures of the Romantic movement in France, considered one of the country’s greatest poets and also a major political figure: Alphonse de Lamartine. Born in 1790 and raised in some comfort in the Mâconnais region of Burgundy, a landscape dotted with grapevines and grazing herds, Lamartine prolifically evoked rural beauty and connected it with nostalgia, memory and the movement of the soul. His poetry and prose, whilst influential at the national scale, has been particularly and persistently resonant in those regions of eastern France where he travelled, reflected and wrote. Indeed, he is an example of a poet whose status as celebrant of terroir has been consistently imputed during the early decades of the 21st century. A recent collection of his poetry (Magnien, 2002) is entitled ‘*Poèmes du terroir et du coeur*’ and it describes him as a

man ‘perpetually in communion with his native land,’ and ‘profoundly rooted in his terroirs of origin’⁸. An organisation promoting the discovery of French regions on foot describes an itinerary around the Mâconnais as the chance to ‘appreciate a terroir filled with grace and harmony, as it was known by Alphonse de Lamartine’⁹(France Randonnée, 2015). And in 2013, an organisation called ‘Lamartine Un Grand Agriculteur (LUGA)’ was founded in Mâcon, with the specific purpose of: ‘Promoting meetings to understand the nature and culture of terroir and, if necessary, then helping to ensure the transmission of those knowledges and practices’¹⁰ (Net1901.org, 2015). Lamartine thus looms large as an interpellant of terroir in Burgundy, and not so much for any success in the wine production that he dabbled in, but rather for his vivid depictions of the region, often profoundly charged with a sense of historical continuity. Writing towards the end of his life, in a series of books whose aim was to inculcate an appreciation in and of the beauty of literature, Lamartine (1859) wrote in rustic, nostalgic terms of the land he grew up in (*‘la contrée ou je suis né’*). That description in prose used much of the same language of one of his earlier, and far better-known works, the poem *Milly, ou la terre natale* from his 1830 collection *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*. Lamartine wrote this latter poem in the late 1820s, at a time when he was disturbed by the notion that his father was considering selling the family home, the place where he had spent his childhood and first developed his literary sense. The feeling of loss, the clarity of memory, and the force of nostalgia were translated into a vivid and lyrical poem which turned upon the colourful rusticity, ancestral savoir-faire and apparent permanence of the rural landscape of the poet’s youth:

⁸ Tr: ‘en perpétuelle communion avec sa terre natale’; ‘profondément enraciné dans ses terroirs d’origine’.

⁹ Tr: ‘apprécier un terroir emprunt de grâce et d’harmonie, tel que le connut Alphonse de Lamartine’.

¹⁰ Tr: ‘Promouvoir des rencontres pour la compréhension de la nature et de la culture de terroir, si nécessaire, par la suite, participer à assurer la pérennité de la transmission de ces connaissances et de ces pratiques’.

'The moon that waxes and wanes in the night,
 The star that climbs upon the sombre hill,
 The herds chased from their high places by the chill air,
 The hillsides with little valleys that descend step by step,
 The wind, the thorn bush in flower, the grass green or withered,
 The plough in the groove, the wind in the meadow,
 All speak to me in a language of familiar accents
 [...]
 These moors, these fields, these vines, these meadows,
 Have all their dear memories and their dear shadows.'¹¹

The imprints that such lines made on the landscape were appreciated a hundred years later in the account of an excursion taken by a group assembled for a viticultural congress at Mâcon.¹² Part of the way around their circuit, it is recorded that:

'We stopped before Prissé, near to the Château de Montceaux, for just a moment, so as to draw, in this Lamartinesque landscape, on that poetic spirit so necessary for a contented mood.'¹³

But another of France's great poets, who also drew inspiration from the rural landscape of his childhood, saw the country and its agricultural activity in a significantly different way. Jacques Delille was most active in the late 18th century, and his magnum opus, *L'Homme des champs*, was published in 1800. Drawing inspiration from the *Georgics* of Virgil (Auserve, 1964), and in active correspondence with the agronomic reformer Henri Louis Duhamel de Monceau, Delille saw the benefits for France of the emerging agricultural revolutions in

¹¹ Tr: 'La lune qui décroît et s'arrondit dans l'ombre,/ L'étoile qui gravit sur la colline sombre,/ Les troupeaux des hauts lieux chassés par les frimas,/ Des coteaux aux vallons descendant pas à pas,/ Le vent, l'épine en fleur, l'herbe verte ou flétrie,/ Le soc dans le sillon, l'onde dans la prairie,/ Tout m'y parle une langue aux intimes accents'/ [...] Ces bruyères, ces champs, ces vignes, ces prairies,/ Ont tous leurs souvenirs et leurs ombres chéries.' de Lamartine (1830 : 27-28 ; 32).

¹² Fédération des Associations Agricoles et Viticoles de l'Arrondissement de Mâcon 1938 *Compte rendu et rapport général du conseil régional pour l'étude de la lutte contre les ennemis de la vigne tenu à Mâcon, les 16 et 17 janvier 1938*. Dossier 300 - BH 246, Archives Municipales de Mâcon.

¹³ Tr : 'Un temps d'arrêt est marqué avant Prissé, à proximité du Château de Montceaux, juste le temps de s'imprégner, dans ce paysage lamartinien, du complément de poésie indispensable à une heureuse disposition d'esprit.' (p.170, Fédération des Associations, op.cit.)

Europe, and wanted in his poetry to promote a rational and provident use of the land amongst the country's peasant farmers. Delille was celebrated by Voltaire and sought to transmit the values of the Enlightenment to the pursuit of agriculture and its shaping of the rural environment (Ehrard, 1967). He was seen by many as an Enlightenment figure, whose philosophy of nature was distinctively different from that of Lamartine and the later Romantics (Guitton, 1974). Indeed, an 1802 portrait of him being inspired and dictating poetry to his wife ([Figure 4.3](#)) is redolent of Joseph Wright of Derby's 17th-century portraits of scientists, engineers and philosophers, in the way that it illuminates the central, apparently enlightened figure with a 'magical intensity' (Nicolson, 1968, 50). Rusticity for art's sake, which may be abundantly witnessed in Lamartine's work¹⁴ did not motivate him. Rather, Delille argued that the application of the marvels of science and technology would allow a reasoned agriculture to properly dominate the inheritance of the natural world, and this through allegorical verses of his poem:

'Once upon a time, triumphant over an enemy soil,
 An old man knew how to make his fields more fertile
 Defeat barrenness and double the harvests.
 He managed, following the happy example of England,
 To mould, break down and rebuild the earth,
 And to create new meadows; and rich sainfoins,
 And clover repayed his efforts;
 Here from young blossoms he doubled the crown,
 There unknown fruits enriched the autumn.
 No rest for his fields, and their variety
 Alone forsook their fertility.'¹⁵

¹⁴ Consider, for example, the lines: 'And on the thin soil some rustic instruments/ Worn-out carts, others sleeping under their beams' (Tr: 'Et sur la terre éparse des instruments rustiques,/ Des jougs rompus, des chars dormant sous les portiques') de Lamartine, op.cit. p.26.

¹⁵ Tr: 'Jadis, heureux vainqueur d'une terre ennemie,/ Un vieillard avoit su de ses champs plus féconds/ Vaincre l'ingratitude et doubler les moissons./ Il avoit, devinant l'art heureux d'Angleterre,/ Pétri, décomposé, recomposé la terre,/ Créé des prés nouveaux ; et les riches sainfoins,/ Et l'herbe à triple feuille avoient payé ses soins ;/ Ici des jeunes fleurs il doubloit la couronne,/ Là de fruits inconnus enrichissoit l'automne./ Nul repos pour ses champs, et la variété/ Seule les délassoit de leur fécondité.' Delille (1800 : 70-71).



Figure 4.3 : Illustration of ‘Delille inspiré dictant ses vers à son épouse’ (Gravure de Laugier d’après le portrait de Danloux, de 1802).
Source : *Ecrivains d’Auvergne* (1967: 49)

The dry stones and nobly struggling farmers of the Mâconnais that served as the idyllic backdrop of Lamartine’s poetry were for Delille evidence of a problem of rural poverty that could be remediated by the improvements of the agricultural revolution that was gaining ground in France. Indeed, he positively encouraged improvement in agricultural practice, appealing directly to the reader;

‘You, do even more ; dare by your farming
To correct terroir and master nature.
Rival of Duhamel, learn his secrets ;
Get to know and employ the rich art of fertiliser :

Limestone, lime and marl await
 To provide your fields with the food they demand.
 [...]
 Here, to improve the meagreness of your fields,
 Mix rich clay into their coarse sands:
 There, to break up muddy ground,
 Marry to its soil more sandy earths.’¹⁶

Lamartine and Delille could both evoke rural beauty, but whereas Lamartine would let the literary and affective power of this beauty be the purpose of his setting pen to paper, Delille wanted it to be the context for improving the lot of peasant farmers. Both writers accepted terroir as an inheritance; but Delille, informed by the Enlightenment, corresponding with the modernising agronomist Duhamel du Monceau, and inspired by the didactic mission of Virgil, did not want it to be a form of economic predestination. In the preface to his poem, Delille explains the vision of agriculture that he wishes to communicate:

‘This is not that ordinary agriculture, which sows or reaps the productions of nature according to its seasons, which obeys its ancient laws, and follows its ancient customs; it is that marvellous agriculture which does not content itself with profiting from nature’s offerings, but which triumphs over obstacles, perfects crops and native breeds, naturalises foreign breeds and crops; which makes rocks yield their place to grapevines, [...] which knows how to create or correct lands, which makes canals for agriculture and commerce, which fertilises by irrigation the driest places...’¹⁷

So we have two competing visions of rural France from two of that nation’s great poets; the one resonating with the anteriority and continuity we explored in Chapter 3 of this thesis; the

¹⁶ Tr: ‘Vous, faites plus encore ; osez par la culture/ Corriger le terroir et domter la nature./ Rival de Duhamel, surprenez ses secrets ;/ Connoissez, employez l’art fécond des engrais:/ Pour fournir à vos champs l’aliment qu’ils demandent,/ La castine, la chaux, la marne vous attendent ; [...] Ici, pour réparer la maigreur de vos champs,/ Mêlez la grasse argile à leurs sables tranchants :/ Ailleurs, pour diviser les terres limoneuses,/ Mariez à leur sol les terres sablonneuses.’ Delille, op.cit. p.69-70.

¹⁷ Tr: ‘Ce n’est pas ici l’agriculture ordinaire, qui sème ou recueille dans leurs saisons les productions de la nature, obéit à ses vieilles lois, et suit les anciennes habitudes; c’est l’agriculture merveilleuse qui ne se contente pas de mettre à profit les bienfaits de la nature, mais qui triomphe des obstacles, perfectionne les productions et les races indigènes, naturalise les races et les productions étrangères; force les rochers à céder la place à la vigne, [...] sait créer ou corriger les terrains, creuse des canaux pour l’agriculture et le commerce, fertilise par des arrosements les lieux les plus arides...’. Delille, op.cit. p.xxvi (Préface).

other celebrating the great changes of processes of modernisation. Jacques Delille was writing at a time when the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the desire to apply them to the social problems of the day, were common currency amongst France's intellectual elite; indeed his poem *L'Homme des champs* is described as the 'swansong of the Enlightenment'¹⁸ by Guitton (1974: 450). But this was also a time before France had escaped the spectre of famine. In the early 19th century, France's regions had not been largely integrated into the national economy and grain shortages and surpluses were not effectively mediated at a national level (Weber, 1976; Clout, 1980). France was full of regions which had their own struggles to produce enough food, let alone achieve profits of distinction for what they could export, as in some of the wine-producing areas that had built up great reputations. For Paul Vidal de la Blache (1903: 384), prior to the revolutions in transport, communication and commerce he identifies in the 19th century, each region 'remained a little world unto itself, concerned with its own subsistence'.¹⁹ Within this spatially limited agricultural economy the land retained a central place in people's mindsets; '[i]n this state, esteem and trust were invested exclusively in the earth [*'terre'*]'²⁰. This was a view shared by Ratzel (1898: 5), who argued that: 'Whether we consider a large or small society, it seeks above all to maintain the integrity of the soil on which it lives and from which it lives.'²¹ Delille wrote of his country and of the country, of agriculture and of terroir, at a time when remote rural regions of France could suffer from impoverished soils, overpopulation and unimproved methods of farming. The relationship with the soil was a vital one, as Vidal and Ratzel argue, and one that for Delille and reforming agronomists like Duhamel ought to be improved with rational and

¹⁸ Tr : 'chant du cygne du mouvement des Lumières'.

¹⁹ Tr: 'restait comme un petit monde en soi veillant à sa propre subsistance'.

²⁰ Tr: '[d]ans cet état, l'estime et la confiance vont exclusivement à la terre'.

²¹ Tr: 'Que nous considérions une grande ou une petite société, avant tout, elle cherche à maintenir intégralement le sol sur lequel elle vit et dont elle vit.'

technological progress; progress that would be made ‘once the achievements of modern science - engineering, chemistry, plant and animals physiology - were exported from the towns into the countryside’ (Kautsky, 1988 (1899): 42-3). Placed alongside evocations of the beauties of nature, but not content for them to remain unchanging, Delille promoted a vision of agronomy which could *improve* the inheritance of terroir. Just as Voltaire wrote ‘France has its deserts; dare to cultivate them,’²² Delille hoped for ‘even more; dare by your farming to correct terroir and master nature’. As Guitton (1974) argues, this was a vision that would facilitate the technical conquest of nature through industrious modernisation; and which would help to ‘emancipate civil society through reasoned reform’ in common with the other arts and sciences informed by the Enlightenment (Withers, 2005: 193-94).

One such cognate science was winemaking. Following the *agricultural* revolutions of the late 17th and 18th centuries, the work of Jean-Antoine Chaptal and several other chemists produced a *vinicultural* revolution. And, just as Lamartine figured on the line-up of great men of letters in Roubaud’s satirical portrait above, so Chaptal figured in a line-up of seventy-two great men²³ of science and industry that was carved onto the Eiffel Tower ([Figure 4.4](#)). His analysis and propositions on how to better make wine were published in several treatises in the first few years of the 19th century. They centred around the addition of sugar to fermenting grape juice, with Cadet de Vaux introducing Chaptal’s argument that: ‘It’s sugar, sugar alone that makes wine.’²⁴ At this time, France, like Britain, had many overseas

²² Tr: ‘La France a des déserts, ose les cultiver’. Voltaire A Madame Denis, Sur l’Agriculture (14 Mars 1761) in Voltaire 1877 *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire* (Vol. 10), Garnier Frères, Paris, p.379 – Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k4113266) .

²³ No women figured in this list.

²⁴ Tr: ‘C’est le sucre, le sucre seul qui fait le vin.’ Cadet de Vaux A-A 1807 *L’Art de faire le vin, d’après la doctrine de Chaptal*, Au bureau de la “Décade philosophique, littéraire et politique”, Paris, p.15 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k10251137 / Notice n° : FRBNF30183188).

possessions in which sugar was produced and shipped back to the metropole. So valuable were the colonial sugarcane plantations to France, that the country gave up its vast Canadian territories in exchange for the return of the Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe, Martinique and St Lucia at the end of the Seven Years' War. The suite of recommendations that Chaptal made, and that other chemists, agronomists and commentators added to, may be assessed as means to create a modern agricultural commodity out of a banal, vernacular product of variable quality, in a similar way to the production of capitalist goods out of peasant sustenance that the agricultural revolution and greater national interconnectedness had enabled elsewhere. The role of terroir was fundamentally deprecated in this new approach to wine production. Chaptal observed that the grapevines of northern France received less than ideal amounts of sunlight, whilst those of southern France received much higher amounts. This translated into high concentrations of sugar in the juice from the southern grapes, and in higher degrees of alcohol in the fermented wine. However, Chaptal's proposition was not to blend wines from both regions of France, as some 19th-century wine merchants were already doing (see Husson, 1875) but rather for the producer to add sugar to grape juice that lacked its natural presence so that the resulting wine would be higher in alcohol. No matter the aptitude of the territory in which the grapes were grown, Chaptal instructed to: 'Add sugar to your harvested grapes, and you will have wines as spirituous as those from Burgundy; even as spirituous as those from the Languedoc'²⁵ ; or as Duchesne relayed the idea in his *Dictionnaire de l'Industrie*,²⁶ adding sugar would be the 'Means of producing the best quality

²⁵ Tr: 'Ajoutez à votre vendange de la matière sucrée, et vous aurez des vins aussi spiritueux que ceux de Bourgogne, même que ceux du Languedoc'. Cadet de Vaux, op. cit., p.16.

²⁶ Duchesne H-G 1800 *Dictionnaire de l'industrie, ou Collection raisonnée des procédés utiles dans les sciences et dans l'art* (Tome 6) Poignée/Volland/Billois, Paris, p.458 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k6388020c / Notice n° : FRBNF30364707).

and the most agreeable taste out of a wine from the worst terroir.’²⁷ I see this as a vision paraxial to that of Delille, whose injunction to ‘dominate’ terroir through improvement in agricultural method was published in the same year as Chaptal’s injunction to ‘correct’ terroir with the addition of sugar. In these conceptualisations, terroir was a barrier to progress; its affordances and limitations needed to be denatured by the intervention of Enlightened technology. So impressive and so influential were Chaptal’s recommendations that his work was officially prefaced and sent by the French Minister of the Interior to the prefects of various French départements. Chaptalisation, as the addition of sugar to grape must has now come to be known in the French language, was a process that rapidly became part of the national interest, and terroir would be seen as a source of defects in wine production; with the model of good quality wine described in an 1836 *Nouveau manuel complet des marchands de vin* as being specifically ‘sans goût de terroir’²⁸. Already famous for its wine exports, as we saw in Chapter 3, the French wine industry stood to benefit vastly from the scientific innovations of the late 18th and early 19th century; but through an understanding of terroir as something to be corrected rather than transmitted *qualis ab incepto*.

²⁷ Tr: ‘Moyen de donner au vin du plus mauvais terroir, la meilleure qualité et le goût le plus agréable.’

²⁸ Tr: ‘without a taste of terroir’. Laudier M 1836 *Nouveau manuel complet des marchands de vins, des débitants de boissons et du jaugeage*, Roret, Paris, p.114 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k63384864 / Notice n° : FRBNF30749128).



Figure 4.4: Detail of the series of names of 72 ‘savants’ engraved on the Eiffel Tower.
Source: Jean-Pierre Dalbéra/ Flickr.

So, whether describing terroir as an inherited aptitude to be overcome so as to provide enough food for the different regions of France, or as an initial source of grapes to which sugar and other products could be added to produce a more lucrative commodity, writers influenced by the scientific air of the Enlightenment saw the farmer’s closeness to the soil and its secular aptitude as an agricultural fact ripe for improvement. I have summarised, with very broad brush strokes, these and other trends in the use and meaning of terroir which I have found in a good number of archival documents, and present these in Figure 4.5 to allow the reader to follow this discussion of how its multiplicity of meaning has built up over time.

Period	Trends in terroir use evident from archival documents
(Pre-16 th century)	<i>(Terroir as land or territory, especially agricultural land or land with propensity for agricultural production; Terroir as rural environs of a town.)</i>
16 th century	Terroir used on maps in sense of environs of a town, and as fields or groups of fields. Terroir conditioning product. Taste or scent of terroir in product.
17 th century	Terroir being good, pleasant or fertile. Good practice allied with good terroir yielding good results. Terroir used as metaphor.
18 th century	Terroir used in description of colonial natures. 'Explication du terroir' as geographical description, including agricultural production.
19 th century (first half)	Terroirs named and delimited in cadastres. Sense of terroir in literature. Terroir responsible for bad taste in product. Ability to improve aptitude of terroir through application of science, industry to produce commercial commodity. Interventions able to make terroir as good as any other. Marks of terroir as defects in bourgeois society.
19 th century (second half)	Terroir being used in evocation of memory. Terroir as basis of wine recognition, but still improvable through interventions in vinification. Geological appreciation of terroir. Marks of terroir in art and imagery. Marks of terroir as something authentic, and related to landscape. National success of diversity of terroirs.
20 th century (first half)	Renewed interest and defence of patois and marks of terroir in language. Patriotic connection of terroir. Terroir in anthropological/environmental determinist accounts. Terroir responsible for good taste in product.
20 th century (second half)	Terroir a good thing. Attachment to terroir and one's place of birth and childhood. Post-war scientific apprehension of soil and terroir for improving productivity and feeding population (birth of INRA). Rootedness in terroir as a social phenomenon. Attributing the evocation of terroir to poets.
21 st century (to present day)	Desire for terroir, tradition, nature. Sense of rootlessness to be remedied by connections to terroir.

Figure 4.5: Summary of trends in use of terroir drawn from archival documents.
Source: Author.

In the rapidly urbanising France of the 19th century, urbane society in Paris above all could continue to deprecate the link to terroir, but this time in purely sociocultural terms. Balzac and Frémy wrote a satirical comparison of the types of person that may be found in Paris and in the country districts in 1841. One of the points they made was that members of fashionable

urbane society might attribute ‘the ridicule of terroir’²⁹ to their rural counterparts. I would argue that this ridicule was informed by the same conceptualisation of terroir that had grown in agriculture and commerce. In a French vocabulary of 1837, the expression ‘Ce vin sent le terroir’ is equated with the idea that the product ‘a un goût désagréable’³⁰. In a culinary dictionary of 1853, terroir is listed as one of the principal causes of the bad taste that a wine may exhibit. And at this time when terroir was described, even *defined*, in terms of fault, one could find: ‘locutions of terroir’³¹ in society being seen as ‘the flaws of their generation [*temps*] or their region [*pays*], what they inherit from their parents or from their terroir’³²; ‘a vice of terroir’³³; and things being said ‘with such an accent of terroir’³⁴ or using ‘a word of terroir unknown in Paris’³⁵. In an 1865 dictionary, ‘il sent le terroir’ was described as a popular expression of the time meaning ‘il a les défauts attribués aux personnes de son

²⁹ Tr: ‘le ridicule du terroir’. Balzac H and Frémy A 1841 *Physiologie du rentier de Paris et de province*, Martinon, Paris, p.106 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k1133819 / Notice n° : FRBNF32128912).

³⁰ Tr: ‘this wine tastes of its terroir’; ‘has a disagreeable taste’. Unknown Author 1837 *Nouveau vocabulaire de la langue française : d’après le Dictionnaire de l’Académie*, Lebigre Frères, Paris, p.629 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k6489460t / Notice n° : FRBNF30337118).

³¹ Tr: ‘locutions de terroir’. Rigault H 1859 *Conversations littéraires et morales* Charpentier, Paris, p.376 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k57669469 / Notice n° : FRBNF31217395).

³² Tr: ‘les défauts de leur temps ou de leur pays, ceux qu’ils tiennent des parents ou du terroir’. Rigault, op. cit.

³³ Tr: ‘un vice de terroir’. Nisard C 1867 *Des chansons populaires chez les anciens et chez les Français*, Dentu, Paris, p.249 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k205150s / Notice n° : FRBNF31019583).

³⁴ Tr: ‘avec un tel accent de terroir’. Jacolliot L 1875 *Voyage aux ruines de Golconde et à la cité des morts (Indoustan)*, Dentu, Paris, p.262 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k62044009 / Notice n° : FRBNF30639824).

³⁵ Tr: ‘un mot de terroir inconnu à Paris’. Letter from Maxime du Camp to Gustave Flaubert, 24 September 1856, itemised in Cottin M and Suffel J eds 1957 *Gustave Flaubert et Madame Bovary : exposition organisée pour le centenaire de la publication du roman (19 décembre 1957-28 février 1958)*, Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, p.15 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k58469497 / Notice n° : FRBNF37065040).

pays'³⁶; and In Ordinaire's (1867) *Rhétorique Nouvelle*, terroir would be used as a pejorative connection to remote places, to understand the source of faults in diction:

'A fault of accent in speech is shocking like a false note in a concert [...]
As for pronunciation, which is the manner of accentuating words, it is transmitted to us like an inheritance: we receive it, good or bad, from our parents, from those who raise us [*nos nourrices*], from our childhood companions: we breathe it in, so to speak, with the air that surrounds us. It is a local wine [*vin du cru*] that time can improve, but without taking from it its taste of terroir.'³⁷

Such distinguishing marks in speech were, as Bourdieu (1991) and indeed Shaw (1920) argue, sources of anxiety in bourgeois society. Paris in the middle decades of the 19th century was attracting great numbers of immigrants from all over the country. Ordinaire remarked that; 'the railways continually pour the country into Paris, and Paris into the country'; just as Husson (1875: 264) observed that '[t]his city absorbs...considerable quantities of wine'³⁸ from the country and sends them out overseas. As both national centre of calculation for political and economic power, and arbiter of distinctions in the cultural domain, it was the nexus for the valuation of vernacular productions and the cultivation of epistemologies of national excellence. Thus, like in improving agriculture and commerce, in literature and in art terroir would be used in criticism as a distinguishing mark of that which was vernacular, remote or insufficient by virtue of origin. So, for example, a magazine in Paris was criticised

³⁶ Tr: 'he has an air of terroir'; 'he has the flaws attributed to those people from his region [pays]'. Bescherelle L-N and Pons A-J 1865 *Nouveau dictionnaire classique de la langue française*, Garnier frères, Paris, p.972 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k6109143b / Notice n° : FRBNF31133874).

³⁷ Tr : 'Une faute d'accent dans le discours est choquante comme une note fausse dans un concert [...] Quant a la prononciation, qui est la manière d'accentuer les mots, elle nous est transmise comme un héritage : nous la recevons, bonne ou vicieuse, de nos parents, de nos nourrices, de nos compagnons d'enfance : nous la respirons, pour ainsi dire, avec l'air qui nous environne. C'est un vin du cru que le temps peut améliorer, mais sans lui ôter son gout de terroir.' Ordinaire D 1867 *Rhétorique nouvelle*, Hetzel, Paris, p.300 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k5440098s / Notice n° : FRBNF31039069).

³⁸ Tr : '[c]ette ville absorbe...des quantités considérable de vins'.

for being ‘rather common, too chatty, and having all the defects of terroir’³⁹; and a set of engravings which, whilst having their merits and their historical interest, had ‘too much of an accent, too much of a taste of terroir...to be ever recommended in an academy’.⁴⁰ Terroir had by this time clearly developed its own epistemological life beyond the bounds of agriculture, and it passed through institutions of discernment that were interested in multiple domains of cultural production.

Yet, as the century progressed, for reasons that are hard to identify but may well be related to the accelerating urbanisation of the country (cf. Weber, 1976; Clout, 1980; Murdoch and Pratt, 1993), this ‘taste of terroir’ came to be seen in a more positive light. Guy de Maupassant, a keen observer of the mores and fashions of Parisian life, communicated in his fiction a very sympathetic sense for its rural counterparts. In *Bel-Ami* (1885) he offset the intrigues and infidelities of the capital with the honesty and wholesomeness of rural Normandy, and allows the protagonist’s parents to communicate in their endearing patois. In *Le Horla* (1887) meanwhile, he evoked places saturated by memory and meaning in terms of:

‘[T]hose deep and delicate roots which attach a person to the land where his ancestors were born and where they died; which attach him to the thoughts one thinks and the food one eats, to customs, to local sayings, to the accents of the people; and to the scent of the soil, the villages and the air itself.’⁴¹

³⁹ Tr : ‘peu rare, fort bavarde, et ayant tous les défauts du terroir’. Hatim E 1859 *Histoire politique et littéraire de la presse en France*, Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, Paris, p.440 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k208033r / Notice n° : FRBNF30580242).

⁴⁰ Tr : ‘trop d’accent, trop de goût de terroir...pour être jamais recommandées dans une académie’. Renouvier J 1853 *Des types et des manières des maîtres graveurs : pour servir à l’histoire de la gravure en Italie, en Allemagne, dans les Pays-Bas et en France*, Imprimerie de Boehm, Montpellier, p.67 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k58215364 / Notice n° : FRBNF31199453).

⁴¹ Tr: ‘[C]es profondes et délicates racines, qui attachent un homme à la terre où sont nés et morts ses aïeux, qui l’attachent à ce qu’on pense et à ce qu’on mange, aux usages comme aux nourritures, aux locutions locales, aux intonations des paysans, aux odeurs du sol, des villages et de l’air lui-même.’

Born in Normandy and pursuing his career as a writer in Paris, Maupassant was clearly sensible to the pull of home and, importantly, to the value of terroir – of ‘*paysanneries*’ or living landscapes as Salomon (1896: 65) puts it – in other parts of France. At the turn of the century, the beginning of what is widely known as the *belle époque*, links to the rural and to the past were being positively celebrated, and indeed regional culture was making itself better known on the national scene. A discussion of the work of the poet François Fabié, for instance, described ‘this love of terroir’⁴² apparent in his work being tied to a sense of rural nostalgia. And one writer, discoursing on the subject of ‘Christmas in the old days’ argued that his favourite Christmases were those in the country that, born of the ‘naïve piety of the region’ could ‘keep the good flavour of their terroir’⁴³. This appetite for something authentic and virtuous in the country continued to grow as France became a progressively more urban country in the 20th century. Without a doubt, there was a growth in regionalist sentiment and a celebration, borne to some degree out of the fear of loss of regional patois and regional culture more generally (cf. Calvino, 2003). Regional reviews and magazines celebrated the cultural life of different parts of France. In the northern region of Picardy, one writer argued in 1903 that: ‘The question of patois is highly topical,’ given centralising policies that chased local idioms ‘into the furthest hideouts of their terroirs’⁴⁴. A section of ‘poems of terroir’ was included in the publication, with words of patois appearing therein; one was written by Leon Duvauchel, using words he had published in his earlier (1894) work ‘*Chez nous: paysages de France*’ (‘Our home: landscapes of France’), a book that depicts landscapes and scenes of life

⁴² Tr : ‘cet amour du terroir’. Brisson A 1895 *La comédie littéraire*, Armand Colin, Paris, p.125 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k96229j / Notice n° : FRBNF30162788).

⁴³ Tr : ‘Noëls d’Antan’ ; ‘nés de la naïve piété berrichonne’ ; ‘gardaient la bonne saveur du terroir’ - Ferré E 1895 Noëls d’Antan *Bulletin de la Société académique du Centre*, p.314-319 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/cb34422153c / Notice n° : FRBNF34422153).

⁴⁴ Tr : ‘La question des patois est toute d’actualité,’ ; ‘jusqu’en les recoins des terroirs’. La Picardie 1903 Enquête de la « La Picardie » sur le patois picard *La Picardie littéraire, historique et traditionniste*, p.70 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/cb32839675c/date / Notice n° : FRBNF32839675).

from rural Picardy, Brittany, and elsewhere. He opines that: 'Patois is like the steam that rises from the ploughed earth; special, particular to each terroir, and constituting to a certain extent the local air. It is a treasure.'⁴⁵ Another writer continued, noting the changes that modernisation had generated :

'With the railways, new means of communication, the setting up of factories that attract colonies of workers foreign to the terroir, coastal development, [and] the continual introduction of new elements into rural populations, our country regions are losing more and more of their uniqueness [*originalité*]. Once again, gentlemen, let us encourage the work of the traditionalists [*traditionnistes*]. Now is the time!'⁴⁶

France's panoply of terroirs came to be seen as a national resource, and were tied to memory and folklore. 'Terroir means something to us [*Le terroir nous parle*] and helps to constitute our national consciousness,' wrote one, 'like those who have died...Our ancestors only transmit all of the inheritance accumulated in their souls through the permanence of work on the land [*l'action terrienne*].'⁴⁷ Such transmission of continuity through the soil was promoted in the geography of Vidal de la Blache (1903), who argued that 'the relations between soil and man are imbued, in France, with a unique character of ancientness, of

⁴⁵ Tr : 'Le patois, c'est comme une buée qui monte de la glèbe remuée, spéciale, particulière à chaque terroir, et constituant un peu de l'air ambient. C'est une richesse.' Duvauchel L 1901 Patois *La Picardie littéraire, historique et traditionniste*, p.242-43 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/cb32839675c/date / Notice n° : FRBNF32839675).

⁴⁶ Tr: 'Avec les chemins de fer, les nouvelles facilités de communication, l'établissement de fabriques qui amènent des colonies ouvrières étrangères au terroir, le voisinage des plages, l'introduction continuelle d'éléments nouveaux dans les populations rurales, nos campagnes perdent de plus en plus de leur originalité. Encore une fois, Messieurs, encourageons les travaux des traditionnistes. Il est grand temps !' Maison P 1901 *Le Mariage en Vimeu La Picardie littéraire, historique et traditionniste*, p.319-21 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/cb344172122/date / Notice n° : FRBNF32839675).

⁴⁷ Tr: 'Le terroir nous parle et collabore à notre conscience nationale,' ; 'aussi bien que les morts...Les ancêtres ne nous transmettent intégralement l'héritage accumulé de leurs âmes que par la permanence de l'action terrienne.' Barrès/Colline 1902 Scènes et Doctrines du nationalisme *Le Figaro* 15 June 1902, p.4-5 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k2859040 / Notice n° : FRBNF34355551).

continuity'⁴⁸ ; this was represented in terms of folklore and tradition by Burgundy wine producers in the inter-war years (Laferté, 2011), and it also later took a darker turn in the ideology of the Vichy government, with Marshall Pétain remarking famously that 'la terre ne ment pas...[e]lle demande votre secours'⁴⁹ as part of the promotion of peasant values in his proposed moral rebuilding of France (Cleary, 2001: 249; Demossier, 2012). More broadly in the first decades of the 20th century, art that bespoke terroir could be valued for that character – 'Certainly not grand art, but personal art, art of terroir that has its worth'⁵⁰ ; the indelible marks of regional language in literature could be so many 'picturesque expressions of terroir,'⁵¹; and wine itself could now be described as 'deliciously marked by terroir'⁵² in clear contradistinction to the 'disgusting taste of terroir'⁵³ that Chaptal had sought to remedy over a hundred years earlier. Terroir had, as indicated in [Figure 4.5](#), become a good thing; a cultural mark of distinction that was no longer largely deprecated. Even the geographer Jean Brunhes (1920: 18-23) remarked that 'dialects and patois endure with their picturesque expressions of terroir,' and have been given a new 'vitality' with the growth of 'literary regionalism,' before he went on to discuss the country's products of terroir ('foies gras de Toulouse...pruneaux d'Agen...nougat de Montélimar...'), landscapes and regional architecture as so much

⁴⁸ Tr: '[I]es rapports entre le sol et l'homme sont empreints, en France, d'un caractère original d'ancienneté, de continuité'.

⁴⁹ Tr : 'The soil doesn't lie...[i]t needs your help'

⁵⁰ Tr : 'Petit art sans-doute, mais art bien personnel, art du terroir qui a son mérite'. Magnin J 1919 *La Peinture et le dessin* au musée de Besançon, Imprimerie de Darantière, Dijon, p.156 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Notice n° : FRBNF30858821).

⁵¹ Tr : 'pittoresques expressions de terroir'. Anonymous 1913 *Bibliographie : Au pays des ch'tits gas...* par Emile Guillaumin *La Lanterne* 9 Janvier 1913, p.4 – Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k7518021j).

⁵² Tr : 'savoureusement marqué par le terroir'. Perdriel-Vaissière J 1934 *En Pologne : Le Théâtre au Patronage Mon Théâtre*, p.5-8 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/cb32818010g/date / Notice n° : FRBNF32818010).

⁵³ Tr : 'goût repoussant de terroir'. Cadet de Vaux, op. cit., p.42.

evidence of admirable cultural ‘bigarrure’ (variegation) in his illustrated description of the *Visage de la France*.⁵⁴

Following the Second World War, this romantic, nostalgic sense of terroir continued to prevail throughout French culture, drawing on the ‘deep roots’ of the soil/society relationship which ‘continued to resonate well beyond the fall of Vichy and the Liberation’ of France (Cleary, 2001: 248). But in its original and specific domain of agriculture the epistemology of terroir had to change once more. At this time the country needed to be rebuilt and the population fed. For example, in the Normandy celebrated by writers like de Maupassant (1885) and Le Vavas seur (1888) for its rusticity, widespread destruction would require years of remediating work (Clout, 2006); and in Brittany, the longstanding seasonal movement of agricultural labourers to Jersey would be stemmed by the pressing need to produce food for the local population (Monteil, 2005). The *Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique* (INRA) was founded in 1946 with the express aim of bringing science and technology to bear on the agriculture of France. This was around the time of the establishment of the body that protected products of terroir that could claim ‘local, loyal and constant’ methods of production; the *Institut National des Appellations d’Origine* (INAO),⁵⁵ but the need for a renewed focus on productivism came with the reality of post-war circumstances (Claval, 1994; Bockstaller *et al*, 2010). In a 1952 report which INRA had prepared in conjunction with the French Ministry of Agriculture, it mentioned the ‘[l]aunching of a programme of terroir studies, with manuring trials, so as to determine the bases of the interpretation and

⁵⁴ Tr: ‘les dialectes et les patois subsistent avec de pittoresques expressions de terroir’ ; ‘vitalité’ ; ‘régionalisme littéraire’.

⁵⁵ In 1947, though it had precursor organisations earlier in the century.

analysis of soils’⁵⁶. This presaged the acceleration of adding synthetic materials to improve the fertility of soils, performing anew Delille’s injunctions of the 1800s, and laying seeds of later reaction in the development of organic farming. The epistemological background to this study of terroir was that of a scientific agronomy, which aimed to understand and ‘define the character of soils from different terroirs, their degree of fertility and the means of improving them’⁵⁷. The romantic connotations of terroir were clearly less important in this work than the much older sense of territory or land with aptitude for agricultural production, apprehended through the application of modern science, at a time when such agricultural production needed to be maximised. For instance, a 1957 action plan in the eastern Lorraine region attempted to identify those parts of the region where various crops could be most successfully grown, and the existence of ‘insufficiently exploited agricultural possibilities,’ following several other projects of post-War reconstruction and modernisation (Clout, 2011). After identifying two areas as ‘the two main breadbaskets [*greniers*] of the province’, it went on to describe ‘a whole range of terroirs, with each one offering great possibilities, despite the climate being poor almost everywhere’.⁵⁸ The ways in which terroir was understood in agronomic and sociocultural fields had at this time clearly grown far apart. Although the earth had to be worked to feed an exhausted and hungry population, in time the satisfaction of immediate need would allow for discernment, distinction and concern for place-based authenticity to once again be widely exercised in the commerce of food and drink. The sense

⁵⁶ Tr : ‘[m]ise en route d’un programme d’étude de terroirs avec essais de fumure, afin de préciser les bases de l’interprétation et l’analyse des sols’. INRA/ Ministère de l’Agriculture 1952 *Rapport Annuel*, p.294 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k6537694j / Notice n° : FRBNF33918276).

⁵⁷ Tr : ‘définir les caractères des sols de différents terroirs, leur niveau de fertilité et les moyens de l’améliorer’. INRA op. cit., p.14.

⁵⁸ Tr : ‘possibilités agricoles insuffisamment exploitées’ ; ‘les deux principaux greniers de la province’ ; ‘tout un éventail de terroirs dont chacun offre, malgré un climat presque partout aigre et rude, de grandes possibilités’. Région de Lorraine 1957 *Programme d’action régionale (approuvé par arrêté du Ministre des affaires économiques et financières, du 12 octobre 1957)* Imprimerie des Journaux officiels, Paris, p.23 -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k65355705 / Notice n° : FRBNF33903584).

of terroir that relates to seeking authenticity and relating quality to provenance, which had built up over several centuries, is today by far the most widely used, and is how terroir is largely interpreted through the lens of the AOP-IGP system.

Consumers making choices about products with expectations of terroir may be far removed from the land they come from. We explored that idea in historical terms in Chapter 3, and the role of terroir in connecting people to places continues to this day. ‘Attachments to terroir can be made anywhere, independently of actual immediate proximity,’⁵⁹ it was argued in the 1980s; and we may reflect upon the description of terroir’s broad cultural valency that the geographer Jean-Robert Pitte wrote in 1999. Terroir has grown in popularity amongst a society ‘in search of its roots’ (Frayssignes, 2008), ‘in search of meaning’⁶⁰ (Héritier, 2013: 17) and ‘rediscovering the charms [*aménités*] of the countryside’⁶¹ (Perrin, 2010: 326). Terroir has become a symbolic and widely meaningful way to evoke the authenticity and multifarious value of the country (cf.; Le Caro, 2014; Baker, 2012; Halfacree, 2014), and events can be held in which those who are both ‘lovers of wine’ and ‘lovers of the music of words’ present ‘poems of terroir’⁶² to fascinated audiences (Bien Public, 2012). The vivid rhetorical description, or *ekphrasis*, of the Romantic poets, may not have had terroir as an evocative part of its lexicon, but its present-day resonance allows such work to be mobilised in the valorisation of rural places. In this way, we can understand the ‘personality of a place’

⁵⁹ Tr : ‘Les attachements à un terroir peuvent se manifester partout, indépendamment d’un voisinage actuel et immédiat’. Conseil national du crédit 1986 *Rapport du groupe de travail sur le financement du développement régional*, Banque de France, Paris -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k64957901 / Notice n° : FRBNF34929311).

⁶⁰ Tr : ‘en quête de sens’.

⁶¹ Tr : ‘redécouvrant les aménités du campagne’.

⁶² Tr : ‘amateur du vin’ ; ‘aimant la musique des mots’ ; ‘poésie du terroir’.

owing much to ‘the influence of a powerful literature’ armed with the evocative power of terroir (Tuan, 1991: 686).

It would be a lengthy undertaking to go through France’s literary and scientific output to pin down exact moments of change in the continuum of terroir’s popular understanding. But it is possible to generalise in a provisional way about these innovations and trends in the use and meaning of terroir, and I have done that in [Figure 4.5](#). My contention is that terroir’s epistemological life has been enriched by wider trends in French society, and that terroir itself has entered the conceptual vocabulary of diverse cultural domains. Though not always contemporaneous, the deprecation and celebration of terroir have been relayed from agriculture to culture and back again. The technological domination and correction of terroir propagated by Delille and Chaptal saw, some years later, terroir being used as a pejorative sobriquet for discursive and cultural output that remained too close to their vernacular origin. But then the romance of Lamartine and his aestheticisation of landscapes of the past also eventually found its supporters, first in cultural production and criticism, and later in the appreciation of wine and other agricultural products. The sense of authenticity in anteriority that Romanticism helped to generate would have profound effects and, I will argue, would form part of the specific epistemology of terroir in the production of geographically protected food and drink approved by INAO; an epistemology built on different predicates from the post-war agronomic expectations of INRA, but nonetheless shaped by national systems of comparison.

4.3. Parallel Lines: Terroir, Language and Abstraction

I want now to think about this in a more structured way. I want to sketch out what I see as the parallel lines of terroir and language which should help us to assess the cultural framework of today's system of terroir-driven geographical protection. Michel Serres, in his *Platonic Dialogue* (1982), and in more detail in his *Origines de la Géométrie* (2011), elaborates a theory that geometric forms are abstractions from everyday noise, fuzziness and chaos. They are purified forms detached from empirical admixtures of form[s]; they are order *abstracted* from disorder. Derek McCormack (2012) develops a similar point, arguing that 'abstraction can be understood as a technique of thinking which marks a removal from the contingent nature of empirical experience in order to generate some kind of extraexperiential generalization'. Toscano (2008) and Loftus (2012) have also considered processes of abstraction from social science points of view, and it would be a small step to understand products of terroir as mobile abstractions from complex agricultural spaces, and, as we did in Chapter 3, to discuss this in terms of things *becoming* economic, following Callon *et al* (2007) or of things attaining particular qualities, following Barry and Slater (2005). I will come back to these ideas, but I want first to start from Serres' theory to elaborate a relationship between terroir and language via the process of abstraction. Serres' proposition that a circle drawn in the sand can be *understood* as a circle, with all of its attendant geometrical possibilities, even though its actual shape will be fuzzy, imperfect and crumbling, has parallels with Michel de Certeau's (1988) argument for the remarkable, and power-laden ability, to interpret mobile, fragile and imperfectly-drawn glyphs as writing; with Gunnar Olsson's (2007) arguments for properly composed clusters of lines constituting cartographic propositions about the world; and has an historical illustration in Captain Cook's chalk drawing of a circle on the deck of

the *Endeavour* in an attempt to signify an island to a Polynesian man who did not speak his language (Withers, 2007: 105-7). The important point is that:

‘To isolate an ideal form is to render it independent of the empirical domain and of noise.’ (Serres, 1982:70)

Serres proposes the term ‘cacography’ to refer to the noise that impedes perfect communication and the successful exchange of abstract forms between actors. He identifies the following as belonging to this realm of noise: ‘stammerings, mispronunciations, regional accents, dysphonias, and cacophonies’ (*Ibid*: 66). Serres argues that abstracted forms allow communication to overcome the ‘noise’ of the world; for systems of signs to exceed ambient nonsense, or for cartography to offer a way out of cacography. But in excavating the history of geometry, his concern is to identify the historical processes by which this has occurred. He remarks that before systematized abstraction takes place;

‘History begins with regional language and the space of anisotropic communication.’ (*Ibid*: 65)

Now, the line of argument I want to pursue here is an experimental one, but to begin I would hold in suspension a blunt idea: that is, that the French nation is an abstracted form, and in ‘placing epistemology at the top of the hierarchy’ as Bowker and Latour (1987, 740-41) put it, it works to privilege abstracted forms in its intellectual, economic and cultural life. At the time of the French Revolution and the consequent declaration of the French Republic in 1789, it has been estimated that most of the citizenry did not speak French (Weber, 1976; Bourdieu, 1991). They spoke a variety of regional languages, dialects and *patois* related to French but not entirely mutually intelligible. The French provinces were indeed spaces of anisotropic communication; not only linguistically, but more widely across epistemological domains. Not only had their economies not yet become robustly interconnected through the work of

modernisation, but also as Withers (2007: 120) has argued, with the Enlightenment profoundly informing the arts, sciences and philosophy in France at this time, standardised measures and systems were beginning to ‘further standardize France's sense of itself’. Knowledge claims in various domains of intellectual and public life depended on ‘where people went looking for evidence to “prove” them, on specific localities and places of knowledge, and on how others elsewhere interpreted them’ (*Ibid*, 129); and an interest in the commensurability, systematisation and classification of panoplies of different things grew. Thus epistemology came to occupy a prominent role in public intellectual life, to which many years later Bowker and Latour (1987) are still sensible. Projects with elite sponsorship in France that embodied this interest before the Revolution, such as Diderot’s *Encyclopédie* and Cassini’s first maps of France (cf. Konvitz, 1987), had counterparts after it, and under Napoleon’s reign the rational ideas of the Enlightenment found powerful expression in attempts at rational organisation of the state. Thus, just as the provinces of the *ancien régime* were divided and recast into contiguous *départements* under his aegis, so the multiple languages found in the inchoate French state were progressively marginalised by the purposeful diffusion of a standardised French language. This is not to say that what we know as the French language came into existence with the declaration of the French republic; it had developed and become formalised over centuries, with men of letters such as Claude Favre de Vaugelas removing ‘latinisms’ and carrying out other operations of purification and abstraction from those vernacular iterations at odds with the language spoken at court (cf. Grevisse and Goosse, 1986), as well as the *Académie Française* pursuing its task of policing and standardising the language from its foundation in 1634. But, with the creation of a French republic, in which the citizens were to have a more direct relationship with the state, the French language became the obligatory medium of interaction with it.

In the decades that followed, the spoken economies of national military service and universal primary education ensured the diffusion of the language to the furthest reaches of the nation. Military service for all men aged between 20 and 25 years was instituted in 1798 (see Weber, 1976: 292-302), and a large number of new primary schools were established throughout the country shortly after the Revolution,⁶³ with primary education becoming both free and compulsory from 1881. Pierre Bourdieu (1991: 49) followed the sociologist Georges Davy (1950) in arguing that in these circumstances the primary school teacher served as a '*maître à parler*' for country children and, thereby, crucially, as a '*maître à penser*'.⁶⁴ Primary instruction in French, he argued, essentially implemented the theory of philosopher Etienne Bonnot de Condillac which 'made it possible to identify revolutionary language with revolutionary thought' (Bourdieu, 1991: 47). A shared national and territorial consciousness could be strengthened through a shared language (Baker, 1990; Anderson, 1991; Billé, 2014); and at the very least, scientific and other epistemologies could be more efficiently shared. The ideas of the Republic, or the Enlightenment, or of whatever else was necessary to instruct, could be propagated through a nationally sanctioned and regulated language.

A major language in the exchange of Enlightenment ideas, French enjoyed widespread success as a language of scholars and elites in 17th, 18th and early-19th century Europe (Rjéoutski *et al*, 2014). In response to the questions of the Berlin Academy on why that language should have been, in 1784, so widespread as to be considered *universal*, the French writer Antoine Rivarol propounded what he saw as the '*génie*' or genius of his French language. I would argue that he went too far when he wrote:

⁶³ See Lakanal J 1794 Rapport et projet de loi sur l'organisation des écoles primaires, présentés à la Convention nationale, au nom du Comité d'instruction publique, Convention Nationale, France, -- Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ark:/12148/bpt6k48940f / Notice n° : FRBNF37246238).

⁶⁴ Tr : 'teacher of how to speak'; 'teacher of how to think'. cf. Crossan (2005).

‘What distinguishes our language from others, ancient and modern, is the order and the construction of sentences...French syntax is incorruptible. From this emerges that admirable clarity which is the eternal basis of our language: THAT WHICH IS NOT CLEAR IS NOT FRENCH; that which is not clear may be English, Italian, Greek or Latin...we could say that it is from elementary geometry, from the basic straight line, that the French language is formed...’ (Rivarol, 2014 (1784): 76-77 (capitals in original))⁶⁵

Yet the basis for this cultural arrogance is specifically rational, i.e. the grammar of the French language. The ‘clarity’ of communication that the language permits is built upon logical order and ‘geometric’ forms: indeed, Rivarol saw the fruit of the Enlightenment promotion of rationality and ordered knowledge in the form of the language itself. Now, Olsson (2007) discusses at length the rhetorical power of geometry, but he also argues that logic itself is a form of rhetoric; one made practically invisible by its apparently objective appeal to rationality. And when cartographic, geometric lines enter the service of the state, their claims are rendered more powerful (Konvitz, 1987; Harley, 1988; Painter, 2008; Gaberell and Debarbieux, 2014). Rivarol’s argument (which he complements with more historical and literary specificities) is one in which the logical principles and rules of the language produce the clearest transmission of argument and knowledge. The domain of noise, the space of anisotropic communication, is one populated by other languages and, within France, by other prototypes of the French he writes in. Those languages, ‘that multitude of patois that still exist in our provinces’⁶⁶ (Rivarol, 2014 (1784): 34) could not claim the universality which was being attributed to French by him and by the Berlin Academy. Moreover, the relative lack of form and logical syntax in those patois, their imperfect degree of abstraction, would

⁶⁵ Tr : ‘Ce qui distingue notre langue des anciens et des modernes, c’est l’ordre et la construction de la phrase... la syntaxe française est incorruptible. C’est de-là que résulte cette admirable clarté, base éternelle de notre langue : CE QUI N’EST PAS CLAIR N’EST PAS FRANÇAIS ; ce qui n’est pas clair est encore anglais, italien, grec ou latin...On diroit que c’est d’une géométrie toute élémentaire, de la simple ligne droite que s’est formée la langue française...’

⁶⁶ Tr : ‘cette multitude de patois qui vivent encore dans nos provinces’.

have necessarily prevented their universality, *pace* Rivarol. Claims to universalism are a danger imputed to abstraction by various critics, as McCormack (2012) argues, and here we may reflect that the language which facilitated communication between collectively enfranchised French citizens, and which served as the sanctioned language within state spaces (Bourdieu, 1991) rapidly acquired a privileged status which was carried along with, indeed was the *means of transmission* of expressions of French national prestige and power. I would argue that language at that time functioned as an apparatus of state, just like cartography; with both implementing the abstractions and adapting the forms of geometry to promote the development of a national project, and both being used in the formulation of national epistemologies.

Those other languages, however; those patois, regional languages and dialects, those spaces of vernacular noise, could also be celebrated in the midst of, but most significantly after, their deprecation. Indeed, as we discussed earlier in this chapter, at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, a new move towards celebrating regional difference was evident in France, and the performance of regional patois and dialects through speech and writing were specifically chosen means of doing this. In the next chapter, we will look at the means by which terroir is performed and portrayed in the Reblochon cheese-producing part of the Savoy region of France. The romanticisation of Alpine landscapes, which we saw in [Figure 4.1](#) above, has left a long legacy in how Alpine regions are imagined, and in the chapter to come one of the archival materials that will be looked at is a newspaper from the village of La Clusaz which was printed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, entitled *L'Echo des Alpes* ('Echo of' or 'Gossip from' the Alpine pastures).⁶⁷ In the first three issues of this

⁶⁷ L'Echo des Alpes, 1979-1982 (Issues 1-11), Dossier PER 640 – Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie.

newspaper the traditional vernacular of the village and valley is transmitted through a regular feature entitled '*La Leçon de Patois*,' i.e. lessons in local dialect. In this feature ([Figure 4.6](#)), the reporter named only as Marie, who also recounts visits to farms and the beauty of the landscape, communicates the words and phrases of the local dialect that 'will allow you [the reader] to better appreciate the charm of the village'. The words chosen are certainly pertinent to the montane region; cows, blueberries, milk, snow, and 'look up there' are all presented in the series along with their translation into standard French, and a later issue presents a traditional local recipe written out in patois, along with its translation. I would contend that the inclusion of this patois forms part of the rhetorical unearthing of terroir that the newspaper's other reports on the life, landscape and produce of the area work towards. These words may be considered as an example of what Marie describes as 'a curiosity that city-dwellers want a taste of', commensurable with the rustic stables and the old-fashioned practices of the farmers which we will see in the next chapter. They '*sentent le terroir*' of Savoy much like Lamartine's poetry is supposed to do for Burgundy; they are presented as examples of the '*véritables fleurs du terroir*' to be found throughout francophone lands (Le Maistre, 1966: xix). But the authenticity and the anteriority of these words have become, I would argue, necessarily *related* in the epistemological conventions of French society. That is to say, vernacular spaces of patois and vernacular spaces of terroir may both be considered as 'hinterlands of anteriority' (after Law, 2004) and that very consideration is a significantly modern aspect of how terroir is understood in France. This is of particular relevance to the arguments of this thesis because both terroir and language are able to conjure a sense of identity, meaning, attachment and stability, and I feel this sense is amplified in their combination.

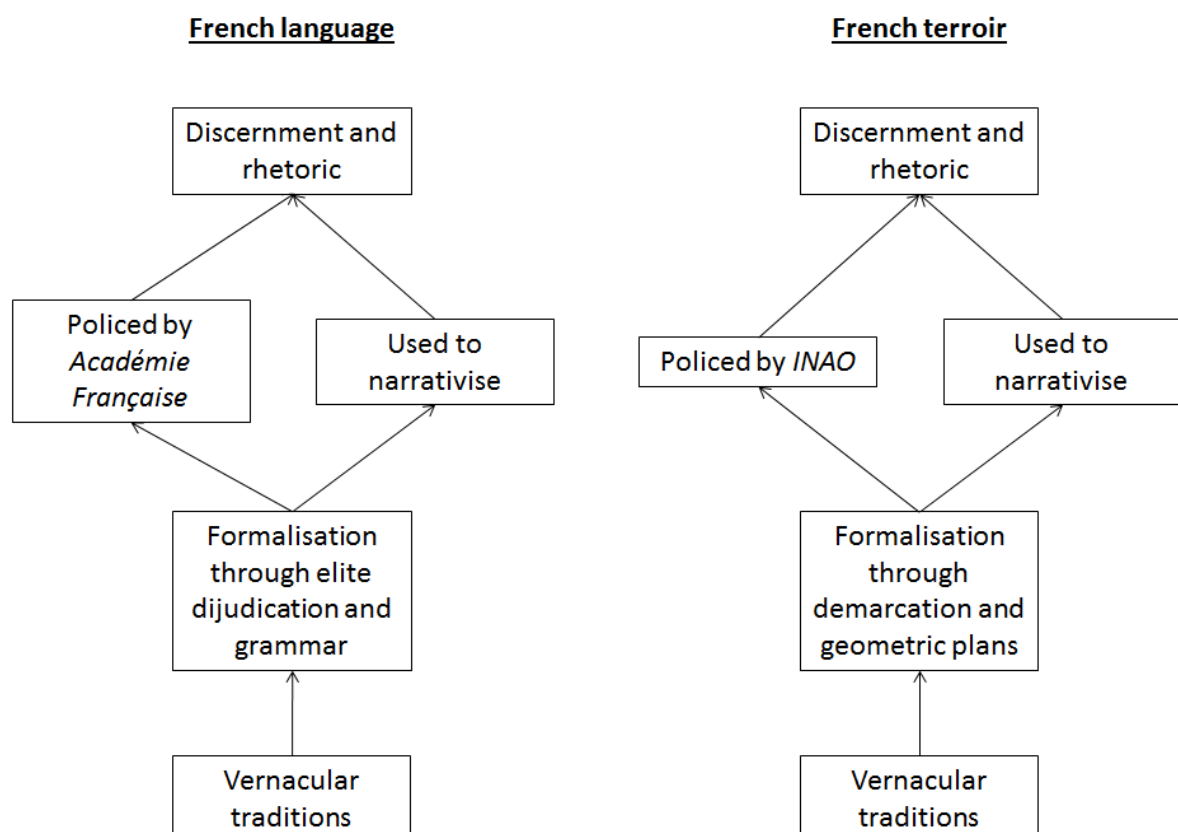


Figure 4.6: Lesson in patois.
 Source: L'Echo des Alpes, op.cit. (1980).

Today, terroir lives through language. As discussed earlier in this chapter, several writers have leapt from land to language in celebrating the accents of terroir and identifying poets of terroir, Lamartine foremost among them. This is the realm of ekphrasis: words and their composition that strongly evoke a particular place. And it is not limited to poetry. At the end of the first '*leçon de patois*' in *L'Echo des Alpes*, a list of toponyms and their etymology is given; thus we learn that the word 'Lachat', found often on maps of the region, means 'a thin pasture on a stony soil, in a clearing of firs'⁶⁸; and that the village name of 'La Clusaz' itself (to be pronounced, we are told, without the final 'az') refers to 'a road confined between two mountains'. So many of the elements that constitute the geographic facts of the region can be evoked and recomposed in words; this much we know from toponymy in general (see Rose-Redwood *et al*, 2010). But language also lives in terroir, in that, as we discussed in Chapter 3, it is necessary to combine the cursive language of words and the cartographic language of colour, line and point to allow the products grown in a specific territory to receive legal geographical protection. Inasmuch as these products are understood as discrete and bearing specifically attributable qualities, geographical protection reveals that the process of

⁶⁸ Tr: 'un pâturage maigre sur un sol pierreux, au milieu des sapins'; 'un chemin resserré entre deux montagnes'.

abstraction is ongoing and may be understood as a form of epistemological labour which does, however, depend upon the anterior, vernacular spaces of agricultural and cultural production. An exercise in geographical rhetoric has to be committed to paper every time a product is to be elevated to geographically unique status: convincing contours of words and symbols have to be found that can convey, in their combination, the unique character and quality of the product's territorial provenance. Indeed, it is my argument that both the cursive language of words and the geographic language of maps are formalised by grammar, built upon tradition, and policed by quasi-governmental bodies in France. That is, the *Académie Française* in the case of the French language; and the *Institut National des Appellations d'Origine* (INAO) in the case of localised food and drink. I outline this comparison in [Figure 4.7](#).



[Figure 4.7](#): Schematic comparison of processual abstraction of language and terroir in contemporary France.

Both models above are apparatus for making and receiving meaning. On the right, both vernacular and formal elements will come through in terroir: the authenticity to be found in anteriority and mobilised by processes of historicisation; and expectations (and tools) of formal geographical communication. Both of these models operate within national projects and schematise processes of abstraction within national cultural and epistemological frames. Products of language and terroir can both be considered abstractions, where ‘[a]bstraction is the process by which simplification takes place, and abstractions are taken to be those representational forms through which this process is stabilized and through which its results circulate’ (McCormack, 2012: 717). We could follow the progress of a geographically protected product through this model on the right, with its vernacular traditions being pinned to a specific territory and used in the production of narratives about the product, with INAO propagating maps of its origin and ensuring the product is not copied elsewhere, and with consumers ultimately choosing from between the various types of similar product on offer in the marketplace and the stories of terroir they convey; and indeed we will walk through this geographical and historical structure of expectation for the Reblochon cheese production chain in the next chapter.

4.4. A System of Singularities: From Terroir to Geographical Protection

Epistemologically then, terroir bears a kind of tension. It is an attempt to limit a set of relationships in space and time, and this requires various forms of labour both to initiate and to maintain. Bingham and Thrift (2000) have discussed Serres’ idea that ‘geometry vitrifies space and freezes duration’, and this resonates both with Whatmore’s (1999) concern with the conservative action of ‘geometric habits of mind,’ and with de Certeau’s (1984) conjugation

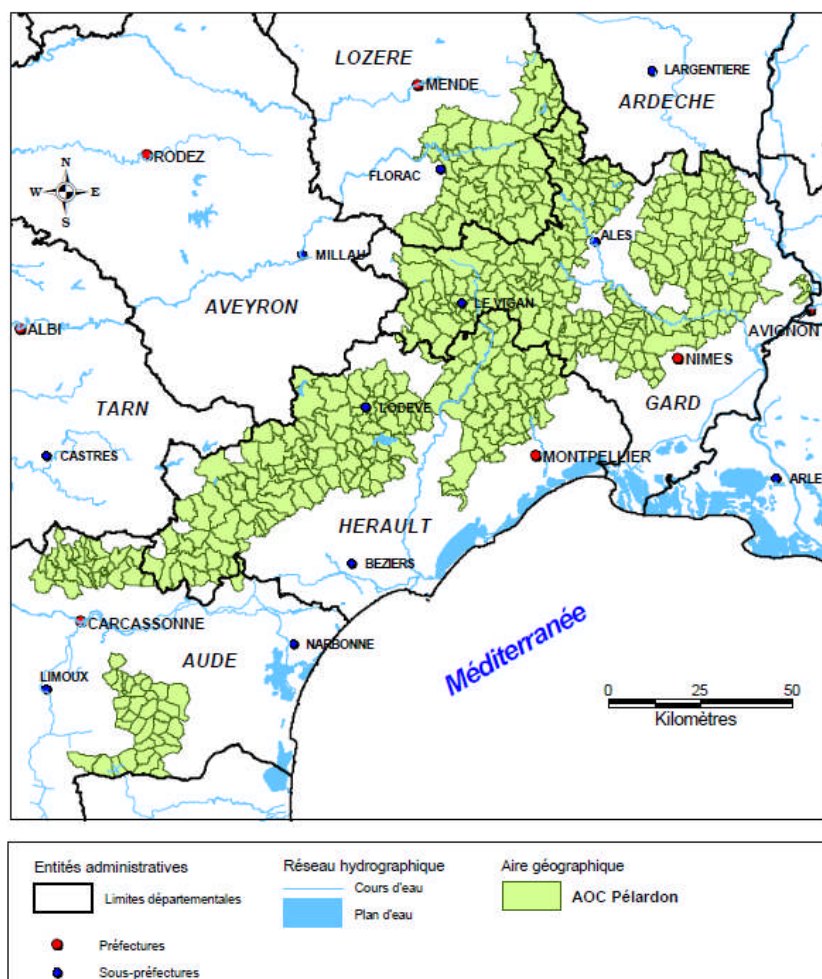
of geometry and stasis. The important connection here is that to make claims for terroir, and to enter it into a national system of terroirs, producers have to settle its spatial limits, and this fixing with lines is done always with the expectation of precedence – some historical logic – but never with the obligation of permanence. The earliest iterations of the AOC (now AOP) system valorised practices that were supposed to be ‘local, loyal and constant’, and the AOC label was designed to protect products whose producers could adduce the elements of terroir that made them unique. Today, the AOP system is necessarily sympathetic to claims made for products on the bases of connections between elements that have both a spatial and temporal consistency and, as I will argue, using geometric units to encapsulate and mobilise historical agricultural situations can be seen as developing a specifically modern epistemological project out of a landed anteriority.

When Charles de Gaulle remarked on the difficulty of governing a country that had ‘246 different varieties of cheese’ (cited in Mignon, 1962: 57), he offered a glimpse of the challenges of national organisation of spatial difference that was as amusing as it was incisive. The system of geographical protection of food and drink that prevails today in France (and by extension in Europe, as we will discuss in Chapter 7) is a system of singularities. Veronica Della Dora (2013: 698) follows Farinelli (2003: 41) in using that particular phrase to express what the Roman emperor Tiberius saw in the view he enjoyed over the landscape of Capri from the elevation of his imperial palace; a ‘prospectus of *topia*’; an idiography of places presented at once. And this is the point at which the French system of terroir varies from that of language to which we compared it in [Figure 4.7](#) because it does not entail the progressive reification of one product (i.e. the French language) but rather standardises the terms of entry to a prospectus of different products. Compilation of diverse geographical and cultural facts into a series or system is a classic operation of power-knowledge (Foucault, 2002 (1970);

1972), and the assertion that the limits of the prospectus and the limits of the state are coterminous is a deployment of national territorial logic (Elden, 2010; 2013; Billé, 2014; cf. Gaberell and Debarbieux, 2014). The current AOP system in France, just like its earlier iterations, serves as a national prospectus of terroirs, an operation of parataxis or compilation of things whose propositions are understood to be commensurable. Importantly, although products of terroir do not have to be *contiguous* parts of a national whole (see [Figure 4.8](#)), which, as Claval (2001) argues, is a common epistemological predicate in geography, they do have to conform to a specifically territorial structure of expectation, and this, I contend, is communicated through a form of geographical rhetoric.



AIRE GEOGRAPHIQUE DE L'AOC PELARDON



SOURCES : BDCARTO-IGN, MAPINFO, I.N.A.O, 04/2008

Figure 4.8: Map of the *communes* (towns/villages) included in the fragmentary geographic area of the *appellation* for Pélardon AOP cheese (areas highlighted in green).
 Source: INAO.

The AOP system has not abandoned the *ancien régime*'s imprints on the land of France. It has instead reorganised them. This is a crucial difference. Geographically protected products such as the Agneau du Bourbonnais IGP and Noix du Périgord AOP betoken by their name and heritage regions of France which are no longer represented on the national administrative map and which no longer have any political existence. Yet the fact of their proposed descent

from that anterior region speaks for their authenticity. Continuity is a powerful rhetorical device. As we saw in Chapter 3, the wine producers of Meursault organised themselves into an association to recommence wine fairs and reach out to wine merchants following the decimation of grapevines wrought by phylloxera and their subsequent replanting in the late 19th century. In their evocation of the terroirs of the village, they would attempt to recreate a sense of continuity in production *despite* the rupture of a very grounded discontinuity. ‘In highlighting epistemological ruptures,’ Veronica Della Dora (2013:705) recently argued, ‘geographers have inevitably downplayed continuities in their histories of geographical thought.’ I would certainly concur that in analysing the logics of popular geographical thought, continuity needs to be given more, not less, attention. However, I would also argue that we need to go further than simply attending to the presence of continuity; we need to examine how continuity is proposed and how it is mobilised. In France especially, geography and history have been for so long conjugated in national geographical, cultural and political stories that the inheritance of the past cannot fail to shape how sense is made of the land. But, more importantly for my thesis, the cultural value and consequent expectation of historical continuity in cultural goods are themselves a powerful shaping force. In stories of terroir, continuity is frequently the headline. It is explicit in the formula ‘local, loyal and constant’; it is more or less explicit in most accounts of terroir I have come across in my research; and it is what I see regularly being presented to the formal dijudication of the AOP system; the decisions to accept and recognise, or not, proposed products of terroir.

When associations of producers in France wish to obtain a label of geographical protection for their food or drink product, they are obliged to submit a dossier to the *Institut National des Appellations d’Origine* (INAO). Though the French system goes back to the 1920s, as we discussed in the previous chapter, a comparable process now exists in other European

countries, and in every case national governments need to approve the dossiers before they are passed to the European Commission for EU-wide approval. For the AOP label, as well as describing the material characteristics of the product, producers need to provide, as Article 4 of the regulation (European Commission, 2006) puts it:

- (c) the definition of the geographical area and, where appropriate, details indicating compliance with the requirements of Article 2(3);
- (d) evidence that the agricultural product or the foodstuff originates in the defined geographical area referred to in Article 2(1)(a) or (b), as the case may be;
- (e) a description of the method of obtaining the agricultural product or foodstuff and, if appropriate, the authentic and unvarying local methods as well as information concerning packaging, if the applicant group within the meaning of Article 5(1) so determines and gives reasons why the packaging must take place in the defined geographical area to safeguard quality or ensure the origin or ensure control;
- (f) details bearing out the following:
 - (i) the link between the quality or characteristics of the agricultural product or foodstuff and the geographical environment referred to in Article 2(1)(a) or, as the case may be,
 - (ii) the link between a specific quality, the reputation or other characteristic of the agricultural product or foodstuff and the geographical origin referred to in Article 2(1)(b); [...]

That is to say, producers need to specifically address and elaborate the link between product and place, and what may be identified as the ‘authentic and unvarying local methods’ which are practiced there. Terroir is the most apposite concept to use in describing such a link. Indeed, in the public directory of geographically protected products that INAO maintains online (INAO, 2015a), files for each product contain details on its mode of production, the current traceability and monitoring arrangements and, importantly, sections of narrative with the headings ‘history’ and ‘links to terroir,’ and a map of the ‘geographic area’ of the product.⁶⁹ We may therefore understand that it is necessary to elaborate the spatial and temporal story of the product to attain geographical protection, and discussion of terroir is, in

⁶⁹ Tr: ‘historique’ ; ‘liens au terroir’ ; ‘aire géographique’.

France at least, specifically mandated in this process (cf. Scheffer and Ronçin, 2000; Flutet, 2013). Production areas are not always contiguous (as [Figure 4.8](#) shows), but the narrative provided allows coherence and continuity to be communicated. In the history section of *Abondance* cheese (INAO, 2015b), for instance, we find the claim that:

‘Starting in the 14th century, the monks of the Abondance Abbey selected a breed of cattle: the Abondance. They also created pastures, encouraged the production of a quality cheese that would allow milk to be conserved from summer to winter, and in this way provided for the livelihoods of the people in the mountains.’⁷⁰

The various wines of Savoy contain the following historical-geographical combination in their history sections (INAO, 2014b):

‘Originating in a much larger vine-growing culture (20,000 hectares at the end of the 19th century), the grapevines of Savoy are to be found in a series of ecological niches where the aspect, altitude, [and] soils create very favourable conditions.’⁷¹

And in the ‘links to terroir’ section of the *Dinde de Bresse* (a kind of turkey; INAO, 2014a), we find the following connections outlined:

‘Situated on an ancient lake of the Tertiary (geological) era, the territory of the ‘Bresse’ is made up of a very impermeable quartz-clay soil. It is in this humid soil that the turkeys find worms, molluscs and tiny animals, which are particularly present under the hedgerows that border the meadows.’⁷²

⁷⁰ Tr: ‘Dès le 14^e siècle, les moines de l’Abbaye d’Abondance ont sélectionné une race bovine, l’Abondance. Ils ont aussi créé des pâturages, encouragé la fabrication d’un fromage de qualité permettant de conserver le lait de l’été jusqu’en hiver et d’assurer ainsi la vie des populations montagnardes.’

⁷¹ Tr : ‘Issues d’un vignoble beaucoup plus important (20000 ha à la fin du XIX^eme siècle), les vignes de Savoie occupent une série de niches écologiques où l’exposition, l’altitude, les sols déterminent des conditions très favorables.’

⁷² Tr : ‘Situé à l’emplacement d’un ancien lac de l’ère tertiaire, le territoire " Bresse" est composé d’un sol silico-argileux, très imperméable. C’est dans ce sol humide, que la dinde trouve des vers, mollusques, animalcules, particulièrement présents sous les haies vives qui bordent les prairies.’

So as well as proposing the key geological, meteorological and ecological connections that make up a *terroir*, it appears that claims to continuity, geographical, historical, and ideally both, meet the expectations of the national system of geographical protection in food and drink. This is, I would argue, a reflection of a national geographical culture that recognises and celebrates the historical dimension of agricultural spaces. Abstractions from hinterlands of anteriority these labelled products might be, but the historical content of those vernacular spaces is itself important to communicate *along with* the geometric lines that delimit and thereby define the *terroir* of each product.

Given that Serres was interested in classical Greece, we may consider his claim that '[h]istory begins with regional language and the space of anisotropic communication' in the context of that particular historical society.⁷³ But it holds as a more generalizable principle. For Vidal de la Blache (1903), France's close relationship with the soil began with highly autonomous regional localities. And he proposed that the 'geographical individuality' of these different areas 'doesn't come from simple changes of geology and climate',⁷⁴ (*Ibid*: 8) but rather is wrought from natural materials over time into the more human, not to say hybrid, sense of regional 'personnalité' (personality). Having covered in his *Tableau Géographique de la France* the history and geography of each of France's regions; expounding their individual stories and proposing both continuity and separation between them through a language of gateways, passages, thresholds and horizons, Vidal identifies his national generalisation of a close relationship of people with their land and their soil, as consequent upon the anterior

⁷³ We could even follow this through to the late Medieval period and Petrarch's desire for a 'purification of Latin diction and grammar' as part of a more general renaissance (Panofsky, 1972: 11).

⁷⁴ Tr: 'individualité géographique'; 'ne résulte pas de simples modifications de géologie et de climat'.

histories of connection to the land in the manifold French regions.⁷⁵ Like Braudel (1988; 1990), Vidal communicates an interest in the processes of modernisation and how they worked to bind the regions of France more closely together into a modern nation state. Indeed, he identifies ‘the great revolution that has transformed modern life’⁷⁶ (Vidal de la Blache, 1908: 380) not as the French Revolution of 1789, but as the gradual extension, centralisation and densification of the country’s transport network from the mid-19th century onwards. So where Serres argues that ‘history begins with regional language and the space of anisotropic communication’ (Serres, 1982: 65), Vidal is equally confident in the history of different territories from which an organised, though diverse, national system may develop. Indeed, it is in Vidal’s reflection upon the changes wrought by processes of modernisation that the clue emerges of a sense of authenticity residing in the diverse soils of France:

‘Look at the expressive sense that the word heritage has for the people of France ; it is a sense materialised in the earth [*terre*]...’⁷⁷

That heritage may find its origin in the earth and be mobilised in much wider communication permits that something historical and valuable, which is to say authentic, enters into the popular epistemology of the land and popular geographical culture. As Ricoeur (1984) has argued, the idea of the *longue durée* allowed the close relationship of a group of people and an area of land to assume precedence in historical explanation (such as in Le Roy Ladurie, 1969; Braudel, 1988b) over series of remarkable events and over neo-positivist accounts in 20th century France (cf. Hacking, 2002). Vidal’s focus on the development of connection

⁷⁵ One could also consider, for instance, Gaston Roupnel’s (1932) proposed historical three-fold division of French space; along with the tripartite divisions of Marc Bloch and Roger Dion discussed in Prince (1977).

⁷⁶ Tr : ‘la grande revolution qui a transformé la vie moderne’.

⁷⁷ Tr : ‘Voyez le sens expressif que prend pour le peuple de France le mot héritage ; il se matérialise dans la terre...’

between people and place over time was drawn upon by Braudel, Febvre and their *Annales* school of history,⁷⁸ just as it is compatible with (and was informed by) Ratzel's geography of social development. In every case, it was the land, with its aptitude for production and its perdurability, that served to underwrite the sociocultural development of a territorial idiography; of a mosaic of so many 'petit[s] monde[s]'⁷⁹ (Vidal de la Blache, 1903: 384; Brunhes, 1920: 26); of an ongoing parataxis of '246 cheeses', all different but epistemologically equally commensurable. To repeat my earlier point, the wide circulation and solution of these ideas in the mentalities of French society has facilitated the valuation of terroir in terms of its claims to continuity. Anteriority can be epistemologically equated with authenticity, and the inscriptions of the past on the land may be mobilised in the production and marketing of goods from it.

So to effectively move from terroir to geographical protection there is an expectation of both horizontal and vertical consistency; the geographical rhetoric of products of terroir depends on both geometrical abstraction and vernacular traditions, and these spatial stories are compiled in a national system. I want to develop these points a little further so they can be eventually assembled into a more complete model. The rhetorical function of geometry in delimiting and *thereby* legitimising spaces that terroirs can be identified with renders sensible Serres' idea that geometry vitrifies space and freezes duration, and that this is an eminently repeatable process (as discussed in Bingham and Thrift, 2000). The key operations we can identify are *diacrisis* and *copularisation*; that is to say, proposing separation through the drawing of lines, and proposing the synonymy of the product and the now delimited place it

⁷⁸ Consider Braudel's (1990: 678-79) proposition of history as a slow moving sea on which nation, culture and society may be viewed as being pulled irresistibly along.

⁷⁹ Tr : 'little worlds'.

comes from. So for example, to develop the argument presented in Chapter 3, the terroir of Pommard must be delimited to attain commercial success, whether that be with imaginary lines interpolated from longhand prose description in the 18th century,⁸⁰ or with indelible lines on a map distributed by the regional wine association ([Figure 4.9](#)). Otherwise, anyone could claim to be producing Pommard wine, either through including themselves in the space it refers to, or claiming the name refers to their space as much as another. These delimitations are, as Bourdieu follows the linguist Benveniste in arguing, expressions of power; diacrisis consists in making artificially proposed separations appear as natural divisions; an effort which ‘introduces by decree a decisive discontinuity in natural continuity...delimiting the interior and the exterior’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 221); and there are obvious parallels here with the territorial construction of statehood (see Elden, 2013; Billé, 2014). Withers (2007: 98) has also discussed how abstracted representations of space can become ‘facts of geography’ under powerful sanction, and Olsson (2007) has explored the epistemological consequences of this in some depth. For him, cartographic reason entails a series of pro-positions, positioning statements about relationships in space that may be communicated through the projection of a map, its orientation, what is included, how it is described, to what it is related, and so on. When he considers how geometric and formal logic are used as a form of rhetoric – a form ‘so convincing’ and ‘so trustworthy’ as to not even be considered rhetoric (*Ibid*, 96) – two propositions stand out above all:

$A = B$

and

$A \neq B$

⁸⁰ See document outlining limits between Pommard and Beaune dated 22 September, 1741 – Doc. No. 1, Carton 94, Archives Municipales de Beaune.

These are efficient ways of summarising copularisation and diacrisis, respectively. And I feel we could also understand them in Greimas' (1966) terms of conjunctive and disjunctive transformations. For me, they are the fundamental epistemological operations of identifying and abstracting terroir from its surrounding space, and they are the preliminary operations necessary for the eventual geographical protection of a good or drink product. First, terroir must be delimited and distinguished from other terroirs (or what through lack of recognition might not be articulated as terroir) which may be contiguous to the territory in question. Then, given the proposed discrete existence of terroir within, or literally in the shape of, a particular territory, there is a subsequent need to propound the copularity, or equivalence, of the product and place. The form of the truth claim that Champagne has to come from the Champagne region of France, indeed that Champagne *is* both region and product, is one that is well known in marketing and management literature. Medway and Warnaby (2014) argue that place-branding is a particularly effective means of generating interest in a product; toponyms delivering 'a degree of brand resonance in which the place name itself becomes the core of brand identity activities'. Though they elaborate this idea, they do not discuss it in terms of epistemology, territory or terroir. Yet the 'haunting of territorial grammar' (Whatmore, 1999) is, in France, a phenomenon manifested in the territorial predicates of the AOP system. The territorial and cartographic form of terroir enters the national system of terroirs because each set of claims has a commensurable structure; it follows the same rule of spatial grammar. The epistemology of terroir is therefore one in which territories must be geometrically defined for the narrative of the nature of their content to be appropriately communicated.

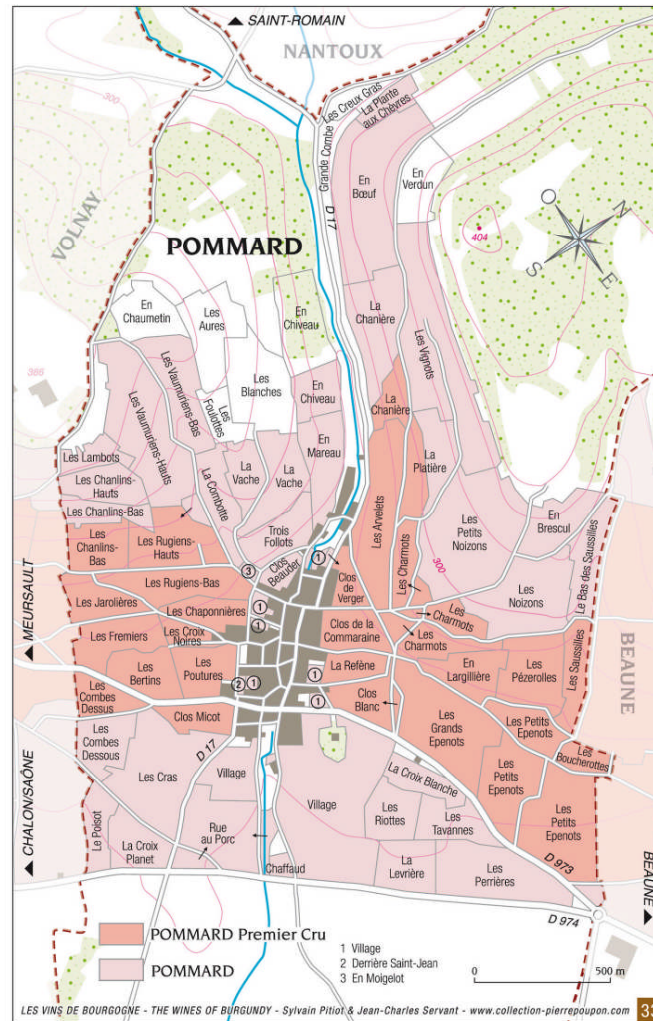


Figure 4.9: Map of the AOP vineyards in the village of Pommard (Côte d’Or). Source: Extract from Pitiot and Servant (2011)/Collection Pierre Poupon used with permission; please see notice in Bibliography.

Now, this poses a problem. The *definition* of lines within which terroir is identified and to which the quality of its products is then associated; what Bourdieu (1991: 222) describes as the authoritative act of ‘circumscribing the country, the territory [...], in imposing the legitimate, known and recognized definition [...], of frontiers and territory’ necessarily produces simultaneous conjunctions and disjunctions with other (i.e. outer) territories. It is the epistemological problem that comes with layering imagined straight lines onto terrain; it proposes a discontinuity at the line which may bear little relation to the continuity of observable phenomena. A pertinent illustration of this is the côte d’Or discussed in Chapter 3;

the long, south-east facing hillside that runs for around 100km through northern Burgundy but which is not physiographically entirely separable from hillsides further south. Lanexrie described the côte Maconnaise as the ‘prolongement naturel’ of the côte d’Or⁸¹, and he discussed how wines from the côte Chalonnaise were being successfully passed off as coming from the côte just a few kilometres further north in the early 20th century. Yet the wines of the côte d’Or have long sold for more money than those of their southern counterparts, and in France’s geographical culture, various forms of evidence have been used to reason the idea that something about that côte is special. Vidal de la Blache (1903: 241), for instance, argued that: ‘[n]owhere else is better concentrated the clear and ordered character of what we can call a Burgundian landscape,’ and that the côte offers the ‘perfect’ physiographic conditions ‘for the expression of local genius’⁸². He supported this argument with a map ([Figure 4.10](#)) of the côte which focusses upon its ‘regularity’ of slope and the ‘inherent’ quality of the territory for wine production. And this is to say nothing of the literature produced by the regional wine association and wine producers that build upon the symbolic precedence and imputed qualities of the côte d’Or, at the expense, in both popular geographical understanding and commercial returns, of the côtes to the south.

⁸¹ Lanexrie F 1924 Les Vins de Mâcon et du Beaujolais *L’Illustration Economique et Financière – Numéro Spécial : Saône et Loire (Supplément)*, 31 May 1924. Cote 302 BH 199, Archives Municipales de Mâcon.

⁸² Tr: ‘[n]ulle part ne se concentre mieux l’aspect net et réglé de ce qu’on peut appeler le paysage bourguignon,’ ; ‘pour l’épanouissement d’un génie local’.

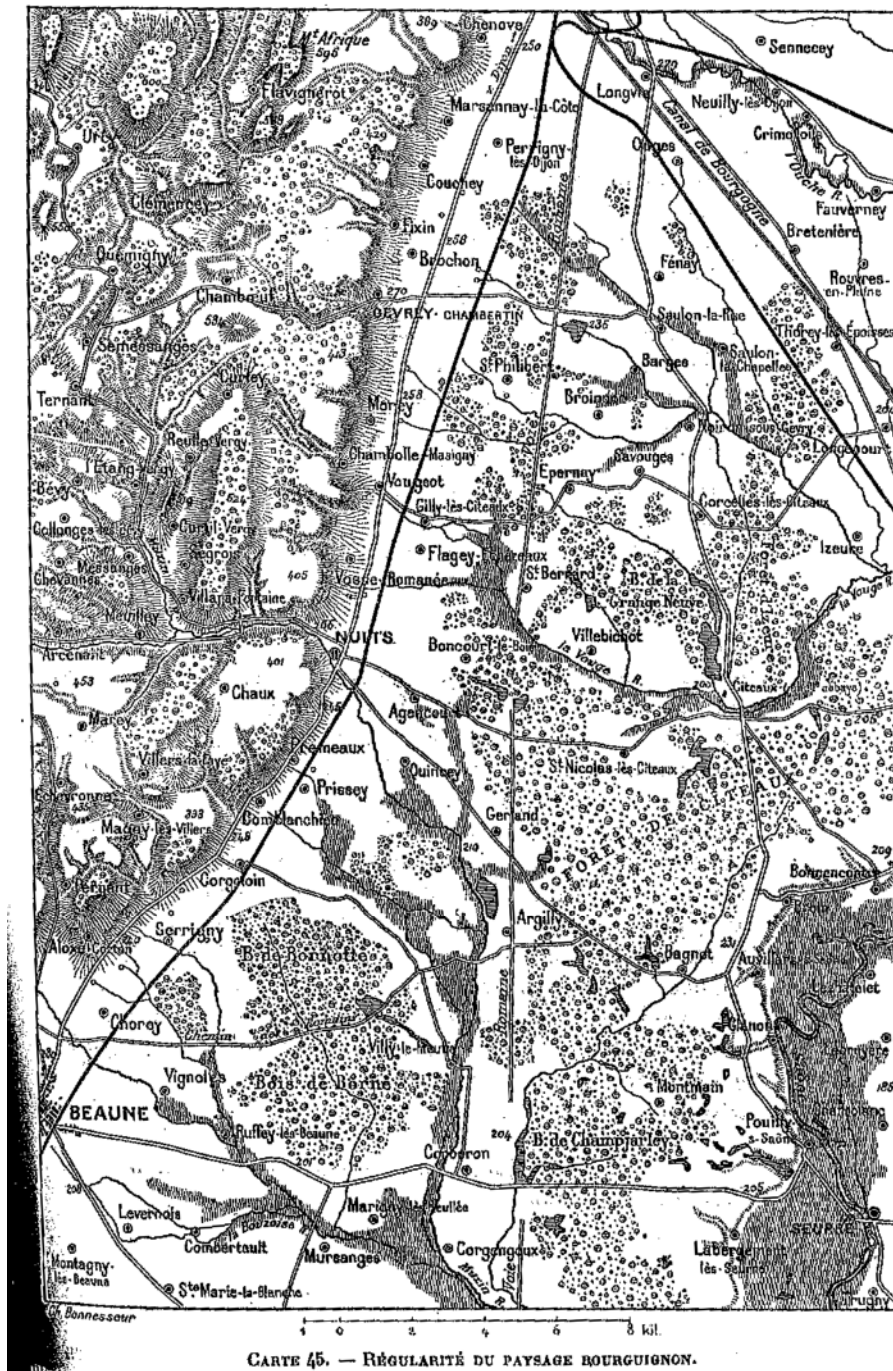


Figure 4.10: Map of the ‘Regularity of the Burgundy Landscape’ from Vidal (1903: 243). The northern part of the côte d’Or escarpment is represented by the line of hatching from the top to the bottom-left of the image.

Yet within the bounds of the côte d’Or itself, disjunctions are no less troublesome. Laval’s (1861) classification of Burgundy wines created circles within circles, abstractions within abstractions, in the sense of dividing up the vineyards of the côte into progressively more

distinguished, supposedly ‘less and less identical’ (Perrin, 2010: 327), and territorially smaller, *premiers crus* and *grands crus*. But the means of understanding the salience of these differences are as troubled by geographical knowledge as they are supported by it. On the front label of a Maison Latour (2009) bottle of wine from Aloxe-Corton, the ‘*climat*’ or specific vineyard parcel of *Les Chaillots* is named (Figure 4.11). This parcel has been classed as a *premier cru*, and on the rear label the following explanation (in English) is offered:

‘Founded in 1797, Maison Louis Latour has always been based in the beautiful village of Aloxe-Corton, two miles north of Beaune in Burgundy. Les Chaillots (*Stones*) is a Premier Cru vineyard situated only a few meters below the renowned Grand Cru vineyards of Corton. Made from 100% Pinot Noir grapes, the wine is aged in small oak barrels in the cool cellars of Château Corton Grancey for 10 to 14 months prior to bottling.’

We may understand that Les Chaillots is an area that should produce grapes that will make excellent wine, owing to its classification, and we may take comfort from the time that is spent in its production, both in the short term life of the wine ageing in barrels, and in the long-term heritage of a company founded in the 18th century and based in a château. Yet the inclusion of the phrase ‘situated only a few meters below the renowned Grand Cru vineyards of Corton’ is troubling. Are we to understand that this wine is better by virtue of being so close to a *grand cru* vineyard? And are we thus to understand that the line which separates Corton from Les Chaillots is not entirely impermeable, and that the elements of terroir that produce excellence in Corton may exert some influence on the Les Chaillots side of the line? Yet, if that were true, wouldn’t it cast doubt on the idea that our *premier cru* vineyard of Les Chaillots is itself clearly and tangibly better than those surrounding vineyards which are neither classified as *premier* nor as *grand cru*? Just how much better can this wine of terroir be than those produced on the other side of the lines that surround it? Especially when the map of the village shows us (Figure 4.12) that the line separating *premier cru* grapevines

from their supposedly inferior neighbours at Les Chaillots actually runs *through the middle* of a single vineyard?



Figure 4.11: Front label of a 2009 bottle of Louis Latour Aloxe-Corton Les Chaillots 1er Cru.
Source: Author

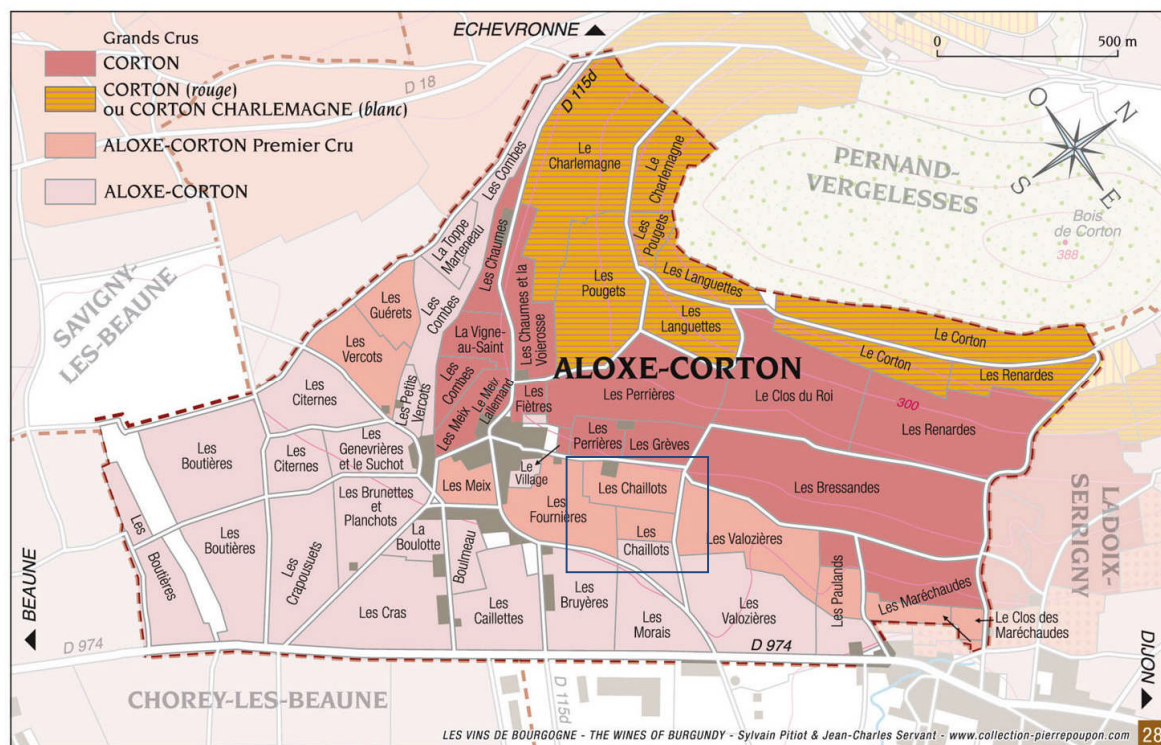


Figure 4.12: Map of the AOP vineyards in the village of Aloxe-Corton (Côte d'Or), with the Les Chaillots area marked in blue. Source: Extract from Pitiot and Servant (2011)/Collection Pierre Poupon used with permission; please see notice in Bibliography.

What is clear is that operations of boundary-marking (*bornage* in French) are geographical propositions. As de Certeau (1984) argues, they are ‘meta-stories’: they are the territorially structured basis on which to tell stories, as Louis Latour’s wine label does, and then for consumers to make choices from the multiple stories that co-exist, and government bodies to consider the narratives provided in applications for geographical protection. Wine, with its hierarchy of territorial divisions, does seem to be particularly well organised by geographical provenance in its popular appreciation; something readily visible in the way wine is sold in France and overseas (see [Figure 4.13](#)), yet uncommon in the merchandising of other goods. Maps can entomb and create geographical ‘facts’ out of such proposed divisions, as both de Certeau (1984) and Withers (2007) argue. And as Ricoeur (1984: 119) writes, the supposed objectivity of their division; of their claim that $A \neq B$; may be a function of the demand placed on those ‘facts’. But, as evoked by the text on the wine label discussed above, these self-contained epistemic truths of the map (Gerlach, 2014) must be explained and legitimised by reference to a sense of continuity and tradition; the horizontal consistency of terroir must be plotted against a vertical consistency to most effectively fulfil its modern epistemological expectations.



Figure 4.13: Geographical organisation of display of wines in an *Oddbins* store, Little Clarendon Street, Oxford. Column headings are marked from left to right: Italy, Italy, France, Regional France, Loire Valley, Burgundy, Bordeaux.
Source: Author (2014).

In this need to combine geography with a sense of history in the claims made for terroir, we can see the legacy of the Enlightenment and the early apparatus of the French nation in its rational divisions of space, as well as the legacy of Romantic evocations of rural localities and the sense of French history being tied to the land through its long-term occupation by originally peasant farmers elaborated by Vidal de la Blache and later by members of the *Annales* school. Echoes of this three-dimensional epistemological inheritance may be found elsewhere: Héritier (2013), for instance, discusses Frémont's (1997) work *La France, Géographie d'une société*, in which the first chapter is dedicated to understanding the 'commune' or village:

'In this he explains both the spatial dimensions and the historic depth of the village. He offers a reading of the landscape palimpsest, functional and social, which allows us to understand, still today, the attachment of a large part of the population to this local territory.'⁸³

⁸³ Tr : 'À son propos il en expliquait à la fois les dimensions spatiales et la profondeur historique. Il en livrait une lecture du palimpseste paysager, fonctionnel et social, qui permet de comprendre, aujourd'hui encore, l'attachement d'une grande partie de la population à ce territoire de la proximité.'

In France's geographical culture, narratives of rural spaces, as Héritier (2013) explains, are habitually deepened by reference to historical precedence, and this is especially compelling in a society that feels increasingly cut adrift from its rural ancestors (cf. Beaucarnot, 2008) yet is nostalgic for rural spaces with the inscriptions of history upon them. The narrativisation of space is also a well-known subject in both anglophone and francophone cultural geography, as discussed in Chapter 1, and Daniels and Lorimer (2012) have argued that narrative is an important resource for making sense of the world. But very little work has been done examining how narratives enter the formal processes of geographical protection in food and drink. In this chapter, I have drawn upon a diversity of thinkers to begin to theorise how this takes place: I have used de Certeau's (1984) arguments for spaces being storied, along with Olsson's (2007) development of the idea that space is more epistemological than ontological. The point I have arrived at here is one in which both geometric lines and the presentation of anteriority through narrative are necessary in the translation of the concept of terroir to the abstract portability of geographical protection. Indeed, Greimas (1968) has argued that conjunctions and disjunctions – the propositions of the lines Olsson discussed and which we examined above, and the consequences of the labour of diacrisis that Bourdieu developed – are the fundamental drivers of narrative. Certainly, this scholarship originates in linguistics but, as I have argued in this chapter, adapting such ideas helps us to understand the transmission of an idea that stems from an idiography of vernacular spaces within a pre-modern economy into an organised system of epistemologically commensurable objects in a modern state. This transmission, resulting ultimately in the parataxis of the national AOP system in France, has parallels which I have modelled ([Figure 4.7](#)), and will presently fine-tune, with the development of the French language from hinterlands of anteriority and cacophonies of noise to the officially sanctioned system of state communication and control.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to identify the key facets of the epistemological adventure of terroir through the modern culture of France. I have explored the influence of Romantic and Enlightened modes of thought in agricultural and more widely cultural spheres, and examined several of the innovations that emerged in the conceptual life of terroir. I have attended to the processes of abstraction that formalise vernacular expressions of both language and terroir, as well as to the modern desire for authenticity and historical rootedness that revalorises those vernacular expressions. I have argued that language functions as an apparatus of state alongside cartography; both implementing the abstractions of geometry; and I have tried to show that authenticity and anteriority become connected in the epistemological conventions of France's geographical culture, such that horizontal geometric limits and vertical narrative density need to be conjugated for rhetorically convincing applications for geographic protection, and for consumers to decide between products which have spatial stories to tell. Though in recent years, terroir has been so frequently used to evoke local, loyal and constant stories of production, its uses 'in very different ways at different times' (Perrin, 2010: 326) betray a history of conceptual dynamism; terroir has not itself remained isolated in the cultures of particular territories, nor has its national sense remained unchanged over time. Its polyvocality has been influenced by changes in French agriculture and wider French culture over several centuries. And, as we will see in the next two chapters, its settlement upon certain historical geographical predicates is being upset by those who wish to pursue innovative forms of agriculture and to valorise their products in unconventional ways.

In the introduction to this chapter I proposed making an original effort to ‘join the dots’ between the concept of terroir and the AOP system, given that it is so widely and sometimes uncritically accepted in France that ‘terroir is the notion which the concept of appellations of origin is based upon’ (INAO, 2016).⁸⁴ I have throughout the chapter argued that there are what amount to seven key operations that anchor terroir within an epistemological framework which permits this official geographical protection, and it is possible to develop the earlier model of terroir’s processual abstraction into a new model of those operations ([Figure 4.14](#)). Firstly, within the territory itself there is the need for an *assembly* of elements to be presented as materially constituting terroir. This may be witnessed in publicity and literature that proposes the salience of elements of terroir such as geology or soils or plants; or it may be discovered in conversation and participation with producers. Such assembly is given extra rhetorical force by reference to the continuity of those elements’ presence over time; thus a process of *historicisation* is used. This involves not only adducing historical evidence, but connecting it to the status of terroir today. The vivid rhetorical description of the properties of a place in which terroir is supposed to be found is a kind of *ekphrasis*; and this can be done through the use of romantic language, in poetry, patois or otherwise. Then, there is the need to delimit the terroir and distinguish it from other terroirs or the absence of terroir, which may be contiguous. *Diacrisis* is this operation of drawing lines and proposing separation. It is as much a linguistic as a geometric operation, and the idea that language and geometry are closely related formal abstractions was developed earlier in the chapter. Given the proposed discrete existence of terroir within, or literally in the shape of, a particular territory, there is a subsequent need to propound the *copularity* of the product and the place. In its most successful iterations, this permits the success of products like Champagne, which Medway

⁸⁴ Tr : ‘[c]’est la notion de terroir qui fonde le concept des Appellations d’origine.’

and Warnaby (2014) describe as epotonyms, where the place and the product constitute one another epistemologically just as they are related ontologically. The conjunctive and disjunctive transformations that definition of lines of terroir produce also fundamentally drive narrative, *pace* Greimas (1967) and de Certeau (1984), such that *narrativisation* produces stories about products that have a spatial and temporal consistency. Then, in a nation of terroirs, *parataxis* is the operation by which multiple terroirs are held together in prospect, even without links of spatial contiguity necessarily existing between them. Finally, for the decision-makers in government and the consumers faced with a choice of products from different terroirs, there is the matter of *dijudication*; of making a choice between the spatial limits and stories of the terroirs on offer. It is therefore possible to develop the earlier model of terroir's processual abstraction into a new model of the operations that permit the use of terroir in the system of geographical protection, and in eventual consumer recognition.

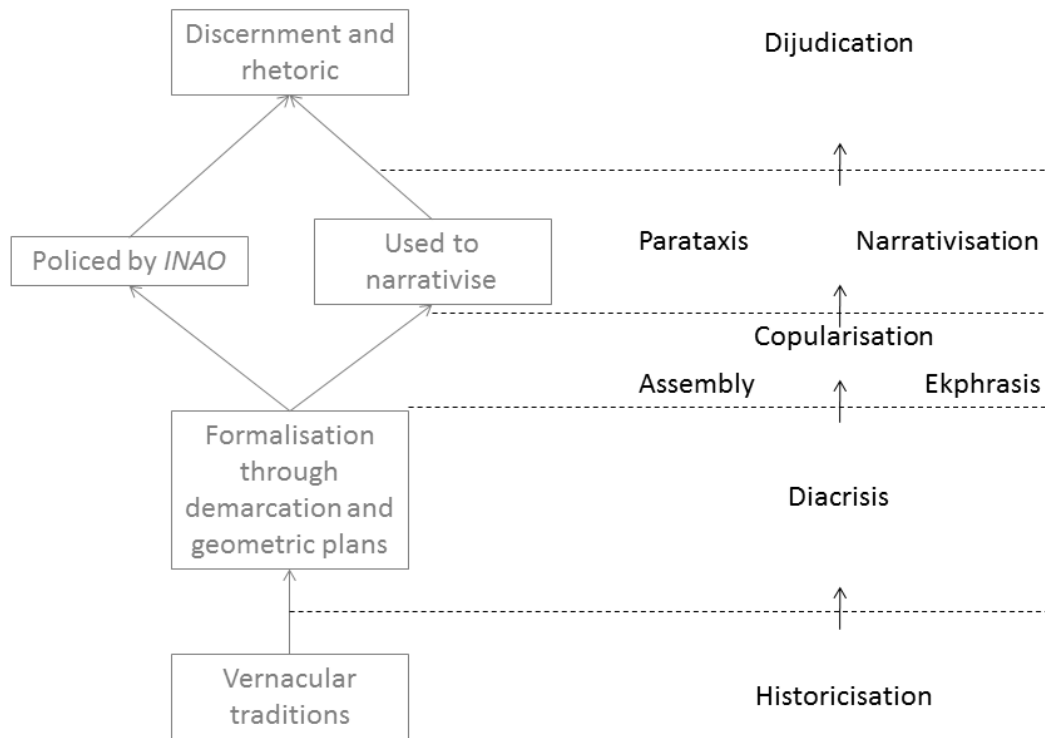


Figure 4.14: Final model of operations that transmit terroir into the French system of geographical protection.

This model, importing concepts from linguistics and from social scientists who have theorised using linguistic devices, is a heuristic and experimental one. It is a product of my attempt to follow what I see as parallel lines of language and terroir in French culture. I have only spent a little time examining the epistemological *problems* that arise when the operations identified are carried out (such as the troubling separation of vineyards at Les Chaillots). There are doubtless many more, and I should like to attend to them further. But at this stage I am satisfied to conclude this attempt to build a theory of how terroir becomes geographical protection, not only in terms of cultural geography, but in terms of the *geographical culture* of the country in which both flourish. The operations of narrativisation, historicisation and parataxis; that is, the processes of proposing spatial stories that have historical depth in a national compendium of goods; were alluded to in the previous chapters, and will be returned to in what follows as distinctive coordinates of terroir's epistemological

life. Indeed, I want to change tack now and start to examine evidence of how farmers interpret and shape the epistemological predicates of terroir for themselves. In Chapter 5 I will use materials and experiences gathered in the field to think through the contemporary production of knowledge about terroir and the performance of terroir. I will also attend specifically to the curation of an experience of terroir in the Alps, and the provision of stories about savoir-faire and sustainable agricultural praxis in that landscape, and question their bases as local, loyal and constant in the light of a less obvious history of territorial discontinuity and changes to the product chain through processes of modernisation.

* * *

Chapter 5: Dynamic Encounters

5.1. Introduction

The argument I elaborated in the previous chapter is that the AOP system in France is a prospectus of food and drink products whose producers and promoters have assembled geographical arguments which are convincing because they are attuned to popular understandings of geography and because they are compatible with the epistemological life of a concept that has developed over a long period of time. But how do farmers see their role in this? What do they think *terroir* means? And do all products succeed? In the first part of this chapter, I will use the words of farmers themselves to begin the task of examining how this concept is understood and connected to agricultural practice in the three product chains of my thesis. Bringing different conceptual propositions of *terroir* to light is important for several reasons. It will contribute to the discussion of the central problem of stasis and dynamism in *terroir* which is being examined throughout the thesis. It will provide evidence with which to weigh Bowker and Latour's (1987) assertion of the political consistency of the *concept* in French society, and it will respond to Pitte's (2001) call for work that compares the different experiences of *terroir* across France. It will contribute to our understanding of the different 'knowledge cultures' that inform agricultural practice and the contestation and dissonance that exist within them (Ramisch, 2014; Turnbull, 2007), and it will provide the epistemological background for the use of *terroir* as a convention, and source of contention, between farmers and other actors in the food chain which will be treated in more detail in the following chapters.

This will also set the direction for the work I will do later in the chapter, where I will bear witness to how terroir is portrayed, performed and convened through recounting my journey up to the high Alpine pastures with Reblochon farmers, cattle, and other participants in June 2013. In that account, I will bring together field observation, epistemological theorisation and archival evidence to weave experiences of the landscape produced on the day together with the fragments of the past that I was exposed to in the archives of that region. This will be an attempt to ‘creatively interrogate’ (Kearns, 2007: 11) how terroir is put to work and put on show in that particular production chain, and to witness how dynamism and change runs through its history in ways that are not always evident in the landscape.

5.2. Understanding Terroir on the Farm

In the course of the interviews I carried out with farmers whilst on fieldwork in France in 2012 and 2013, I made sure to ask each one the following question:

‘Qu’évoque le mot terroir pour vous?’

This may be translated as: ‘What does terroir mean to you?’ Like all my questions, it was asked in French. With this question, I was asking what the word terroir *evoked*, or what sense and meaning it generated for the farmer, and I was particularly interested in the type and framing of phenomena they would describe. What was apparent is that the farmers I interviewed were conscious of a set of extant epistemological predicates concerning terroir, and my encouraging them to speak about terroir and their work did not come in a vacuum. Numerous newspaper and magazine articles, television programmes, and even films (e.g. Nossiter, 2004; Bravo-Maza, 2010) have aired discussions of the nature of terroir in various

food chains. My interview question was but one exchange in a dialogue that is ongoing in France. Whilst Mr C (Wine producer, Ladoix-Serrigny) was explaining his approach to terroir, he went to find a copy of a talk he had given on that subject, and passed it to me. Ms T (Reblochon producer, Thônes) passed me copies of an eMail correspondence she had been involved in with a journalist, and Mr M (Walnut producer, Tullins) gave me a copy of a TV documentary in which he and his walnut farming activities had been featured. It has also been argued that in villages that receive high numbers of visitors in the summer, wherein tastings and other events are organised, and where large numbers of people make the same kind of product (such as wine in Meursault, shown in [Figure 5.1](#)), the need to be able to talk about the nature of the product and where it comes from has grown in recent years (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2010; Demossier, 2011a).



Figure 5.1: Crossroads in the village of Meursault (Côte d’Or) showing directions to eleven different wine producers.

Source: Author.

Yet if they were aware of a set of received ideas about terroir, I sensed that each farmer wanted to convey not only what terroir meant *in general* to me, a foreign researcher; but also what it meant to him or her *personally*, how it was implicated in their work, and what it could or ultimately should be. Several of the farmers first responded to my question with the idea that terroir is an assembly of things, either by describing it as “an ensemble”¹ (Mr K, Walnut producer, Saint-Marcellin) or saying ‘Terroir is...’² followed by listing a series of things that constitute it. This would typically include soil, subsoil, aspect or exposure to the sun (for wine producers above all), and almost always the role of the farmer themselves and the importance of tradition and *savoir-faire*. Others began with the idea that terroir referred to a specific place; “a place marked on a cadastre”³ (Mr G, Wine producer, Lugny); or considered the etymology of the word, responding “the word earth [*terre*] is inside it”⁴ (Mr F, Wine producer, Vaud) and then using this as the basis for subsequent ideas concerning the soil. The locations in which the interviews took place also afforded farmers the opportunity to point to things; allowing us both to use the ‘primitive epistemological tools’ of eyes and index fingers (Olsson, 2007) to discern key elements, as discussed in the Methodology chapter. Thus Mr K would answer my questions as he pointed things out whilst we moved around his farm (Figure 5.2), Mr J (Walnut producer, Saint-Marcellin) would respond to my questions about how nuts were being sorted at harvest time (Figure 5.3), and Mr C would answer questions prompted by the grapevines I pointed to.

¹ Tr: « un ensemble ».

² Tr: ‘Le terroir, c’est...’.

³ Tr: « un lieu cadastré ».

⁴ Tr: « le mot terre est dedans ».



Figure 5.2: Mr J in part of his farm in which walnuts were dried and packed.
Source: Author.



Figure 5.3: One of the team helping to sort harvested walnuts (note discarded items in the barrow) on Mr K's farm.
Source: Author

I have listed the locations in which initial interviews were carried out along with summaries of the major points farmers made in responding to my question about what terroir means in Figure 18. Whilst I cannot be certain whether the location of the interview affected the responses farmers gave to my question about terroir, where we did talk elsewhere than an office, the farmer would often point out or refer to materials and spaces around us – grass, trees, fruit, the tracks of boar, the dense, moist air of the dairy – as part of their explanation. From a more-than-human geographical point of view we may see in this demonstrative assembly of things an appreciation of the reticularity of matter and the connected affordances of living things (Abrahamsson *et al*, 2015; Brice, 2014b; Høyrup and Munk, 2007). But it may also be useful to consider this work of making reference to and between things in the field in light of Ricoeur’s (1984) theoretical discussion of propositions in the form of attestations. Just as historians assemble documented events and in so doing produce and reproduce history (as de Certeau, 1988, also argues), so we could imagine farmers reproducing a sense of terroir by attributing connections and weighting their importance; producing explanations, as Ricoeur (*Ibid*: 100) notes, ‘in the constituting of chains of similar phenomena and in establishing their interactions’. This is just the sort of assembly that we have seen is produced textually in INAO product dossiers, and the dossiers of geographically protected foods from around Europe, specifically under the heading called ‘link to terroir’⁵ in France or simply ‘link’ in Britain. It is the telling of the first fundamental parts of a narrative that will link product and place, and we will go on to examine other means of making this link later in the chapter. From this initial identification of what was implicated in terroir, many farmers moved on to discuss the polemical issues of: the relationship of terroir and the structure of the national AOP system; the changes to the plants, animals and soil which come

⁵ Tr : ‘lien au terroir’.

with different modes of production; and the question of who should be able to talk for terroir given the spectrum of producers that include small family farms and large industrial conglomerates. I will examine each of these issues in detail in the two chapters that follow, and I will refer back to the table of responses in Figure 5.4 within those discussions.

Farmer (Canton, Département)	Interview location	Key elements of vision of terroir
Wine production		
Mr A (Châtillon-sur-Seine, Côte d'Or)	Vineyards and winery	Different areas with different aptitudes and producing different results; good to experiment.
Ms B (Fribourg, Switzerland))	Vineyard and garden	Assembly of things including role of farmers; traditions in each region; can be linked to the grower, not linked to the earth "like in Burgundy"; some grape varieties more dependent on terroir for flavour than others.
Mr C (Ladoix-Serrigny, Côte d'Or)	Vineyards and van	Problem of limits of AOP areas being fixed and freezing terroir in time; received idea that lower slopes best for grape growing; need for philosophy as well as material reality and praxis.
Mr D (Ladoix-Serrigny, Côte d'Or)	Office, yard and shed	Geology and soil most important; importance of soil microbiology in terroir; room for different philosophies but in each case valuing terroir; name of appellation attracting customers.
Mr E (Ladoix-Serrigny, Côte d'Or)	Wine cellar	Assembly of things: soil, plant, adaptation to surroundings, farmer; valuing elements in the vineyard environment; the life of the soil; terroir and AOP system should valorise small producers, not industrial actors.
Mr F (Vaud, Switzerland))	Office and vineyard	"Terre" being in terroir; each region has its own terroir; must begin by analysing one's soil; feel closer to terroir with less mechanisation; lots of attention given to the soil, not the plant; local appellations recently reviewed.
Mr G (Lugny, Saône-et-Loire)	Office	A defined place (" <i>lieu cadastré</i> "); relations between product and place; a specific identity noticeable in the product, but it is possible to mask the terroir in the taste of the product; importance of soil; mineral aspect often overlooked in discussion of terroir –not only the organic element that is important; terroir evolves slowly, under the hand of man; French appellation system limits prices; smaller subdivisions of territory often have more expensive product; terroir as more than just geography.
Mr H (Ladoix-Serrigny, Côte d'Or)	Wine cellar	Assembly of things: soil, subsoil, sun, wind; praxis may change but terroir changes very slowly if at all; terroir better expressed when grapevine roots go deeper into the soil; environment and quality linked; "great terroirs for great wines".
Mr I (Sciez, Haute-Savoie)	Winery	Living thing; " <i>le terroir, c'est la vie</i> "; soils different in different régions, can taste resulting difference in grapes even before vinification; cosmos-plant-terroir connections; AOP system freezing a typical taste (' <i>typicité</i> ') in time; France having some of the best terroirs in the world, but some of them badly managed.

Walnut production		
Mr J (Saint-Marcellin, Isère)	Orchards, yard and office	Attachment to a particular geographic area; " <i>terre</i> " being in terroir –soil, sun, climate; AOP as link between terroir and product; terroirs differ between regions and within regions; means of marketing to consumer.
Mr K (Saint-Marcellin, Isère)	Office	An "ensemble" of things; diversity of landscapes and crops; visual aspect; role of farmers, heritage and "savoir-faire"; can value terroir through praxis; gastronomy and cuisine also important; terroir supported by subsidies and consumer purchasing.
Mr L (Pont-en-Royans, Isère)	Kitchen	Assembly of things; earth, soil type, climate, tradition, heritage to some extent; (discussed properties of different soils but not explicitly in terms of terroir).
Mr M (Tullins, Isère)	Office, orchards and van	AOP on the ground; should try to valorise it as much as possible; INAO decides on the limits of the appellation zone; terroir producing different characteristics of walnuts in different areas; buildings and architecture also part of the story of the crop in the region.
Mr N (Luc-en-Diois, Drôme)	Orchard	Usually seen as specific geographical areas with their own potentialities; soil characteristics; terroir can become "subjective" once it enters a commercial setting; praxis can harm terroir; industrial actors are distant from terroir; one terroir can produce multiple products; certification and appellation useful tokens of trust when product sent far afield.
Mr O (Pont-en-Royans, Isère)	Yard and shop	Image and marketing aspects important; need to analyse soil to see what is missing.

Cheese production		
Ms P (Ugine, Savoie)	Dairy and shop	Earth ("terre"), containing both grass and subsoil; role of farmer too; should be able to live from it, not be for industrial actors; terroir fixed in a specific place; if it were to change, could jeopardise farming livelihood.
Ms Q (Thônes, Haute-Savoie)	Shop, dairy and kitchen	Tradition above all; transmitting "passion" from one generation to the next; " <i>un mot fort</i> " in France, a word that sells product; banning raw milk would break the connection with terroir; want terroir to last into the future.
Mr R (Thônes, Haute-Savoie)	Office and dairy	Reblochon cheese as product of a geography and a history; benefits of the area (good grass, high pastures accessible, not too far from urban markets in valleys, not too large); praxis linked to past economy; variations (e.g. of quality) within the appellation zone; consumers interested in products marketed in terms of terroir; small producers as veritable artisans of terroir, not industrial actors just using the word.
Ms S (Thônes, Haute-Savoie)	Terrace and dairy	Territory linked to praxis; the Abondance cheese slogan 'one valley, one breed, one product' represents terroir well; each place has its "savoir-faire"; things specified in the <i>Cahier des Charges</i> (production manual); customs and practices that last through time; terroir not going to change as remaining profitable for all, though certain things might change.
Ms T (Thônes, Haute-Savoie)	Kitchen and dairy	A production appropriate to the territory; customers have an interest in what they eat and how it is made.

Figure 5.4: Summary of producers' visions of terroir provided in response to interview question 'Qu'évoque le mot terroir pour vous?'

In the responses tabulated in [Figure 5.4](#), farmers often began with immediately appreciable epistemological predicates – things to hand or things commonly known – from which they could identify, illustrate and connect further ideas as they proposed a vision of terroir that motivated their praxis and could be transmitted to consumers in the promotion of their product. After assembling things like grass, soil, tradition and savoir-faire, some would go on to adduce the lines in the land proposed by the AOP system as part of their vision of terroir ("It's the AOC on the ground...we try to make the best of it"⁶ said Mr M). Others still would

⁶ Tr : « C'est l'AOC sur le terrain...on essaie de valoriser au maximum »

point to other places and other practices to better distinguish the nature of the terroir they worked with, or to make useful comparisons. In comparing terroir to the German notion of *Heimat* (roughly, ‘home’), Mrs B said:

“It’s more linked to traditions...not so much to the ground, like in Burgundy for example”⁷

And for Ms S, there was a productive comparison with terroir in another nearby food chain:

“It’s the territory linked to practices...the slogan of *Abondance* [another Alpine cheese, with an area of production that partly overlaps with that of Reblochon]; ‘One valley, one breed [of cow], one product’, that represents terroir quite well”.⁸

This assembly and narration of things need not be an objective or definitive pursuit; as Ricoeur (1984: 116-18), following Frankel (1957), argues; ‘What is important is not that the explanation is incomplete but that “on many occasions, it seems fully to satisfy our demand for an explanation”.’ No farmer was unable to answer my question about what terroir meant to them. But each had to estimate for themselves what sort of explanation would be appropriate to give me as a researcher. Those who had the most to say about their vision of terroir had demonstrable experience of selling their product on that basis; whether because customers in that world expected it, because they received many visitors to the farm, or because they had to undertake their own epistemological labour to make their vision of terroir understood in terms that diverged from those of the official AOP system.

⁷ Tr : « C’est plus lié aux traditions...non lié à la terre, comme en Bourgogne, par exemple »

⁸ Tr : « C’est le territoire lié aux pratiques...le slogan de l’Abondance, ‘une vallée, une race, un produit’, ça représente bien le terroir »

5. 3. Explaining Difference

France is full of terroirs. As Figure 0.4 in the Introduction showed, today it has over 250 geographically protected products, and its longstanding diversity of products and *savoir-faire* is attested to in historic maps such as Figure 5.5. The hundreds of tiny inscriptions on such a map reflect knowledge, practices and traditions on the ground at each of the sites of production; an idiography of *savoir-faire* in more or less historical relation to the biogeography and economy of agricultural possibilities across France. But all terroirs are not equal. In February 2013 I was staying in a small village in the dry, hilly region of the Ardèche. I discussed my project with the lady I was staying with. I explained the matters I was interested in, the questions I was asking of farmers, and the three production chains I was studying. I went on and on about Reblochon cheese and its fame in France. The lady listened patiently and then asked why her sister, who had a herd of goats, struggled to make ends meet from her production of milk and cheese. I didn't know how to answer. Up until that point my explanations of terroir, based on Burgundy wine, Grenoble walnuts and Reblochon cheese, were smooth and eirenic, with the sustainability of their production being almost implicit. Now, suddenly, I was presented with a polemic. If, in the dry, scrubby hills of the Ardèche, where goat and sheep rearing is widespread and transhumance also known (Cleary, 1986; Miellet and Meuret, 1993), a farmer could not benefit from the terroir, what was wrong? The uncomfortable truth, I realised, was that not all terroirs are valued in the same way.



Figure 5.5: *Carte Gastronomique de la France* (Bourguignon, 1962 ; first printed 1929)
 Source : National Library of Australia Digital Collections (URL : <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-vn4769090>)

Terroir is mobilised incessantly for the most distinguished products like wines from Burgundy and Champagne; those whose metonymy of product and place has been established for hundreds of years. But although terroir is a concept with national resonance, it is variegated in its local recognition, value and use. Building upon the national assembly of vernacular stories and products I outlined in the previous chapter, I would argue that we have

to recognise terroir as an idiographic phenomenon, i.e. one that varies across space, and I asked farmers from my three food chains about their perception of terroir in pursuit of that recognition. It is, as I will argue in this chapter, crucial to understand such spatial variation before observations are made about sustainability with regard to terroir, because different social, environmental and economic facts will be more or less germane in each production chain and affect what may or may not be considered sustainable. Furthermore, I would posit that the historical arguments I presented in Chapter 3 of this thesis are more relevant to the present-day than ever; to summarise them quite simply, a product has to reach powerful external consumers to begin to establish a reputation and create an economic environment that offers sustainable reward for its producers. I did not want to criticise my landlady's sister and say that she hadn't worked hard enough to sell her product, or suggest that the product was not of good quality. Who knows how many structural limitations she would have had on how she sold what she produced? She may have been a member of a co-operative, or subject to production quotas, or contracted to a dairy firm. And then what of the thousands of other farmers in a similar position to her? To return to the historical arguments of Chapter 3, it is important to recognise that terroir, as it is talked about today in the media and in non-specialist discourse, is so often used to refer to the origins of products which *do* enjoy a certain reputation and *can* offer a degree of economic security to their producers. The term comes freighted with an implicit sense of economic sustainability. Otherwise, we might simply refer to agricultural territories, susceptible as they are in France to periodic crises (see, for two recent examples, Girard, 2013 and Allain, 2015). What I did not know at that stage of my project, what I could not tell my landlady, was that the cow's milk cheeses from the French Alps (Beaufort, Abondance, Reblochon, Gruyère, Emmental, to name a few) enjoy great success in national and export markets, but that goat's milk cheeses simply do not have the same market share or public recognition. They represent only 6% of the French cheese

market by volume and only 8% by value (CNIEL, 2015). As such, even if their producers evoke terroir in the values of their production, it will often be with less reward. Echoing findings in Chapter 3, if a product cannot leave its territory of origin and access markets elsewhere, or if those coming to the territory do not consume it, it may eventually be replaced by a product which will be more profitable for its producers, and its terroir will be used in a different way. As a French trade body (Fromages des Terroirs, 2015) put it; ‘In 30 years, over fifty cheeses have been rubbed off the map like this!’⁹ This is troubling for the idea of terroir betokening territorial character and agricultural endeavours that are local, loyal and constant, and it invites closer analysis of how terroir *becomes* valuable in specific production chains.

Maps like that shown in [Figure 5.5](#) exhibit the imaginative compendium of geographical products which I argued in the previous chapter has developed in France over time. The many hundreds of names inscribed on Bourguignon’s map betoken at least a small degree of recognition and achieved reputation for those products from those places; they bespeak at least some history of production as part of France’s ‘variegated’ geographical landscape (Brunhes, 1920: 19-23). And their cartographic representation is, following my arguments in Chapter 3, a process by which such recognition and reputation is strengthened. But how, we may ask, are these products and their terroir understood, produced, imagined and performed today? How are these geographically located names connected to the materials and actors of terroir, and how are different senses of terroir mobilised for each one? Obviously it would be a compendious undertaking indeed to attempt to answer those questions for every product marked on Bourguignon’s, or more recent, maps. But I have some data from the food chains I have investigated, all of which Bourguignon identified in his map (see the extracts in [Figures](#)

⁹ Tr: ‘En 30 ans, plus d’une cinquantaine de fromages ont ainsi été rayés de la carte !’

differently articulated, and because I interviewed respondents in several parts of eastern France (and two respondents in Switzerland), I have ‘mashed-up’ or overlaid my word clouds on a map of the region so as to assess the variation of farmer perceptions of terroir within this area of France ([Figure 5.9](#)). I outline the exact methods used to prepare this map in [Appendix 3](#).

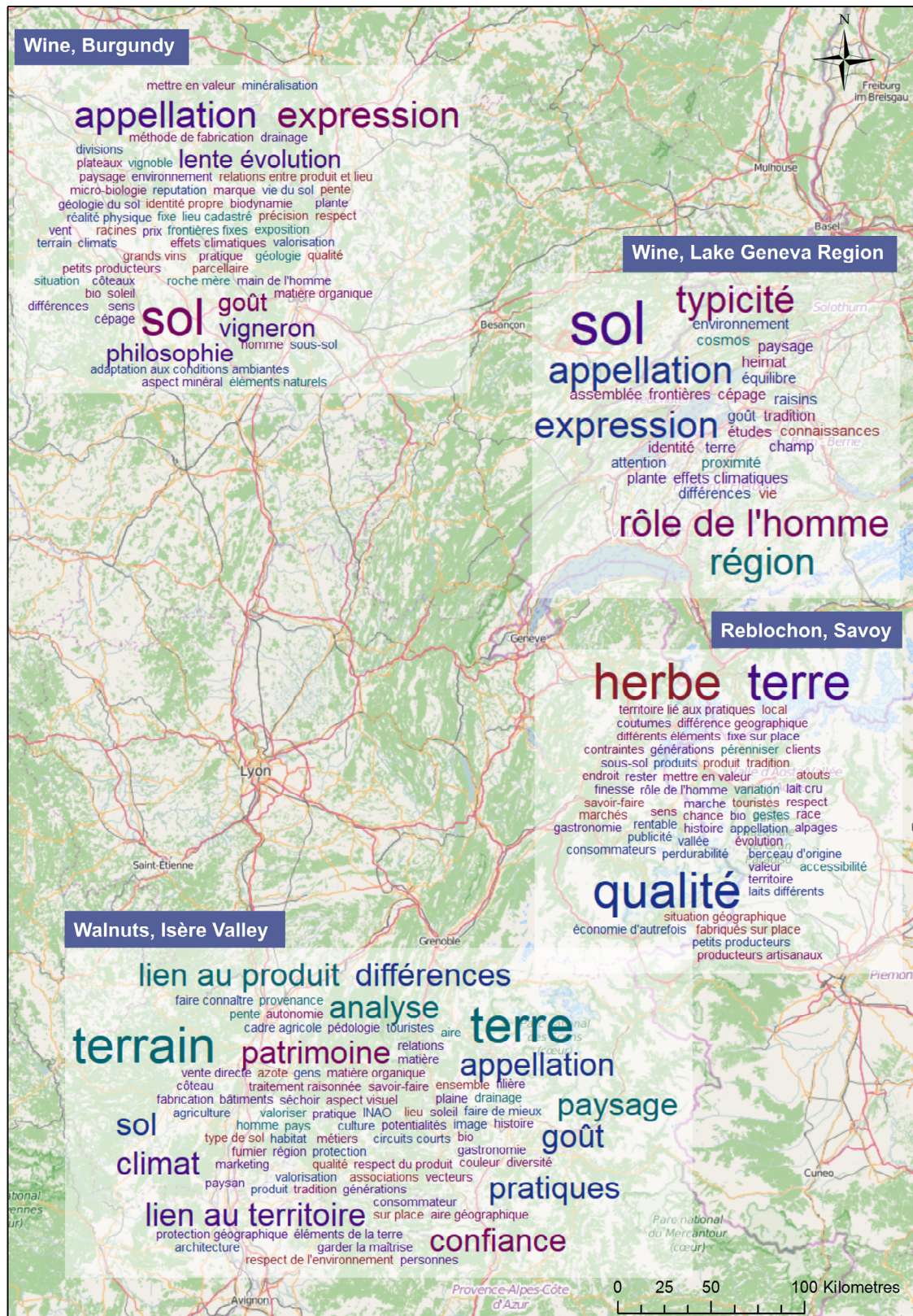


Figure 5.9: Map ‘mash-up’ showing word clouds of responses to question about meaning of terroir in different areas and food chains of eastern France and Switzerland.

Drawn by Author. Base map data: OpenStreetMap.

These combined responses show a large number of words and phrases being used, which evoke elements of terroir ranging from geology, through climate, to soil, practices, traditions, history, consumers, taste, and more. As I noted earlier in the chapter, explanations often started with the assembly of such elements. It is interesting to note that in the wine producing areas of Burgundy and the Lake Geneva region, ‘appellation’ and ‘expression’ figure prominently, providing, at this first glance, a rationale for the work of the previous chapter in fleshing out the link between products of terroir and the system of *Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée*. For walnut producers, meanwhile, a diffuse set of concepts share their attention, from ‘pratiques’ (practices), to ‘paysage’ (landscape), ‘patrimoine’ (heritage) and ‘goût’ (taste), providing some evidence for the multifariousness of the concept of terroir, but also raising the possibility that the most resonant and conventional aspects of terroir within that production chain have not yet been firmly established.

What is striking about this word cloud mash-up overall is the generality and prominence of the words ‘terre’ (earth), ‘terrain’ (terrain), and, above all, ‘sol’ (soil). Certainly, *terra* (earth) and *territorium* (territory) are the Latin roots of the word terroir (cf. Gottmann, 1974; Elden, 2010), and soil is the substrate without which most products of terroir would never exist.¹⁰ For the Reblochon producers, however, ‘terre’ stands out above all with two other terms in the frequency of their evocation: ‘herbe’ (grass) and ‘qualité’ (quality). This resounds with Paxson’s (2013: 202) finding from an ‘old-school Vermont dairy farmer’ in the USA that terroir is above all ‘local grass’, and such investment of value in the food cows eat as constitutive and emblematic of the product’s terroir was something I wanted to investigate

¹⁰ Possible exceptions include seafood.

further and to observe in the field. The opportunity arose to accompany two dairy farmers in the region as they took their cattle up to high pastures for the summer months. This was an opportunity to step into the map and witness how grass, quality and other elements of terroir are made visible and palpable to other people.

Before going any further into interpreting the responses to my interview questions, therefore, I want to recount the experience of one day in the field as a means to explore how terroir is encountered, articulated and sustained in one particular case. On that day, as will be seen, the unique nature of the landscape and production chain of the Reblochon cheese was put on show to an assembled audience. For all, it was the opportunity to experience terroir through stimulating visual, intellectual and bodily encounters; to experience a ‘dynamic connection between territory and vision’¹¹ (Speich, 2012). For me, it was also the opportunity to witness how such knowledge of terroir is built; to take part in dialogue on the subject of terroir with actors implicated in its operation, protection and promotion; and to allow the landscape to trigger the recall of materials which bespeak its history that I found in the archives. It was a live-fire exercise in generating materials from the ‘hybrid archive-field spaces’ (H. Lorimer, 2010: 257-58) of landscape, and I present it here as a means to put at risk the narration of the story of Reblochon’s terroir so that we might better appreciate the historical echoes and epistemological framing of its performance.

¹¹ Tr : ‘relation dynamique entre un territoire et un regard’.

5.4. Climbing Together: Part I

“Terroir is territory linked to practices. Each place has its own *savoir-faire*. There are customs and practices that persist.” (Interview with Mrs S (Reblochon producer, Haute-Savoie)¹², 11 June 2013)

‘The countryside itself is largely an aesthetic construction, one that reflects the variety of aesthetic criteria that diverse social and economic actors and institutions bring to bear.’ (Miele and Murdoch, 2002: 325)



¹² Tr: « Le terroir, c'est le territoire lié aux pratiques...Chaque endroit a son savoir-faire...il y a des coutumes et des pratiques qui perdurent. » In what follows, my own translations will be provided of text and speech originally in French. Some names of participants have been changed. All pictures are my own unless otherwise indicated.

For us it began after lunch. For the two farmers, and their cattle, it had all started before sunrise. Three thousand feet up in the French Alps, in the picturesque village of La Giettaz, Susanne and Jean-Claude tended to their herd, washed, fed and ensured each cow was ready for their annual climb to the high pastures. This late springtime movement of cattle from the valley up to the treeless grass meadows, or *alpages*, is an activity that has taken place for centuries in mountainous parts of Europe. It was an activity that I, and a few others, were lucky enough to take part in one sunny afternoon in June 2013. At heart, it is an activity that forms an essential, and more than ever visible, part of the terroir of the cheeses that are made in this mountainous, challenging region of France.

We know that cows have been kept, and cheeses made in this region for hundreds of years. Savoy's landscape ¹³ is marked by chalets, rough tracks, picket fences and endless sweeps of grass in valleys and on mountainsides, which explode in bright floral colour in the spring and summer months. It is a landscape that makes one think of *Heidi*, or *The Sound of Music*, and it is a landscape that is home to a set of practices which result in cheeses that are famous around the world (see Ricard, 1998; Delfosse, 1998; Frayssignes, 2008; Fumey and Bérion, 2010). The main output of Jean-Claude and Susanne, and of dozens of other dairy farmers in La Giettaz and neighbouring parts of Haute-Savoie in and around the Thônes valley, is the soft, cow's milk cheese known as Reblochon. This is an invention with a long back-story. During the middle ages, farmers in this region often paid their feudal dues in quantities of milk. Some came to adopt a canny trick whereby, after having milked the landlord's share from their cows, they would milk them again (*re-blocher* in the language of the time), and

¹³ Let me clarify my use of terms here. Savoy refers historically to the House of Savoy and the duchy and later kingdom under its control which covered parts of present-day France, Italy and Switzerland. In 1860, the western part of this territory, bordering France, came under French control and was entered into the French administrative system of *départements* as *Haute-Savoie* (the northern section, with the principal town of Annecy) and *Savoie* (with the principal town of Chambéry).

obtain a dense, fatty second helping. With this extra milk, they would make a soft cheese for their own consumption, or to gift or barter with as a form of currency. The extensive grazing opportunities afforded by the mountain pastures meant that dairying has been a long-running pursuit, though the practices and economy of its performance have changed over time. Indeed, in the past, in Savoy, as in other Alpine regions, the achievement of self-sufficiency in a peasant economy had long been a struggle. This is a land of volatile and perilous physical attributes, as are visible today, and as were imagined in [Figure 5.10](#); one of a collection of historical pictures of the region stored in the departmental archives at Annecy. Growing crops at these altitudes is more difficult than in the lowlands (cf. Bardsley and Bardsley, 2013), and historians of Savoy have adduced abandoned terraces in the landscape as evidence of *paysans* trying to grow cereals at ‘implausible altitudes’ in the past (Menabrea, 1933: 408-10)¹⁴ Furthermore, the pressure for pasture and hay for cattle and other ruminant livestock was felt constantly throughout the 18th and 19th century as the population of both humans and animals increased (Clout, 1980: 19), and this was a further amplification of a problem of securing fodder for cattle which Carrier and Mouton (2010: 250) argue has been of ‘considerable social and economic consequence’¹⁵ in the Alps since the Middle Ages.

¹⁴ Tr: ‘altitudes invraisemblables’.

¹⁵ Tr : ‘un problème dont les enjeux, économiques et sociaux à la fois, sont considérables’.



Figure 5.10: 'Peasants of the Alps'

Unknown artist. Sourced from Smith, Elder & Co, London

[Undated ; likely early 19th century]

Source: Smith, Elder & Cie., London, *Peasants of the Alps*, Lithographie colorée, 10.6 x 15.9cm, N° inv. 977-I-1-0767, Département de la Haute-Savoie © Dep74 [located through Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie, Fonds Payot : 977-I-1-0767].

By the time of Savoy's annexation by France in 1860, much of its grazing land had been run down by over-use (see Robert, 1939). The simple pressure of numbers had reduced the richness of pastures, and the clearing of forest for further resources had led to problems of erosion, landslides and the increased risk of avalanches. As the geographer Pierre Arbos (1921 : 225) put it;

'The land was exhausted ; those who lived from it were too numerous.'¹⁶

The American environmental writer George Perkins Marsh had made similar observations on his 19th-century travels through Alpine France and Italy (Marsh, 1864; Lowenthal, 2000: 267-

¹⁶ Tr : '[L]a terre était épuisée; ceux qui vivaient d'elle étaient trop nombreux.'

311) and reflected on the gravity of their ecological consequences. Such problems got worse in the French Alps south and west of Savoy, and led to laws being passed in the 1860s and 1880s on restoration and preservation in all mountain areas. Surveying the Alpine territories at the southern limits of Savoy, the geologist Albert Falsan (1892: 341) argued that deforestation and over-grazing had impoverished the landscape:

‘In this way, this country – once so wooded, so fertile, so picturesque – now only offers an image of sterility and chaos, and has lost the major part of its population...’¹⁷

It is hard to imagine such sterility and chaos in the peaceful pastoral landscapes of so much of the region today. Cows calmly grazing bright green grass, such as in [Figure 5.11](#), are a common sight in publicity for Alpine dairy products and were a common sight in the fields as I travelled to and from interviews. Yet at the end of the 19th century, Falsan (*Ibid*: 327-8) argued that the rhythm of living with, and making a living from cattle had ultimately led to deforestation and the destruction of grazing land:

‘This pastoral economy built the wealth of the Alpine region, before ruining it.’¹⁸

¹⁷ Tr : ‘C’est ainsi que cette contrée, jadis si boisée, si fertile, si pittoresque, n’offre plus aujourd’hui que l’image de la stérilité et du chaos, et a perdu la plus grande partie de ses habitants...’

¹⁸ Tr : ‘Cette économie pastorale a longtemps fait la richesse de la région des Alpes, avant de l’épuiser.’



Figure 5.11: Cows in pastures at Alby-sur-Chéran and La Clusaz, Haute-Savoie.

Félix Briot, the national Inspector of Forests, in his exhaustive 1896 study *Les Alpes Françaises*, concurred with these arguments, painting a picture of a pasturing landscape over-used, and continually eroded by torrents and streams. He is careful to note those areas where the problem is worse than others, but he argues that the connection of pasturing activities with the formation of streams and the provision of water more generally makes the remediation of the Alpine landscape an ‘*affaire d’intérêt général*’ and thus a focus for the intervention of a modernising state. That state had already supported extensive projects of road and rail-building, funding for agricultural improvements, and the establishment of

various institutions to more closely tie that, and other regions, to the rest of the nation (Weber, 1976; Clout, 1980; Plessis, 1985; cf. Massey, 1999), and the expression of processes of modernisation in the 19th and early 20th century would have substantial bearing on the economic entanglement of people, animals and the environment in the region (Harris, 1991; 1992; Swynedouw, 1999; Whatmore, 2002). In many ways, the risks of the Alpine environment that ranged from erosion to avalanches could be compared to those that ranged from poor harvests to complete drought in Swynedouw's (1999) 19th-century Spain. In both cases, the limitations of peasant agriculture in remote regions were identified as in need of redress. Identifying the reasons for the damage to the summer pastures which are both used communally by Savoyard herds and visited by herds from outside the region in long-distance transhumant droves, Briot (1896: 50) itemised:

‘Moving animals in or out too early or too late; too many animals; the lack of order or method in the droving of the animals; and above all the lack of manure.’¹⁹

In these descriptions of environmental damage, and subsequent economic disadvantage, caused by informally organised and over-subscribed grazing, there is a sense of a kind of tragedy of the Alpine commons. The simultaneous struggle of a relatively large number of people to make a living on the basis of pasturing cattle appeared to be unsustainable in the long term; the highly dynamic physical geography of the Alpine region showing this in sharp relief. Given the hard winters where snow covers those pastures for months at a time, and long before the fodder revolution allowed more predictable supplies of feed, farmers adopted the seasonal rhythm of *transhumance* – walking with the cattle up to the mountains in the spring to benefit from the rich grass and flora, and descending in late autumn to spend the

¹⁹ Tr: ‘[D]ates trop hâtives ou tardives pour l'introduction ou la sortie des animaux, nombre excessif de bêtes, le défaut d'ordre et de méthode dans la conduite des troupeaux, enfin et surtout le manque de fumure.’

winter in the valley. This movement is a highly visible means of understanding the geographical basis of the special character of Reblochon, and of other Alpine cheeses. This transhumance is an annual rhythm, with farmers and cattle climbing in concert, one that is considered a major part of the region's agricultural traditions, and finds itself listed amongst the defining characteristics of Reblochon in its official production manual (*Cahier des Charges*) (INAO, 2015c) and elsewhere. It is a rhythm that has in general declined in importance in modern French agriculture (Cleary, 1986; Lambert, 2006), even though the ‘*sensibilité au pastoralisme*’ or ‘pastoral sensibility’ on the part of consumers and tourists in France has never been stronger (Aubron *et al*, 2014). And indeed it is a rhythm that I discovered being opened for volunteers to participate in by *Saveurs des Aravis* (Figure 5.12), a tourism organisation which seeks to connect landscape and local foods in these mountains. For somebody investigating the perception and practice of terroir, and for somebody whose jaw drops at the sight of mountains, it was an opportunity not to miss. And having already carried out interviews with Reblochon producers and consulted archival sources, it was a chance to bear witness to the fashioning, past and present, material and imaginative, of this agricultural territory.



Figure 5.12: The *Saveurs des Aravis* logo.
Source: Saveurs des Aravis (2016).

So it was that I found myself mustering on a farm in the village after lunch. Driving up from the lakeside town of Annecy, I had passed a mountain bike race taking place around the Col

des Aravis, the mountain that separates La Giettaz from La Clusaz, and a location that offers breathtaking views over the Alps (see map in [Figure 5.13](#)). Already I had seen cows and chalets, already I had seen, through binoculars, two daredevils racing down a tongue of snow on seal-skin skis, and all around me bodies were in motion contending with the steep slopes of this region. I was ready to tackle this landscape too. The walkers who arrived bit by bit at Susanne and Jean-Claude's farm were a mixed bunch: families, individuals young and old, the seasoned and the *débutants*, and they had come from all over. I talked to a lady who had moved down to the region from Paris some years before, and now, given its beauty and its active possibilities, had no intention of moving back. I also chatted to a mother who had dropped off her little boy – 'un futur agriculteur' ('a future farmer') – who, like many of the others, had his walking stick by his side. This was to be his first climb up the mountain alongside the cows. It was, his mother hoped, to be the first of many.

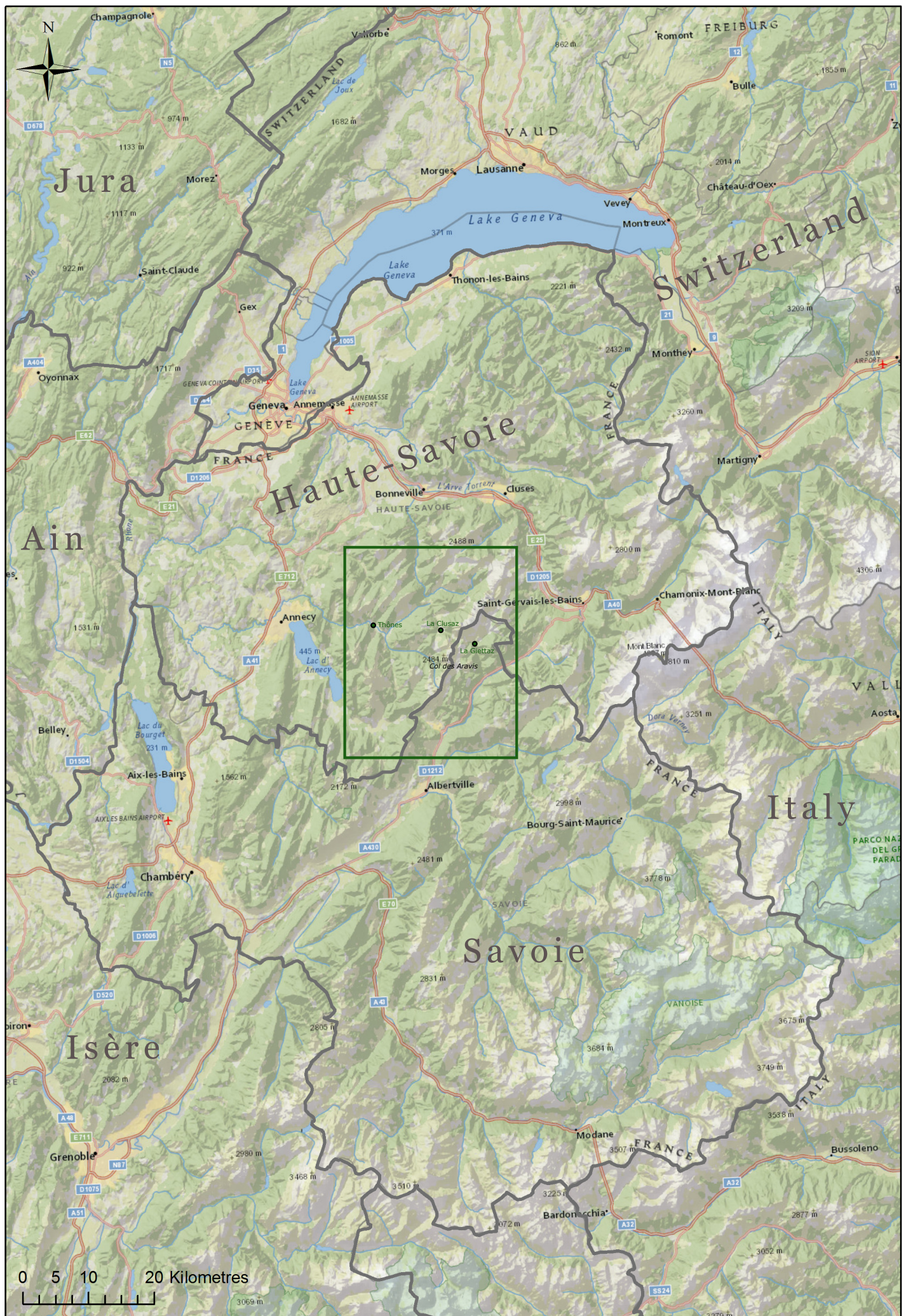


Figure 5.13: Map of the Savoy region, with French departments labelled, and the Thônes Valley and Aravis mountains marked in dark green box. Drawn by Author. Basemaps: IGN and National Geographic.

Carole, the lady from *Saveurs des Aravis* who had organised the climb, offered round some coffee and biscuits, and told us a little of what to expect. She had already been up one mountainside that morning with a herd of cattle; this was the second of the day, but not something unusual as, at this moment of the year, dairy farmers all around were climbing. Susanne and Jean-Claude, who ran the farm where we had assembled, and had been up since four in the morning, were already way up ahead of us – the plan was to walk up and join them en route. We piled into a bus for a short drive up to the highest point of the village and there began walking. We were in woods, climbing constantly, and I used this time to look for a stick like the others all had in their possession. Eventually I found one that was just right, and used it for extra propulsion as the trail began to steepen.

When we emerged from the tree cover, I saw the valley plunging off to the right. The pitched roofs of La Giettaz were below us, and my eye followed the bends of the Arly river, down the valley to the town of Flumet. I switched on my camera and began taking photos. After walking a short while longer, we met up with Susanne, Jean-Claude and their handful of assistants. The cows were with them, all of the *Abondance* breed, grazing excitedly on the side of the track, waiting expectantly for more exercise. Now fully assembled, we all started making our way up together. To begin with, we stayed ahead of the cows, always looking back curiously, pointing and taking photos, but bit by bit the group lengthened out and people and cows mingled together. The process of walking with cows was a constantly interesting one. In general, they were docile, not too much trouble; but an eye had to be kept on them all the way. Carole had explained to us that because they had been penned in for months, they had been exercised outside daily for two weeks before making the journey 'pour qu'elles puissent refaire les muscles' ('so that they could build up their strength again'). Now, out in the mountain air, smelling the lush grass on the side of the track, and enjoying that soft

terrain under their hooves, every now and then some of these pretty brown and white heifers would err onto the slopes, and would have to be encouraged back onto the track before all their friends followed suit ([Figure 5.14](#)).



Figure 5.14: Cows grazing on the side of the track, then being outflanked on the slope and encouraged back onto the track.

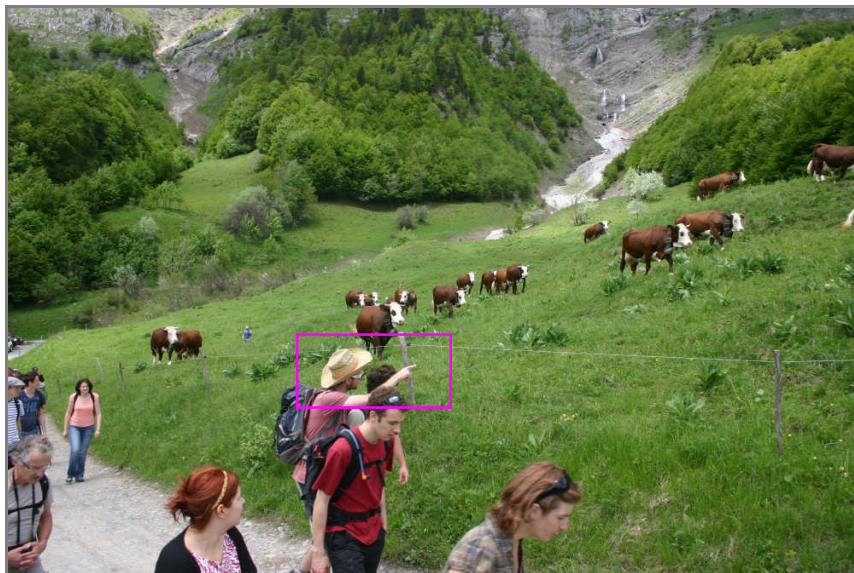
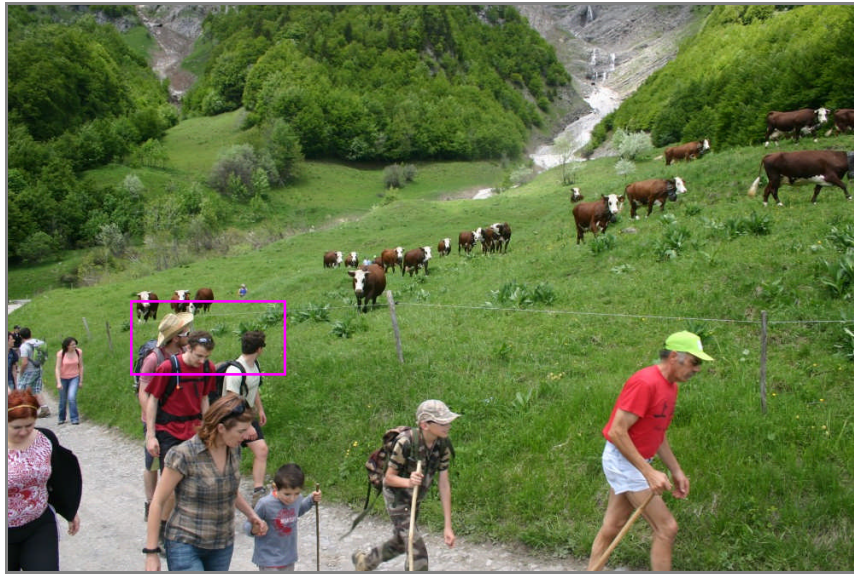
Each cow wore a bell, and the endless chiming was the background score to the entire journey. Over the clamour, I struck up a conversation with a man who turned out to be from the local agricultural office, and I carried on talking to him for much of the way. My questions about terroir had found an ideal respondent. He told me about his work on the management of the territory in the region, of biodiversity and his work with farmers, and promised I would hear more once we arrived at the top. I too intended to tell him about the materials I had found in the archives, but a more pressing matter had to be dealt with first: crossing a stream where snowmelt was racing down into the valley. These became more and more frequent as we climbed. The torrents that Falsan and Briot had reported were destined to be re-made every year as the snow melted. Some were easier to negotiate than others. Most of us got at least our feet wet. Children had to be carried, and sticks were used to test the stability of rocks in the channel before using them as stepping-stones. The cows were a lot like us, in that they would happily cross a narrow or shallow stream, but when the going was more difficult they proceeded in conference with each other, searching out the best place to cross and encouraging one another, with noise, nudges and gestures, over to the other side (Figure 5.15).



Figure 5.15: Cattle and people finding their way across the stream.

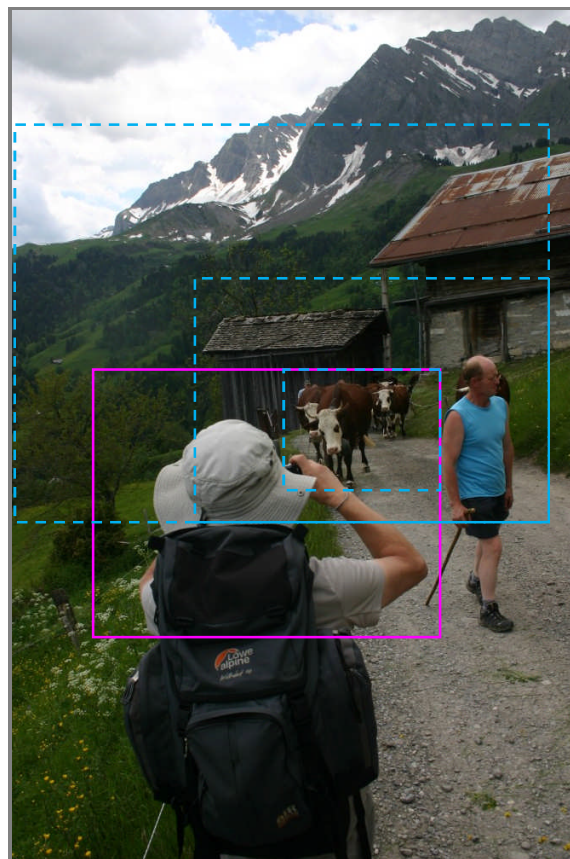
It would be possible to read the whole experience of the transhumance in a sense developed by Tim Ingold and by several cultural geographers, i.e. that it was a chance to observe *and* participate; to appreciate the landscape as a cultural image but also to see, and to some extent share, its dwelling and fashioning through a series of tasks (Ingold, 1993; 2000; Cloke and Jones, 2001; Wylie, 2005; Duncan and Duncan, 2010). The idea of terroir emerging or at least being better understood through this experience depends on visual and haptic processes. Olsson's (2007: 89) 'primitive epistemological tools' of eyes and index fingers were certainly the first to encounter and be guided in the encountering of the terroir of this region. And these were the tools of immediate knowledge creation on the walk up to the high pastures. Figures 5.16-18, for instance, are a sequence of pictures I took early in the afternoon, when we first encountered the cattle and the two farmers. I have highlighted in pink how a group of young men located, observed and discussed the cattle with each other. Some of the cows, for their

part, responded to being looked at by looking back, observing at a distance and then coming closer.



Figures 5.16, 5.17 and 5.18: Visual and digital apprehension of cattle.

The mobile heuristics of the transhumance, however, also led many to attempt to capture the experience using a camera; to mobilise the very human desire to record events and images on a more permanent substrate (Ingold, 2012; Cosgrove, 1984; Derrida, 1996). I have highlighted these actions in [Figures 5.19 and 5.20](#).



[Figures 5.19 and 5.20](#): Recording images with a camera.

Such photography allowed participants to frame their own visions of terroir, and to make sense of the events around them by grouping things together. In [Figure 5.20](#) I have indicated in blue some of the possible frames the photographer may have used for her images. She could have focussed on the cattle in close-up, she might have chosen to include the farmer and the chalet, or she might have included all of the above along with the pastures and mountains in the distance. The important point is that, whichever of these she chose, the elements included could all represent the terroir of the product that results from their interaction. This June expedition presented participants, including me, with the opportunity to see and be shown, to make sense of and be guided to sense, the terroir of Reblochon and other Alpine cheeses. Though many of the encounters and interactions on the day were spontaneous, the experience itself was planned in advance and to some extent curated by the local agri-tourism association *Saveurs des Aravis*, and led by the farmers involved. The memories stored and the images created could enter the circulation of similar montane images used in the commercial promotion of the product by its producers. In short, we were all producing images of terroir just as we were walking through it.

Like the cows, we also got tired and hungry. Watching the cycle race earlier on the other side of the Col, I had noticed the refreshment stands, where volunteers were handing out orange segments and words of encouragement to the tiring participants. We were lucky enough to also enjoy refreshment en route, with tables being set up in front of chalets, ever more isolated, as we climbed higher and higher. At one, a bearded fellow cheerfully offered drinks to the walkers. 'What's on offer?' I asked, stopping and wiping my brow. 'Apple juice, orange juice,' replied the man, then after an instant, moving his hand to the right of the table, 'some white wine, some red...' This piqued my interest. I had just been discussing the relative merits

of the traditional French diet with a fellow walker, and I felt moved to ask for just 'a little drop of red'. Happily, the man filled the glass with a generous hand. As I chugged it down, I thought of those tired workers in the past who desired wine simply for its refreshment or for its calories, and not solely as a luxury to be poked and pondered. Here was local wine, being consumed to slake a thirst created by local work. Revitalised, I thanked the bearded fellow sincerely and continued up the mountain.

Indeed, as we climbed, we came across other chalets, places that looked like they had weathered the storms and snowfall of many years, and from time to time people would come out from them to greet us. One couple emerged with warm smiles and a bottle of wine, and talked with us for a moment. I guessed that these must be other dairy farmers who had already made the journey up, and were now settled in for the summer. Delighted to see the latest arrivals, there was a real sense of welcome, of togetherness, of repeating a long-held tradition of journeying up into the mountains. On the banks, our cows conferred cheerfully with theirs. Our particular journey was in the middle of the season. The long winter that lasted well into 2013 had already postponed our departure by a week. Each farmer has to study the conditions for him or herself and make the decision of when to go and spend their time in the high pastures. Unlike in Burgundy, there was no central, official 'banns' to announce the start of a regional period of activity like harvesting or climbing.

In the distance we could see remnants of that long winter, and its now dormant sporting activities. There in the distance, their summits shrouded in cloud, were the Mont Blanc and its surrounding peaks. The slopes of the Col des Aravis to our left had been, and were destined to become the ski pistes of La Clusaz each winter, and there were more dormant ski lifts and electricity pylons off to the right, amongst the trees. By 1938, the village of La

Clusaz was already well-equipped to host ski activity in the winter months (see [Figure 5.21](#)), and this was part of a pattern that became established of the summer's high pastures being used for winter skiing. Indeed, at the start of the summer, I could see in the distance those slopes being gradually exposed by the snowmelt ([Figure 5.22](#)). Many visitors would discover Reblochon for the first time in these holiday circumstances in the decades that followed the Second World War – the period of economic growth known as the *trente glorieuses*, when urban populations further expanded and workers were entitled to more holidays (Claval, 1994) – and this form of tourism was a means by which its terroir was appreciated at first hand by consumers with disposable incomes from outside the region (cf. Roybin, 1991; Delfosse, 1998). I was told that the annual arrival of thousands of winter sports enthusiasts to this particular mountain playground shifts Reblochon like nothing else. Indeed, one man told me that a sizeable proportion of all Reblochons made today are used in the preparation of *tartiflette*, a hearty dish of cheese, bacon and potatoes which, although based on a traditional Savoyard idea (the '*Péla*'), is itself a 1980s invention of the ski resorts. Like us walkers, those skiers would get hungry, and could also be incited to 'eat the view'. And I had already found a trailhead to this recent history in the archives at Annecy. In the winter of 1979, a newspaper entitled *L'Echo des Alpes* (i.e. 'Echo of' or 'Gossip from' the Alpine Pastures)¹ was established in La Clusaz to serve a readership of the small number of permanent village inhabitants and the much larger number of temporary visitors. The newspaper was at pains to make the reader aware of the Reblochon-producing heritage of the valley they were in. On the one hand, this involved advertising where Reblochon could be bought ([Figure 5.23](#)), and on the other, it involved extensive stories where a reporter named Marie would undertake interviews with Reblochon producers and other farmers and people of the village, such as Mr

¹ Issues 1-11 are to be found in Dossier PER 640 at the Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie, Annecy, France.

Bétemps ([Figure 5.24](#)), a Reblochon producer and president of the local agricultural association, pictured holding a stick in a summer pasture with his cows around him. It was interesting to see the same kind of image was being reproduced around me as I walked in the transhumance ([Figure 5.25](#)), and the stick was a tool that most of the participants had equipped themselves with, from the farmers, to me, to the little boy who had been dropped off by his mother at the start of the day.



[Figure 5.21](#): The village and ski slopes of La Clusaz, 1938.
Source: Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Dossier 18 Fi 80)

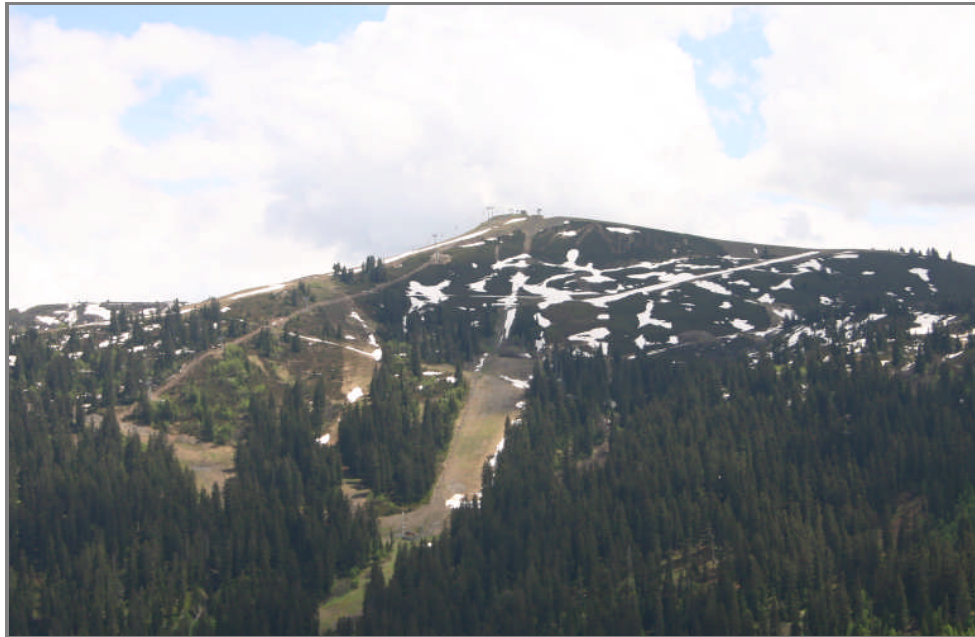


Figure 5.22: The ski slopes of La Clusaz...at the wrong time of year.



Figure 5.23: List of farms selling Reblochon in and around La Clusaz.
 Source: Echo des Alpes (1980), op. cit.



Figure 5.24: Mr Bétemps, Reblochon Producer.
Source: *Echo des Alpes* (1979), op.cit.



Figure 5.25: With stick and cattle.

In the reports from *L'Echo des Alpes*, it was as if the terroir of the valley's pastures, which lay under snow and bore the weight of winter sports enthusiasts at the time of printing, needed to be rhetorically unearthed. To this end, actors, practices and *le temps passé* which

may have been unfamiliar to the visiting reader were described in great detail, celebrated and to some degree romanticised. In the portrait of Mr Bétemps, the reporter focusses on the early starts and long days in the company of cattle and what they produce. In the report of another farmer, Mr Maringenan ([Figure 5.26](#)), it is noted that his chalet has a stable on the ground floor, and is ‘one of the last farms in La Clusaz where [Reblochon] cheese is made where one lives.’ For me, this collided with the images of rustic chalets in Alpine landscapes with manure piled up against the gables ([Figure 5.27](#)) produced by geographers in the early 20th century; and with the evocation of peasants keeping warm in winter through heat generated by the cows beneath the floorboards, recounted in Beaucarnot’s (2008) popular history *Comment vivaient nos ancêtres?* Surely, I thought as I scanned the pages, things must have changed in the interim. The rural way of life, and its ‘socioecological landscape’ of more-than-human relationships which Swyngedouw (1999) has theorised, cannot have resisted processes of modernisation. And the truth is they hadn’t. The spaces that the reporter enters and puts on display – the pastures free of snow, the humid stables, the farmers’ houses – are spaces that most readers visiting in the winter would not have been able to see for themselves. They offer clues to the ways the territory of La Clusaz is used in the ‘*belle saison*’, and evidence of the living constituents of Reblochon’s terroir, as Micoud (1998) has also tried to do. In many ways, these stories are the meeting point of bio-geography and geo-biography (cf. Daniels and Lorimer, 2012); they are the telling of the lively stories of products through the apprehension of their lively constituents. But this material is interesting because it captures a moment at the end of a sustained period of modernisation, in which much of the socioeconomic and socioecological landscape of the region had changed, yet in which the desire for an image of continuity is discursively expressed. The field and chalet spaces recounted warmly and nostalgically were changing through ongoing processes of modernisation (Murdoch and Pratt, 1993; Oakes, 1997; Swyngedouw, 1999; Whatmore,

2002). Marie reports that whilst a handful of the farmers in the village live solely from their dairying activities, most now work in the ski industry during the winter months (as also discussed in David, 1973). This paper, which has received no academic attention heretofore, communicates terroir even as its history is inherently changing; it is reporting from the sharp edge of lived experience that can be mobilised in the field to show that the aptitude of the pastoral territory of La Clusaz was becoming as valuable, or even more valuable, for the practices of winter sports as it was for those of dairy production; that living with cows and producing cheese from their milk were becoming spatially separated activities; and that the farmers' economic activities were adapting to a changed winter economy. The listing of places to buy Reblochon is everyday evidence of the growing connection of Reblochon to consumers from without; the necessary extension of terroir out of merely local appreciation that I elaborated in Chapter 3. Yet the stories told and illustrated in detail offer a vision of authenticity and anteriority embedded in place. In realising these simultaneous processes of embeddedness and disembeddedness (Murdoch et al, 2000), Marie supposes that 'We crave stories, traditions, returning to our roots,'² but later wistfully reflects that, 'We can't go back.'³

² Tr: 'Nous sommes friands d'histoires, de traditions, de retours aux sources,'

³ Tr: 'Il n'est plus possible de revenir en arrière.'



Figure 5.26: Mr Maringenan in his stable.
Source: Echo des Alpes (1980), op.cit.

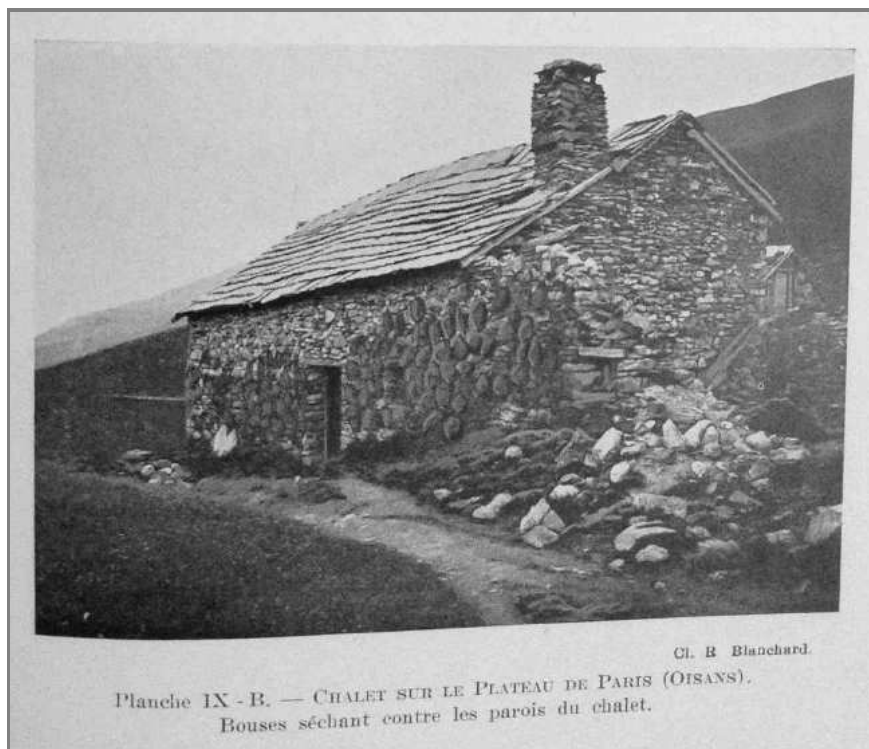


Figure 5.27: Photograph of a chalet in the Oisans region of the Alps, south-west of Savoy.
Source: Arbos (1921).

This buoyant winter sports economy still figures largely within the market for Alpine cheeses such as Reblochon, as I was told by the man I was walking with, and it is an association of food, place and tourism that has meant dairy farmers in Savoy often receive a more sustainable income for their product than dairy farmers in other, less visited regions of France; a point that had earlier been relayed to me at a meeting with two French geographers (Ricard and Rieutort, 2013: pers. comm.) and that had haunted the background of the conversation with my landlady recounted earlier. This is not to say that mountain dairy farming is *inherently* more lucrative than its counterparts in the valleys and plains – there is ample evidence from elsewhere attesting to its difficulties (e.g. Duruz, 2013; Squires, 2014) – but it is to say that today’s producers of Reblochon enjoy the returns of the reputation of their product which has been built up over many years (cf. Bowen, 2010; Fumey and Bérion, 2010) and central to which is a notion of *terroir* whose authenticity is constantly associated with landscapes encountered and anteriority evoked, whether in newspaper reports, product labelling, or the *livelier* encounters of the transhumance.

The archives also held documents which show that before the AOC label was awarded to Reblochon in 1957, communicating the territory of origin in a way that could attain the trust of the consumer was not a formally organised process. Personal interaction in town and village markets was one way, trust in named brands another. But in the 1930s, efforts were underway to develop a system to formalise the process. The *Syndicat des expéditeurs de véritables reblochons*, or Union of Genuine Reblochon Merchants planned in its 1932 constitution to institute a label that would be applied to the packaging of Reblochons sold by its members as a guarantee of its authenticity.⁴ I also found evidence of a similar scheme

⁴ Les Amis du Val de Thônes, *op. cit.* (p.54-55)

from Geneva, a large urban market for Reblochon (cf. Alcaix, 2015), and one whose proximity to Savoy was such that several dairy firms had offices, stores or contracts with actors in the city.⁵ On 20th November 1935, a letter was sent from the Director of that city's Chamber of Commerce to the Inspector-General of Agriculture in Paris.⁶ In it, the author explains that in waiting for a system to be approved in France, the Genevan Chamber of Commerce has instituted its own system:

‘This system consists of applying labels (see samples) onto genuine Reblochons ; labels which are only delivered to the Savoyard suppliers of Genevan dairies in quantities that correspond to the quantities which may be imported. Each label is valid for one Reblochon, whose standard weight has been established at 400g. Once applied, the label sticks in a certain fashion to the crust and it is not easy to lift it off.’⁷

The label in question is shown in [Figure 5.28](#):



Figure 5.28: Label created by the Geneva Chamber of Commerce in 1935, to be affixed to ‘genuine’ Reblochon cheeses.

Source: Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Dossier 7M 13)

This label clearly states that the cheese is a ‘véritable’ Reblochon, from the region of Grand-Bornand, in the heart of the Thônes valley, and we learn from the letter that there is some

⁵ See dossier 7M 41 (Industrie laitière, export en Suisse) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie.

⁶ Anonymous 1935 (Letter sent from the Director of the Geneva Chamber of Commerce to the Inspector-General of Agriculture in Paris, dated 20th November 1935) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Dossier 7M 13)).

⁷ Tr : ‘Ce contrôle consiste en l'apposition sur les reblochons d'origine d'étiquettes (voir modèles) qui ne sont délivrées aux marchands savoyards fournisseurs des laitiers genevois qu'en quantités limitées correspondant aux quantités dont l'importation est autorisée. Chaque étiquette est valable pour un reblochon dont le poids a été estimé, à titre forfaitaire, à 400 gr. Une fois apposée, l'étiquette se soude en quelque sorte à la croûte et il n'est pas facile de l'enlever.’

degree of monitoring going on behind the label, such that the claim of authenticity it expressed may reasonably be believed. The epistemology of terroir in this case is based on the same parameters as that of the producers' union, though it is apprehended in the regulatory space of consumption rather than production. Indeed the exigencies that the label responds to effectively mirror the expectations of the AOC system which was inchoate in France at that time. The author of the letter goes on to say that:

‘This labelling is somewhat improvised but it nonetheless gives a certain level of guarantee concerning the origin of the Reblochons that are offered to consumers.’⁸

Producers in the Thônes valley also began to use a similar system during the Second World War to distinguish the qualities and specific terroir of their Reblochons and separate them from the versions that were being produced elsewhere.⁹ Indeed, if Reblochon, like many Alpine cheeses, is a success story today, fixing the limits of its terroir of origin has nonetheless been a source of tension within its production chain. In the first decades of the 20th century, the production of Reblochon spread rapidly in parts of the Savoy region outside of the Thônes valley. In 1929, an opinion was published in the *Journal de la Vallée de Thônes* that the network of Reblochon farmers, producers and merchants had reached ‘fantastic proportions’ and that ‘the Thônes canton no longer has exclusivity in the production of Reblochon.’¹⁰ The author mentioned that:

⁸ Tr : ‘[C]e marquage est un peu improvisé mais donne quand même aux intéressés une certaine garantie quant à l’origine des reblochons qui leur sont offerts.’

⁹ Les Amis du Val de Thônes, *op. cit.* (p.63)

¹⁰ Tr : ‘le canton de Thônes n’a même plus l’exclusivité de la production du reblochon.’

‘Today we find producers in the whole Borne valley, around Bonneville and Annemasse; and on our side, Dingy, Alex, Montmin, Giez, [and] the areas around Albertville make Reblochon.’¹¹

There was a feeling here and in other quarters that the best, or most authentic, Reblochon had to come from the Thônes region.¹² Furthermore, the Thônes valley, as the ‘*berceau*’ or ‘cradle’ of Reblochon (Roybin, 1991),¹³ and containing the oldest Reblochon market at Grand-Bornand, could be considered in many ways the most direct heir to the traditions of Reblochon making, even if in terms of quantity, it did not dominate production; and if in terms of quality changes would take place through modernising production methods. We may see the emergence of a divided territory here; a hierarchy of terroirs, with the Thônes valley being considered the most historically authentic, and the similar Alpine conditions of neighbouring areas of Savoy being admissible for the production of Reblochon, but not to claim the status of terroir of origin.

Competition from outside the region, however, put pressure on the various Reblochon producers across Savoy to protect their common interests. The differences in pastures and production techniques between the Thônes valley and the Arve valley, for instance, were not so significant as those between the Thônes valley and other regions of France and even other countries; places where, in the early decades of the twentieth century, versions of Reblochon

¹¹ Tr : ‘Nous trouvons aujourd’hui des fabricants dans toute la vallée du Borne, aux alentours de Bonneville, et d’Annemasse ; de notre côté, Dingy, Alex, Montmin, Giez, [et] les environs d’Albertville fabriquent du reblochon.’ Cited in : Les Amis du Val de Thônes, *op. cit.* (p.51)

¹² For instance, in an 1889 guidebook to the region, it had been noted that ‘Les véritables et les meilleurs reblochons viennent surtout et presque exclusivement des pâturages des Aravis, des confins du Grand-Bornand et du Reposoir,’ (‘the veritable and best Reblochons come above all and almost exclusively from the pastures of the Aravis mountains, from the areas of Grand Bornand and Le Reposoir’) which are all in the Thônes region. Cited in : Anonymous 1950 *Historique de Reblochon*, *Op. Cit.*

¹³ As it is still referred to today. See : Fédération Des Coopératives Laitières de Savoie, 2014. [http://www.savoie-fromage.com/fr/cooperative.php?coop_id=9]

were being produced in the absence of regulation. One Reblochon merchant declaimed, ‘Can it be acceptable that the Italians are selling vulgar imitations under the name of Reblochon?’¹⁴ This external competition, in breach of the precepts of locality, loyalty and constancy that laws on geographical protection imposed (cf. Stanziani, 2010; Trubek, 2008), led to a desire to better protect the cheese in its territory of origin even if, by the 1930s, that territory had grown to include most of Haute-Savoie.

When an AOC label was sought, following the end of the Second World War, this internal territorial difference remained a source of tension:

‘If there was agreement on the necessity to establish and delimit a zone of Reblochon production, there was however no unanimity on what area that zone should cover. Most people wanted to keep it within its traditional area of production, that is, the Thônes canton and its environs. Others felt that the production of Reblochon should be extended to include all of *Haute-Savoie* and the Val d’Arly (in *Savoie*).’¹⁵

This tension was especially acute, I would argue, because it rested on different modes of production as well as on different locales. If over the previous centuries farmers across Savoy made different cheeses from time to time as their knowledge, or their apprehension of the market, dictated; the early twentieth century was a time when large consolidated *fruitières* and factories could produce vast quantities of cheeses using technologies, and benefiting from economies of scale, that individual farmers could not. The largest and busiest of these *fruitières* were in the Arve valley, far away from the Thônes valley, and near the Swiss

¹⁴ Tr : ‘Est-il admissible que les Italiens vendent de vulgaires imitations sous le nom de reblochon?’ Cited in : Les Amis du Val de Thônes, *Op. Cit.* (p.52)

¹⁵ Tr : ‘[S]’il y avait accord sur la nécessité de délimiter l’aire de production du reblochon, il n’y avait pas unanimité sur la zone géographique. Les uns, et c’était le plus grand nombre, souhaitaient la maintenir dans son rayon traditionnel de fabrication, c’est-à-dire le canton de Thônes et la région limitrophe ; les autres estimaient qu’il fallait étendre à la Haute-Savoie toute entière et au Val d’Arly la fabrication du reblochon.’ Les Amis du Val de Thônes, *Op. Cit.* (p.56)

border; with a geography of production I could map from data in an archival source (in Figure 5.29). We may argue that the work of modernisation was most complete in those more industrial concerns, which were not fettered by the need to raise cattle, which could rely on expert actors and modern equipment, and which had privileged access to the marketplace. Indeed, somewhat paradoxically, though processes of modernisation saw the quantity and breadth of territory where Reblochon was produced vastly increase, those same processes helped to ensure the viability and sustainability of this product of 'terroir' in the national and international markets.

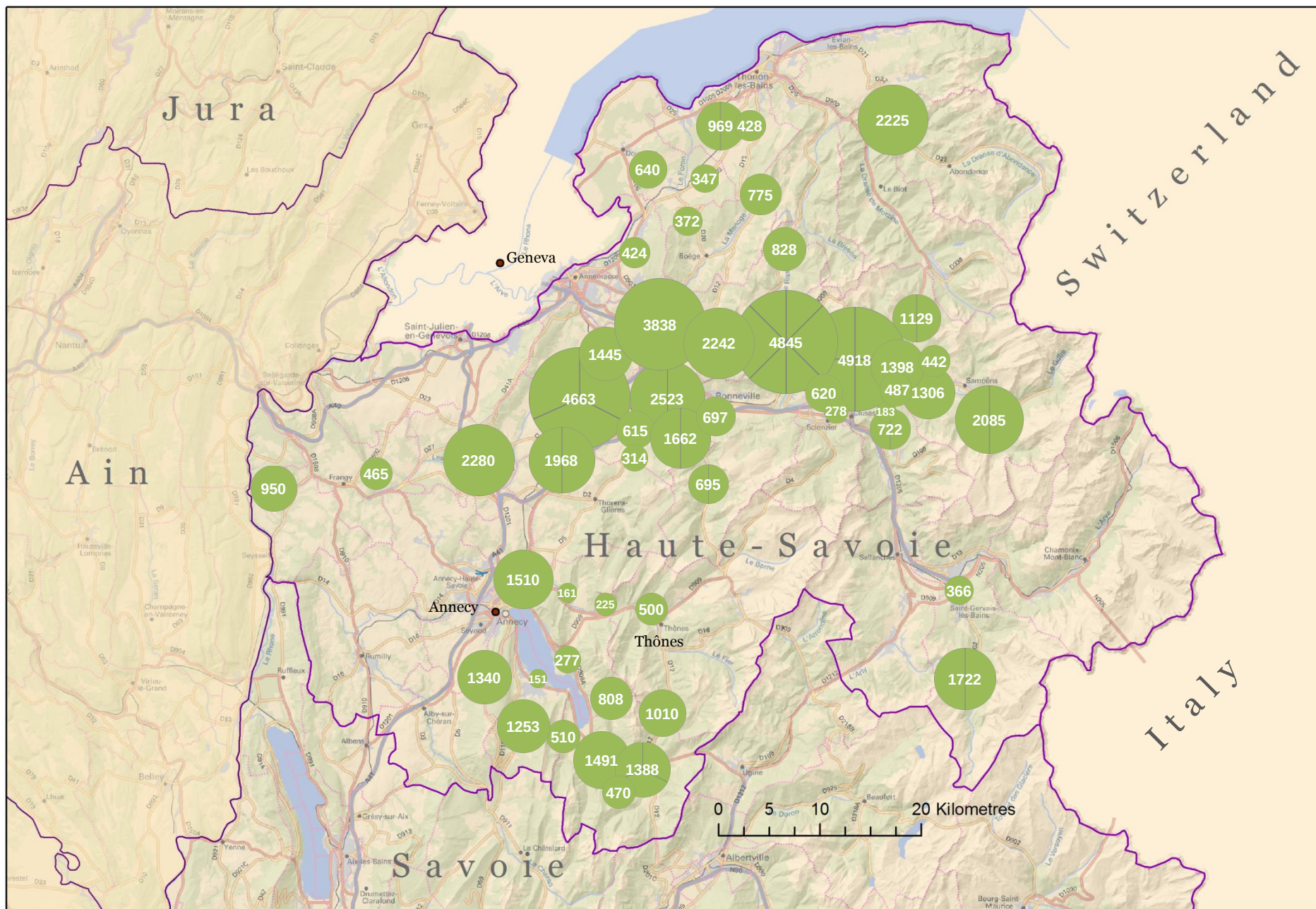


Figure 5.29: *Fruitières* producing Reblochon as at March 1949. Circles are proportional in size to total production from town or village fruitière in kg. Number of segments in circle represents number of fruitières in one town or village.
 Drawn by Author. Data source: Les Amis du Val de Thônes, *Op. Cit.* (p.46-47). Contemporary basemaps: IGN.

What is clear is that the threat from outwith the region served to group producers within Savoy, even if not within the Thônes valley, together. They took part in a process of civil litigation with an entrepreneur who was producing Reblochon hundreds of miles away in Burgundy in 1938, and the debate over copies continued after the Second World War until, in the long winter of 1955, two commissioners travelled around Savoy on a tractor drawing up a delimitation of the Reblochon-producing areas that should be protected.¹ This eventually served as the basis for the AOC that was finally awarded in 1958 and still prevails today, with only a couple of minor changes (see [Figure 5.30](#)). Bowen (2010) has written of similar efforts undertaken by producers of Comté cheese in the Franche-Comté region of France, and reflects on the benefits that accrue to producers who unionise upon the basis of a geographically protected product. Baker (1999) has written of the 19th century precursors of such collective action, and Hinnewinkel (2007) also argues that the collective governance of products of terroir is crucial to their success. The territory that was finally protected under the AOC (now AOP) was a compromise; a settlement between those who wished to cleave as closely as possible to the territories in which the cheese had been first produced by a second milking of cattle as a means of avoiding feudal taxes, and wherein its production had apparently continued ever since; and those who wished to see the benefits of this widely-recognised cheese spread to other areas of Alpine pasturing that made up the region, and which had gone through the improvements of modernisation in much the same way. Once the compromise was established on a map and protected by statute, however, it became legally permissible to talk of the terroir of Reblochon as extending across most of Haute-Savoie and a portion of Savoie; not solely the Thônes valley. Today's 'Reblochon de Savoie' (INAO,

¹ Les Amis du Val de Thônes, *Op. Cit.* (p.68-74)

2015c) was born in legal form, and we will go on to examine the governance of that legacy more closely in Chapter 7.

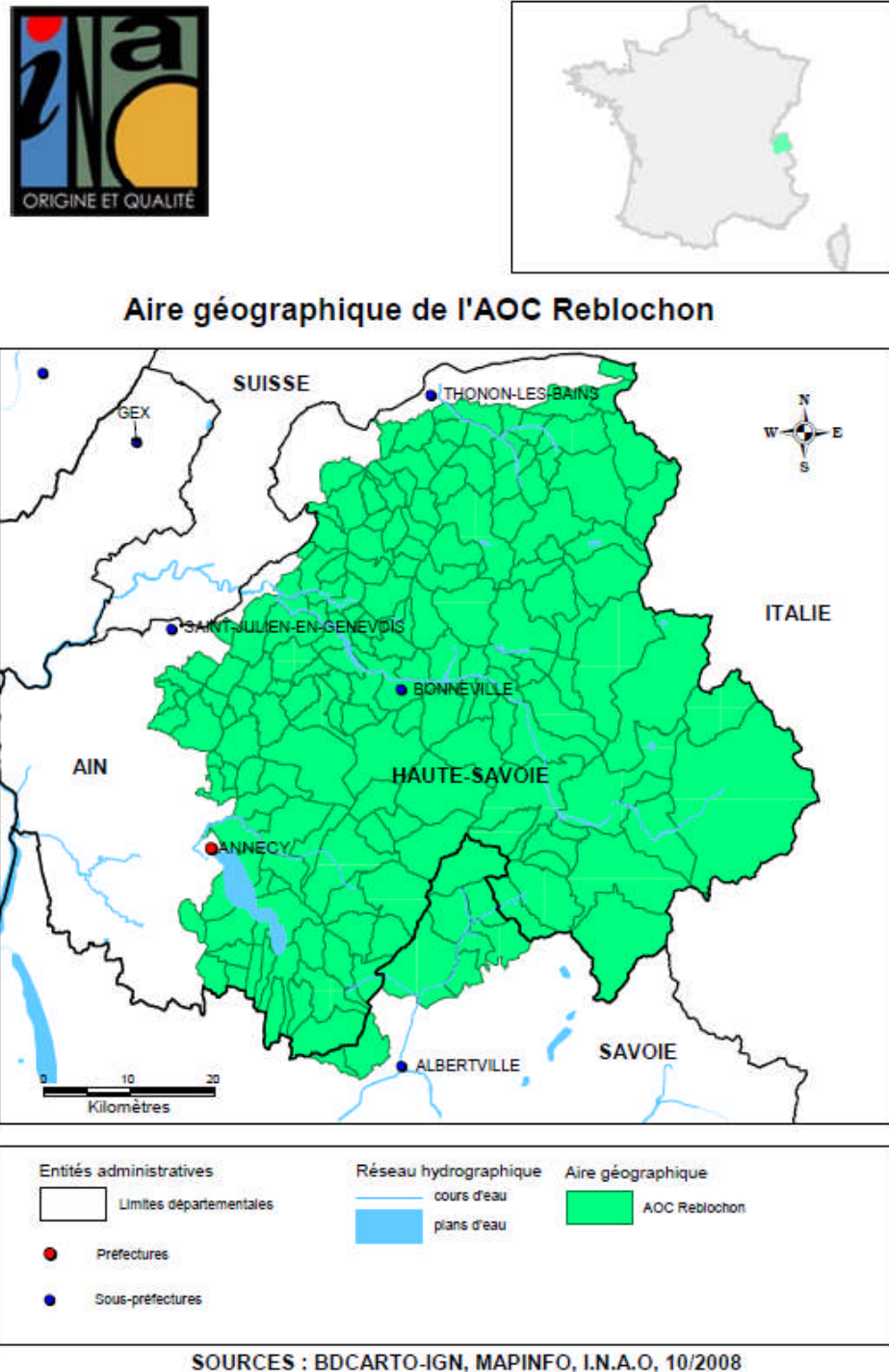


Figure 5.30: Map of today's zone of production for Reblochon AOP (only those areas marked in green are included).
Source: INAO.

Finally, the legacy of both the territorial differentiation within the Reblochon-producing space of Savoy, and the precedent of forging labels onto the cheese itself, is today's system of casein *pastilles* that are pressed into the skin of every AOC/AOP Reblochon ([Figure 5.31](#)). The *pastilles* are coloured green to indicate a *Reblochon fermier* – one that has been produced either on a single farm or from the milk of one farm's herd (most of which are still found in and around the Thônes valley; see [Figure 5.32](#)), and which we were to eat at the end of our journey with the cattle; and red to indicate a *Reblochon laitier* – that has been produced anywhere in Savoy, from the mixed milk of any number of herds (and which constitutes around 80% of total Reblochon production). A two-speed system thus now exists in the spaces of Reblochon production; a simultaneous territorial compromise and distinction through which both farm producers and industrial producers may talk of terroir, even if they must articulate it in different ways.



[Figure 5.31](#): *Reblochons fermiers* maturing, with green *pastilles* affixed.
Source: Reblochon Fermier des Aravis (2016)

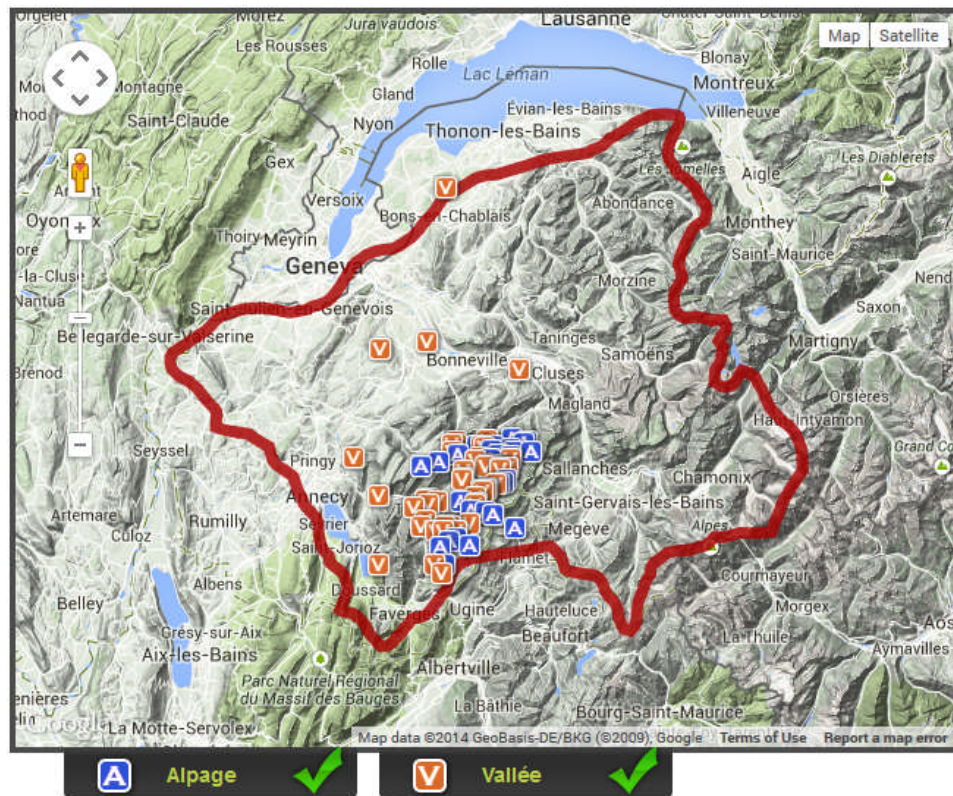


Figure 5.32: Map of producers of *Reblochon fermier* (marked with ‘V’ and ‘A’ symbols) within the red bounds of the whole Reblochon AOP area. Note concentration in the south of the Haute-Savoie département, in and around the Thônes valley. Source: Syndicat Interprofessionnel du Reblochon (2015)

5.5. Climbing Together: Part II



What had started as a closely-packed group had by now extended to a long line up the mountain path, with cows and people interspersed, and two off-road vehicles moving at a snail's pace at the rear. As we continued to climb, the landscape became more and more austere, and I was presented with images that transported me back to the physical geography textbooks of my school days. Streams gushed down the valley and scree littered the slopes of the snow-capped mountains towering above us. Up close, as we walked, we also came across pockets of snow, on the slopes that didn't receive much sunlight. I poked a patch with my

stick, and pressed some in my hands. The cool slush was a novel thing to pick up in the month of June; the children in our group enjoyed playing with it. On the slopes, the trees thinned out, and in the end disappeared, though grass and flowers were everywhere abundant. At times, people remarked upon their beauty, and some produced pocket books of alpine flora to try to identify them. This biodiversity would also please the cattle when they would finally settle into their grazing. The Alpine flora supposedly enriches the flavour and colour of the cows' milk and some can pick up the difference in the delicate taste of the Reblochon. Certainly this is mentioned as a key part of the link between terroir and product in the Reblochon Cahier des Charges or production manual (INAO, 2015c), and identifying flowers in the fields was a chance to fuse aesthetic and botanical knowledge of the terroir ahead of its gustatory appreciation later on. Throughout the ascent, we had to move at the cows' pace. The several stops on the way were as much for their benefit as for ours because, as Carole explained, the cows do not regulate their walking pace like we do. They give one hundred percent and then run out of breath. For all of us, the mountains wouldn't give respite until the course reached its end. But these creatures could manage the terrain and the efforts required, and generations of their predecessors had made journeys of this kind. From the mid-19th century onwards, there was an acceleration of interest in the selective breeding of milking cattle in this region and more widely in France, with genealogies recorded and herd books maintained (de Planhol, 1994),² and this figures within the 'long and distinguished history of bovine biotechnology through which the bodies, ethologies and ecologies of cattle have been

² See dossiers 7M 13 (Statistiques des bestiaux, 1879-1901); 7M 109-113 (Abondance Cow - Herd-Book, Concours, etc); 7M 124 (Inspections sanitaires des vaches, 1872-1914); cf. 7M 37 (Syndicats d'élevage des races Tarine, Abondance et Mulassiere, 1936-1938) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie. See also Vindret M 1890 Causerie Agricole: Nos bovidés de race chablaisienne: Au Concours Régional Agricole de 1892 in *Le Cultivateur Savoyard* 32 9th August 1890 -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Dossier 7M 145 (Vaine pâture (suppression)) ; Romagnan S 1998 *L'Abondance et ses éleveurs en Haute-Savoie dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle (1861-1914)* Mémoire de Maîtrise d'histoire contemporaine, Université Lumière Lyon 2 -- Archives départementales de la Haute-Savoie (F1041 (card index))

modernised' (Lorimer and Driessen, 2013: 251-52). In 1889 a report was prepared that discussed both the 'possibility' and 'necessity' of improving cattle productivity in the Chablais region of Savoy;³ a modern producer of Reblochon; and such operations of allying bovine biopolitics to economic specialization in the region saw a new recognition of the *Abondance* breed as a specialized milk producer of the northern Alps, and the *Tarine* breed from Villard-de-Lans as a well-acclimatised, but less prolific breed.⁴ In place of the adventitious admixture of cattle that had long prevailed in the region – the 'bastardised' cows that slipped through the herd book classifications (Cholley, 1925: 511) – improving farmers in the region had managed to double, even triple milk production by concentrated selective breeding of *Abondance* and *Tarine*:

'The results of the improvement of the herd were seen in an increase of milk production, which we may summarise as follows: under the first Empire [1804-15], the average annual milk production of a cow was estimated at between 800 and 1,000 litres; in 1862, it increased to 1,400 litres; and now [in 1925], it is no lower than 2,000 litres. On the best farms, the average is around 2,500 litres, and can sometimes even reach 3,000 litres.'⁵

Furthermore, the cows were bred to get fatter. Arbos (1921: 213) recounts that in 1840 the average *Tarine* weighed 400kg; but by the beginning of the 20th century, it was 530kg. A 20% increase in the average weight of *Abondance* cattle is also noted over this period. Part of the reason for this was that farmers were adopting more 'rational' modern ideas concerning

³ Jordan E 1889 Rapport sur la nécessité et la possibilité des améliorations à apporter à la production du Bétail en Chablais -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (▲ 3432 (card index)).

⁴ 'Breeds such as these,' Planhol (*Ibid*: 358) remarks, 'were associated with areas less strongly integrated into the general economy.'

⁵ Tr : 'Le résultat de l'amélioration du troupeau s'est traduit par une augmentation de la production laitière : on peut la résumer de la manière suivante : sous le premier Empire la production laitière annuelle moyenne d'une vache était évaluée entre 800 et 1,000 litres ; en 1862 elle s'élevait à 1,400 litres ; à l'heure actuelle [1925] elle ne descend pas au-dessous de 2,000 litres ; dans les meilleures exploitations, elle se tient en moyenne autour de 2,500 litres et atteint même parfois 3,000 litres.' Cholley (1925 : 511).

feeding practices (cf. Delfosse, 1994). And as Arbos puts it (*Ibid*: 232), this had effects elsewhere in the ecology of the production chain:

‘In winter, the cattle were only given just enough that they wouldn’t die of starvation. Wastage in the feed was not the only bad side-effect of this. In the spring, the animals threw themselves voraciously onto the grass, not without damage to their own health and to the state of the pasture.’⁶

These two geographers, writing in the 1920s, when some of these changes would have been innovations still in living memory, appear keen to justify the more rational management of bovine lives for the benefit of the region. Indeed, Delfosse (1998) has argued that such geographical writing contributed to the sense that those cows and the products made from their milk formed part of the unique agricultural attributes of the region. Yet no one climbing with me could remember cows being any smaller than they were at present. Their growth over time was not an appreciable change. We pressed on, passing what appeared to be the last of the chalets until in the end we passed over a crest and began a slight descent. A cirque opened up before us, and we saw in the distance the highest chalet in the valley – ours – was waiting. We walked down in a more relaxed, and tired, pace, and about a hundred yards before we reached the chalet, Jean-Claude passed, announcing our arrival, and the cows trotted instinctively off the track and onto the steep mountain pasture ([Figure 5.33](#)). They, and the two farmers, had returned to their highland home for the summer.

⁶ Tr : ‘En hiver, le bétail ne recevait guère que juste de quoi de pas mourir de faim. La déperdition de produit n'en était pas le seul mauvais résultat. Au printemps, les animaux se jetaient avec voracité sur les gazons, non sans dommage et pour leur propre sante et pour le bon état des pelouses.’



Figure 5.33: The cows finally enter their summer pasture.

We assembled, red-cheeked and satisfied, in front of the chalet, where a table was set up and leaflets, pictures and plates full of cheese were laid out. Carole gathered us round and introduced Susanne and Jean-Claude, who thanked us for coming up and said a few words. Then she introduced our man from the agricultural office, who talked to us about the dairying practices, the terroir, the geography and biodiversity of the region. He explained the origins of many of the things we saw in the landscape around us, talked about his work on sustainability with the region's farmers, and pointed out that much of the landscape we had seen was valuable wildlife habitat protected under the directives of the European Natura 2000 programme. He also used a map as part of his explanations, and in this way further facilitated the epistemological connection of product and place (Figure 5.34).



Figure 5.34: Explaining with reference to a map.

At every turn, the link between product and territory was made clear to us; at every opportunity, we were encouraged to appreciate what was unique about this region, about the agriculture that takes place here, and how these things might be worth protecting. And in these beautiful surroundings, the story was a convincing one. Høyrup and Munk (2007: 7) have made the point that the value of terroir can be ‘hard to contest’ when it is presented or recounted in a persuasive way, with salient materials, and we may note that such opportunities to encounter terroir; to make ‘specific associations between product, history and the natural and social qualities of place’ (MacDonald, 2013: 96) have spread far and wide in France, and indeed elsewhere, happening both virtually and in the field. I have seen terroir entered into a circulation of images and practices by actors who wish to promote, defend or profit from it. As mentioned earlier, several of the farmers I interviewed, in the Reblochon and other food chains, referred me to television programmes in which they had themselves appeared; one even gave me a memory stick bearing an episode of a programme in which he featured as something to view as part of my fieldwork. Organic farmers are profiled in the regular magazines of the French organic chain store *Sato’Riz*, farmers feature prominently in

the long-running France 3 television series *Les Carnets de Julie* ([Figure 5.35](#)), in which the eponymous host travels throughout the country and discovers, then cooks, local specialities; and it would appear that farmers are particularly susceptible to appearing in tourist literature throughout France's regions. Given the almost country-wide coverage of geographically protected products, and the importance of gastronomy in tourist promotion (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2010; MacDonald, 2013; Aubron *et al*, 2014), we can imagine that terroir and those who produce things from it would be evoked in discourse and image throughout France's regions. In addition to this, tourist boards, trade associations and bridging organisations such as *Saveurs des Aravis* stage events at which interested visitors, and local people, can touch and taste, as well as see terroir. These can be one-off or ongoing affairs, but they allow the work described in Chapter 3, of reaching consumers from outwith the territory, to be done. Elsewhere in Savoy, Mr I (Wine producer, Sciez) for example, told me that he usually sells a third of his entire annual production at a 'country fair'-style open day held at the same time each year. In Burgundy, meanwhile, the *Voie des Vignes*⁷ ([Figure 5.36](#)) is a cycle trail that makes a circuitous, leisurely route through the region's most prestigious wine-producing villages, facilitating the discovery, first through sight, then, it is hoped, through taste, of their wines. Amongst other things, and other visitors, it facilitated my gathering of materials on fieldwork in Burgundy.

⁷ Recently discovered by a *Guardian* journalist (Pietrasik, 2015) in an article entitled 'Burgundy by bike: a wine-tasting weekend'.



Figure 5.35: Promotional image for the television series *Les Carnets de Julie*
Source: France 3 Television



Figure 5.36: Promotional image for the *Voie des Vignes* cycle trail
Source: Studio Piffaut/Beaune Tourism

Such experiences of or encounters with terroir are compelling means for its value to be ascertained and shared amongst consumers. Speich (2012) has explained the construction of a ‘*sentier de découverte*’ as part of the work of bringing grapevines from the abandoned terraces of the Ventoux area of southern France back into production; and Høyrup and Munk (2007: 15-16) make a similar point whilst reflecting upon the walking trails through vineyard regions known as ‘*balades vigneronnes*’: that although a particular AOP product may be well-recognised, there is always a need to get people experiencing the sights, sounds, smells and tastes related to it; a need for ‘subjective encounters’ to appreciate its unique qualities. To let it just ‘be’ is not enough. Such exhibitions of terroir seem to me part of a strategy for

achieving sustainable returns for agricultural activity in a country that has a profound, sentimental and epistemologically structured valuation of local foods. Encounters with terroir take place at several scales, from farm visits and vineyard tastings, to village halls and farmers' cooperatives, to regional agricultural and wine fairs, and the massive annual Salon de l'Agriculture in Paris. At each of these, consumers are able to touch, taste and talk about the terroir of the products on show. Producers and other interested actors have the chance to align and enrol actors, materials, images and texts to make persuasive arguments, and such moments of participation and observation, far from the reserved domain of researchers, are lively expressions of the place of terroir in France's geographical culture.

Our man from the agricultural office told us that the region and its landscapes we could see around us were in an 'équilibre délicat', a 'delicate balance'; those who worked in the dairy industry in the summer often took jobs in the ski resorts in the winter, as I had learned in the archives; the cows grazing in the pastures today were maintaining those areas for their use as ski pistes in the winter; and the continued activity in the mountains in the summer made economic and environmental preparation for their use in the winter. Ultimately, the extensive use of the relatively poor soils for cattle grazing was a level of agricultural activity that appeared sustainable, a pattern I knew to be at variance with what prevailed a hundred and fifty years ago. The fact that farmers today made a reasonable return on the sale of their product, with a constant market based on winter sports, allowed this form of agriculture to continue in the face of pressures of property speculation here, the temptation of less geographically challenging farming conditions elsewhere, and competition from other cheeses everywhere.

The timeless appearance of some agricultural landscapes, and the impression of practices being 'local, loyal and constant' that tales of terroir often perpetuate (see Pitte, 2001), not least through the 'lien au terroir' ('link to terroir') elaborated in the dossiers sent to the EU and in the Cahiers des Charges, can belie a history of dramatic change. Farming in Savoy underwent profound changes as processes of modernisation wove dairying activity more and more tightly into the economic life of the nation in the 19th and 20th centuries. For a long time Savoy was a poor region, a region of emigration. French geographer André Cholley (1925 : 489) wrote that in the 18th century much land was put to use in the struggle to produce grain, and 'connections to the outside world were very restricted – the region simply looked in on itself.'⁸ There had been a long tradition of the young and ambitious, and the poor and desperate, leaving this region, and by the 19th century, such movements had become both more frequent and more permanent (see Guichonnet, 1945; de Planhol, 1994: 385-400). The artist Hippolyte Bellangé produced two pictures in 1823 imagining the departure and considerably later return of two young Savoyard siblings from their poor home (Figures 5.37 and 5.38). They certainly put a more desperate aspect on the romance of the Alpine landscape depicted by Terry in Figure 4.1, and evoked in many other past and present images.

⁸ Tr : 'C'était une région de cultures et une région pauvre; le sol se partageait entre les jachères et les terres a "bled"; les relations avec le dehors étaient fort restreintes, le pays vivait replié sur lui-même.'



Figure 5.37: *Le départ de petits Savoyards.*
Hippolyte Bellangé, 1823.

Source : Bellangé Joseph Louis Hippolyte (1800-1866), *Le départ de petits Savoyards*, Lithographie, 25.6 x 33.9cm, 1823, N° inv. 977-I-1-0350, Département de la Haute-Savoie © Dep74 [located through Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie, Fonds Payot : 977-I-1-0350].



Figure 5.38: *Le retour des petits Savoyards.*

Hippolyte Bellangé, 1823.

Source : Bellangé Joseph Louis Hippolyte (1800-1866), *Le retour des petits Savoyards*, Lithographie, 29.3 x 43.4cm, N° inv. 977-I-1-0332, Département de la Haute-Savoie
 © Dep74 [located through Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie, Fonds Payot : 977-I-1-0332].

But the emigration of Savoyards throughout the 19th century facilitated the efforts towards modernisation undertaken in the last decades of that century by virtue of fewer people needing to live from the land. As the geologist Falsan (1892: 334) argued, following Briot:

‘This decline in the population would however present certain advantages; it would facilitate the restoration of meadows and the recovery of hillsides, on which the grass could regain the quality and vigour that over-intensive pasturing would have reduced in the long term.’⁹

⁹ Tr: ‘[C]ette diminution de la population aurait cependant des côtés avantageux; elle faciliterait plutôt la restauration des prairies et le regazonnement des pentes, dont l’herbage tendrait à reprendre des qualités et une vigueur que la dépaissance trop intensive lui aurait fait perdre à la longue.’

And indeed archival sources show that by the time that Reblochon producers in the Thônes valley were forming a union and seeking a label of geographical protection for their *produit de terroir* in the 1930s, the population of their villages, especially the smallest and less accessible ones, had significantly declined from what it was in the mid-19th century ([Figure 8](#)).

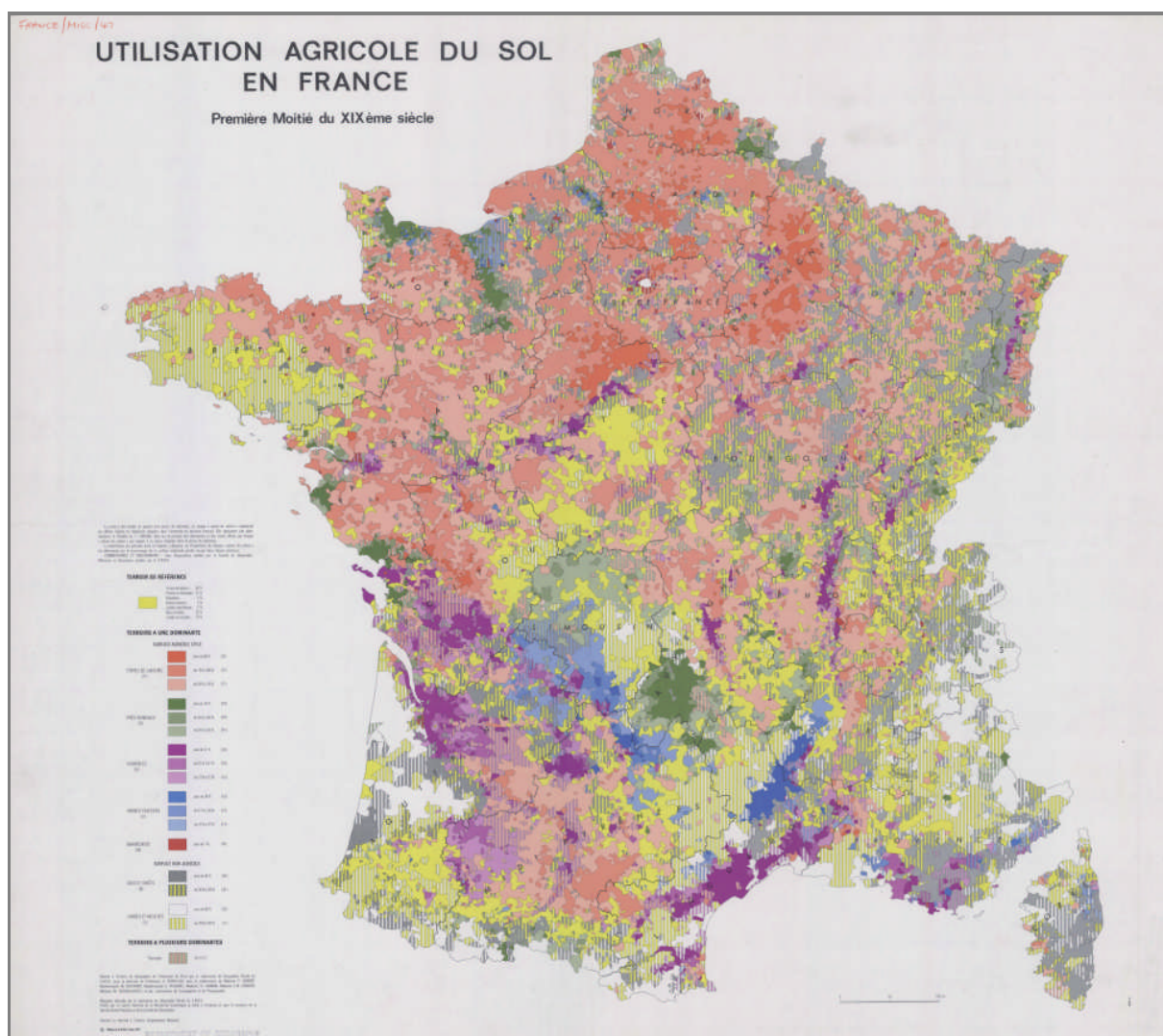
Village	1848 Population	1936 Population	% Change
Thônes	2,919	2,563	-15%
La Baume de Thuy	341	181	-47%
Saint-Jean-de-Sixt	642	507	-29%
Le Grand Bornand	2,332	1,702	-27%
La Clusaz	1,202	1,005	-16%
Manigod	1,898	895	-56%
Les Clefs	756	443	-42%
Serraval	1685	418	-77%

[Figure 5.39](#): Population change in the Thônes Valley, 1848-1936.

Source: Adapted from Pochat-Baron (1942).

Like other parts of France, both agricultural improvement and economic integration accelerated in this region as the 19th century progressed, with farmers increasingly concentrating their efforts on those products that would sell in the network of national markets rather than for themselves or for local markets (Weber, 1976; Clout, 1980; Plessis, 1985; Braudel, 1988a). By the late 19th century, in common with several other Alpine cheese production chains, Reblochon had found powerful external actors who valued it and whose money supported concentration upon quality; ‘Reblochon went from the table of the mountain-dweller to the table of the bourgeois consumer’ (*‘Le reblochon passait de la table du montagnard sur celle du bourgeois’*) (Roybin, 1991: 4). Moreover, the geographic facts of its production became ever more predominant in the region, as documented by Perpillou (1977a; 1977b) in [Figures 5.40 and 5.41](#). Like Normandy in north-western France, and the central Auvergne region towards the centre of the map, the departments of Savoie and Haute-

Savoie are depicted with substantially more green on [Figure 5.41](#) as more land was dedicated to pasture and hay production. And, following legal changes, more of this land was in private hands. The potential supply of quantities of cheese to large urban markets was, as Clout found in the pays de Bray, ‘better realised from individual pastures than from rough grazing’ (Clout, 2004: 61), although archival documents show that this was not realised without resistance or delay.



[Figure 5.40](#): Copy of Perpillon’s (1977a) map showing usage of agricultural land in the first half of the 19th century.

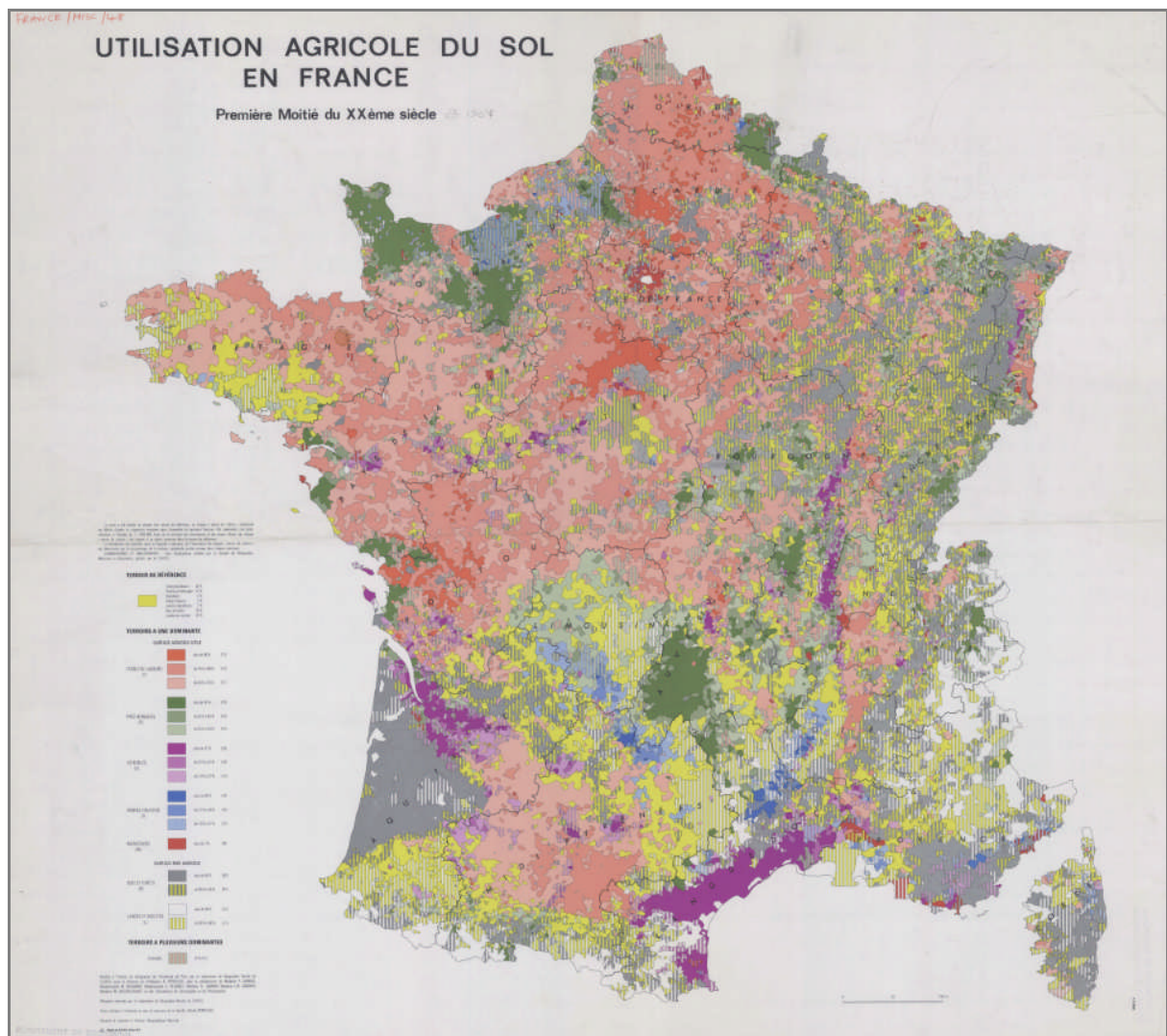


Figure 5.41: Copy of Perpillon's (1977b) map showing usage of agricultural land in the first half of the 20th century.

In Savoy, the division of land and rights to access land with grazing animals had been subject to a complex system of laws and customs for centuries. Evidence of disputes over land is found frequently throughout the archives, and numerous maps and plans attest to the marking out and division of the region's agricultural territory long before the French annexation.¹⁰

¹⁰ See, for example: de Calubo P 1483 *Quittance passée par Jean fils de feu Jean Tissot, d'Arbroz, Paroisse des Gets, en faveur de Guillaume fils de feu Pierre Tissot, de la somme de 18 florins pour prix de la vente d'un pré - Les Gets, a Arbroz, dans la Maison de Jean Bellon*; Pierre de Calubo, du mandement de Samoens, clerc, notaire, 1483, 10 decembre -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Archives Communales Deposées - Petits Fonds - Les Gets: 31 (Acte entre Particuliers)); Anonymous 1728-1738 *La Clusaz (Copie de la mappe)* -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Inventaire des mappes sardes de la Haute-Savoie: 1 C d 64-COPIE); Anonymous 1810-1906 *Réglementation des pâturages: Procès-verbaux de délimitation, règlement*,

One of the best-documented controversies that can be followed through the files at Annecy is that of the attempted destruction of ‘*vaïne pâture*’. This free, communal practice of pasturing livestock was often undertaken in valley bottoms, marshes and other areas at low and mid altitudes in the spring and autumn months (cf. Gorceix, 1918); the shoulder periods between summer grazing in high pastures and winter stabling; between what one participant on the walk advised me are called the ‘*belle saison*’ and the ‘*mauvaise saison*’ in the region.

A series of documents show that farmers in many parts of Savoy assembled to protest against a new national law passed on 8 July 1889, which aimed to put an end to the practice of *vaïne pâture* in favour of more private pasturing and improved sown meadows. Letters were drawn up and sent back and forth between groups of farmers and local officials, with historical precedent, property claims and annotated cadastral maps all used as evidence for the claims of those in favour, and of those against the retention of *vaïne pâture*.¹¹ At Valleiry, for instance, a village near the Swiss border, aggrieved farmers prepared a letter with around 100 of their signatures ([Figure 5.42](#)) which was sent to the Prefect of the *Haute-Savoie département* on 24 August 1890.¹² In it, they argue that their right to *vaïne pâture* had been ‘constantly exercised’ over time; that it was a right that rested on documentary warrants, and had been carried out ‘in a peaceful fashion since time immemorial’.¹³ The use and aptitude of

extrait du registre des délibérations, correspondance, 1810-1906 (Dossier) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Archives Communales Déposés - Manigod: E Depot 160/1N4) ; Anonymous 1870 Commune de Manigod contre Pierre-François Vailland et Jean-Barthélemy Veyrat-Charvillon au sujet de la taxe sur les pâturages et du bail d'un chalet d'alpage: arrêté du conseil du préfecture, 1870 -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Archives Communales Déposés - Manigod: E Depot 160/4D15)

¹¹ See documents consulted in Dossier 7M 145 (*Vaïne pâture* (suppression) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie.

¹² Multiple signatories 1890 (*Letter to the Prefect of the Haute-Savoie département written at Valleiry, dated 24th August 1890*) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Dossier 7M 145 (*Vaïne pâture* (suppression))).

¹³ Tr : ‘d’un façon paisible et immémoriale’.

the land in question was of much greater concern than its ultimate ownership to the protestors, who argued that:

‘In our region, where the products of farming consist mainly in the form of livestock, communal pastures constitute the most precious resource of people of modest means [*petites gens*]. They allow them, in the autumn, to preserve their modest stocks of forage for the winter; and in spring, to supplement those stocks when they have been used up. In this way, many small farmers who hardly have any of their own land can feed one or two cows, from which they draw most of their income.’¹⁴

Vaine pâture figured among the practices to attain grass and hay for the cattle that permitted peasant livelihoods in this region. Ultimately, the protestors argued;

‘The right of *vaine pâture*, one of our old customs, is for us a vital matter.’¹⁵

¹⁴ Tr : ‘Dans notre région où les produits de la campagne consistent surtout dans ceux du bétail, les pâturages communaux constituent la plus précieuse ressource des petites gens. Ils leur permettent, à l’automne, de conserver leur modeste provision de fourrages pour l’hiver, et, au printemps, de suppléer à cette provision, alors que celle-ci est épuisée. C’est ainsi qu’une foule de particuliers qui n’ont presque point de terrains en propre peuvent nourrir une ou deux vaches dont ils tirent le meilleur de leur revenu.’

¹⁵ Tr : ‘Le droit de *vaine pâture*, entré dans nos mœurs, est pour nous une question vitale.’

‘[Has] sought a means to reconcile the interests of those modest farmers with the rights of private property and the demands of agricultural progress...’¹⁶

The detail of the law changed, to protect the sometimes ancient rights of those who pursued a system of transient pasturing. But the spirit of the law remained the same: progress along capitalist lines was not to be impeded, and use of sown meadows (*‘prairies artificielles’*) and the rotation of fodder production in private hands instead of *vaîne pâture* was the key to this in modern dairy farming; and the diffusion of those forms of improvement was corroborated by Arbos (1921) and Cholley (1925) in their surveys of the region. Indeed, we could argue that the laws that were passed in the last half of the 19th century which sought to restore the Alpine landscape, and those that sought to do away with *vaîne pâture*, were based on the same vision of the Alps as a fragile environment worn away by unenlightened peasant agriculture. When Briot (1896) argues, in terms of impoverished summer pastures, that ‘the obstacles to their restoration are also the same: old-fashioned habits and poverty,’¹⁷ we can infer a desire to implement a more rational, organised and essentially *modern* system of pasturing. The assessment of ‘obstacles’ by the Inspector of Forests is paraxial to that of ‘barriers’ which the Minister of Agriculture saw in his circular mentioned above. The solution, in both cases, was to be found in a nationally supported re-organisation of agricultural territory, rhythm and practice along fundamentally modern lines.

In their regional accounts, the French geographers Arbos (1921) and Cholley (1925) charted further forms of work that connected Savoy to the national French economy, and also argued

¹⁶ Tr : ‘[A] cherché les moyens de concilier les intérêts de ces modestes cultivateurs avec les droits de la propriété et les exigences du progrès agricole...’ Develle J 1890 (*Letter sent to the Prefect of the Haute-Savoie département from the Ministère de l’Agriculture, dated 7th August 1890*) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Dossier 7M 145 (*Vaîne pâture* (suppression))).

¹⁷ Tr : ‘[I]es obstacles à leur régénération sont aussi les mêmes: habitudes séculaires et pauvreté’.

that the rapid growth in the number of *fruitières* (central cheese production units) and professional *fromagers* (cheesemakers) throughout the 19th century changed the region's dairying landscape, which has been corroborated by more recent scholarship (Roybin, 1991; Delfosse, 1994; 2006; Micoud, 1998). Records in the archives at Annecy attest to numerous requests being made, and fulfilled, for projects that would improve the integrity of the local networks that furnished milk for cheese production,¹⁸ and a significant number relate to the establishment of *fruitières* or *fromageries* – central cheese production units that could serve groups of farmers in rural hamlets or villages. For instance, in a letter from the Minister of Agriculture to the Prefect of the department written on the 8th of november 1912, it is noted that:

‘A group of landowners from Mont-Piton have sent me a request for a subsidy for the construction and improvement of a *fromagerie* in that village. / The hamlet of Mont-Piton, situated at an altitude of between 1,000 and 1,100 metres, is too far away from the nearest *fruitières* for the farmers to deliver their milk. / To remedy this situation, 23 farmers have formed a co-operative society, with the purpose of turning the milk produced by around a hundred cows into cheese.’¹⁹

By the 1920s, many *fruitières* had become established in the Thônes valley, and elsewhere in the region many small *fruitières* had consolidated into ever-larger central facilities – such as at Pers-Jussy, where a new centre assembled the production of 28 *fruitières* from the surrounding region under one roof.²⁰ This trend was remarked upon favourably by Arbos,

¹⁸ See Dossier 7M 160 (Améliorations pastoraux, 1912-1939) – Archives départementales de la Haute-Savoie.

¹⁹ Tr: ‘Un groupe de propriétaires de Mont-Piton m’a adressé une demande de subvention pour la construction et l’aménagement d’une fromagerie coopérative dans ce village. / Le hameau de Mont-Piton, située à une altitude de 1,000 à 1,100 mètres, est trop éloigné des *fruitières* les plus proches pour qu’il soit possible aux habitants d’y porter leur lait. / Pour remédier cette situation 23 cultivateurs ont constitué une société coopérative, en vue de la transformation en fromage, du lait produit par une centaine de vaches.’ (Letter from the Minister of Agriculture to the Prefect of the Haute-Savoie département, dated 8th November 1912) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Dossier 7M 160 (Améliorations pastoraux, 1912-1939)).

²⁰ Bordeaux L 1922 (Letter sent to the Prefect of the Haute-Savoie département written at Thonon-les-Bains, dated 29th May 1922) -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Dossier 7M 41)

Cholley, and other contemporary geographers (Delfosse, 1998: 20-21). These larger centres could produce larger quantities and rationalise export, and they facilitated the adoption of increasingly stringent hygiene regulations and the pooling of bacterial risk attendant to working with raw milk (Delfosse, 1991; Ricard, 1998; Brunton, 2004).²¹ The utilisation of a specialised space of production, separate from the farm, far from the warmth of the cows and the steam of their manure, as in [Figure 5.27](#), was praised by Arbos (1921: 262), who hoped in the subjunctive:

‘That we might no longer see the fromager having no other means to gauge the temperature of the milk but to stick his arm into it! That he might have well-ventilated and clean rooms to work in, and no longer the smoke-filled ‘*remue*’ [stirring] room!’²²

And these changes that came in how pastures were used by farmers and in how milk was transformed into cheese had an impact on the inherent qualities of the Reblochon cheese itself. Far from the tax evasion of the second milking of cows under the ancien régime, in the latter decades of the 19th century, it had been observed that:

‘Already Reblochon was no longer being made exclusively with milk from a second milking ; all of the available milk is used, and the quality is not at all the same.’²³

²¹ We may reflect that the issue of bacterial risk in milk is one that has not diminished in importance. It remains controversial in France, at the interface of French goods with the rest of the world, and in countries where cheeses are made in a French style (see Latour, 1988; Atkins, 2010; Paxson, 2013; Frédéric, 2014). The issue will be discussed again in Chapter 7 of this thesis.

²² Tr: ‘Qu'on ne voie plus le fromager n'avoir d'autre moyen d'apprécier la température du lait que d'y plonger son bras! Que des pièces aérées et propres lui soient réservées, et non plus la "remue" enfumée!’

²³ Tr : ‘[D]éjà le reblochon ne se fait exclusivement avec du lait de deuxième traite, tout le lait disponible est employé et la qualité n'est plus de tout la même.’ Anonymous 1950, Historique de Reblochon - Fromage des Vallées de Thônes *Le Progrès* (Edition Haute-Savoie - Savoie - Ain) Nos. 2613-15, 16 June - 30 June 1950 -- Archives Départementales de la Haute-Savoie (Doc 761 (card index))

Ultimately, the old agricultural order of this region was irremediably transformed by improvements and specialisation; and, as de Planhol (1994) has argued, the economic differentiation of national space led to what we might describe (after Muniesa *et al*, 2007) as agricultural goods *becoming* economic in new ways. Thus, by the time of Cholley's regional survey in 1925, and as shown in Perpillou's historical map in [Figure 5.40](#), instead of the 'nonsense' of wheat production in the Alps dictated by remoteness and necessity (de Planhol, 1994: 353), this region had become a '*pays herbagé*,' ('grass country') wherein, 'Cattle have taken the leading role and the production of milk for *fruitières* has become the principal concern of all the farmers [*paysans*]' (Cholley, 1925:490).²⁴ As well as the changes to the practices of pasturing and the nature of the cattle themselves, the improvement of methods of cheese production and better connections to external markets provided for a more efficient monetisation of the aptitude of the territory for raising dairy cattle. Economic adaptation fed back into territorial aptitude, and the changes that were wrought under conditions of modernisation (cf. Plessis, 1985; Harris, 1991; Murdoch and Pratt, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1999) contributed to the landscape dominated by permanent pasture which exists throughout the region today. Over time, Reblochon became part of the system of geographical protection in which the agricultural capacities and aptitudes of regions were appreciated at the national level and privileged within a national economy of goods. These modernising efforts began in the region of Savoy in the 19th century were so fruitful that in his 1925 regional survey, Cholley (1925: 1) argued:

'In the Rhône valley and on the surrounding plateaux, the adaptation to modern conditions has been very simple and very swift, thanks to

²⁴ Tr : 'Le bétail a pris la première place et la production du lait pour les fruitières est devenue la préoccupation essentielle de tous les paysans'.

specialisation in the production of a soft cheese: Reblochon, a real gourmet product.²⁵

In front of the chalet, our man from the agricultural office finished his story of this gourmet product's connection to the landscape we could see around us, and how its production is a sustainable activity within that landscape (Figure 5.43). The historical struggles and transformations evident from archival materials were not the focus of his discussion. But no-one seemed dissatisfied with the story told. At the end of his talk, Susanne stepped forward and invited us all to sample the cheese and some other local fare laid out on a large table. We ate, drank and chatted contentedly. An accordion struck up and some of the group started singing. I was informed that these were songs from the region, and there was an extra note of local terroir about the bandleaders, with their fulsome beards and feathered hats. I sampled the Reblochon and the Chevrotin cheese, which had been calling to me whilst I had listened to the story of the several steps involved in their production. As the *Cahier des Charges* (INAO, 2015c) insists, for *Reblochon fermier* many operations, such as cutting the curds and turning the cheeses as they ripen, have to be carried out by hand. These cheeses were certainly delicious, and partnered beautifully with some of the local white wine we were offered. Whether it was the elation of the climb, the lack of oxygen at altitude, or the spirit of the company, I fancied that here and now I was savouring the elements of terroir in their most stunning alignment: the life of the cattle, the abundance of their food, the fragile beauty of the landscape, the annual rhythms through which it is put to use, and the tang of the fruits of that same land. This final act of tasting employed one final epistemological tool, that of the mouth. In some ways this was the most important act of the day. It was the chance for people to be rewarded for their labour in climbing, and for them to encounter terroir in a way that, whilst

²⁵ Tr : 'Dans la vallée de Thônes et sur les plateaux voisins, l'adaptation aux conditions modernes a été très simple et très rapide, grâce à la spécialisation dans la fabrication d'un fromage à pâte molle : le reblochon, vrai fromage de gourmet.'

also stimulating nerve-endings and conjuring memories, would go beyond the work of the hand and eye in apprehending place and allow the product to be ingested; to establish an ‘intimate biomaterial connection’ with it (Roe, 2006: 118). If good food in France draws upon local knowledge, and ‘embodies the traditions and rhythms of a particular place’ (Whatmore and Clark, 2008: 403), the participatory transhumance ultimately provided both the food for thought and the food itself.



Figure 5.43: The group listening to a talk about sustainability and biodiversity in the region, just before tasting cheese, wine and other local products.

After everyone had eaten, drunk and rested, Susanne and Carole manned a cheese stall on the table, which did a brisk trade (I myself acquired some to bring home), and then after saying our goodbyes we turned and headed off back down the mountain. I travelled back down at a gentle walking pace and chatted to some of the other participants. One of them thought I was a journalist. I explained that he wasn't far wrong. My chronicling of the terroir of Reblochon must have used similar methods to those of Marie in her reports for *L'Echo des Alpes*. The

transhumance we participated in was a mediated event. I participated in its mediation, as did many of the other participants. I took pictures and was in pictures, I am writing about it now just as others have written about it. But I contend that terroir *has to be* mediated, it has to be communicated outside its geographic origin, whether by word of mouth or more modern means. Buller (1996: 173) has argued that in France, ‘agricultural heritage remains economically and socially rooted in national culture, notwithstanding the relative decline in numbers within the farming profession,’²⁶ just as Frayssignes (2008) has argued that modern French society is ‘in search of its roots,’²⁷ and the national newspaper *Le Figaro* (2012) has showcased what it describes as a national ‘Comeback of Terroir’²⁸. Visual, literary and tactile experiences are all necessary to allow France’s majority urban population to appreciate the terroir they have inherited from previous generations both in its cultural value and its rural territorial materiality. However, as I have argued, a too delectable history can dissimulate some quite grounded discontinuities in the region’s history *and* geography. Working backwards through the archive, I discovered changes in the cheese, the dairies, the cheesemakers, the cows, and the land itself. Today’s terroir, experienced visually, physically, through talk and through taste, is not an unchanged inheritance. If Reblochon is encountered and presented as a product that comes from a sustainable form of agriculture, allowing collisions with archival documents allows us to see that hasn’t always been the case. Yet appreciating the terroir through the soles of my feet, witnessing it visually and affectively, and discussing it with fellow participants moulds the historical perspective through the intense experience of the present tense (Dodgshon, 2008; Wylie, 2005; Kearns, 2007). Here

²⁶ Tr: ‘l’héritage agrarien reste économiquement et socialement enraciné dans la culture nationale malgré la diminution relative du poids démographique de la profession agricole,’.

²⁷ Tr: ‘à la recherche de ses racines’.

²⁸ Tr: ‘Revanche du Terroir’.

at the top of the mountain, the epistemological expectations of terroir were met with a curated, aesthetic, affective and ultimately delicious experience.

In today's Reblochon Cahier des Charges (INAO, 2015c), it is asserted that:

‘The organoleptic characteristics of ‘Reblochon’ or ‘Reblochon de Savoie’ are closely linked to the feed given to the dairy cattle (pasture and fodder), which come from a flora shaped by the climatic conditions described above; and to the maintenance of the *savoir-faire* of the cheesemakers who, faithful to history, have always worked with the raw milk to get the best out of it.’²⁹

This is a conveniently poetic way to propose continuity with the past in a way that might be appreciated and communicated out in the field. It is rhetorical and contributes to the coherency of the history and geography of the product's provenance. Whilst what I witnessed in taking part in the transhumance was, without doubt, an expression of long-established *savoir-faire* in the landscape, I cannot escape the fact that my participation involved a particular set of actions and images that were used as part of the promotion of terroir of the Reblochon food chain; a means of *faire-savoir*, or making known (Speich, 2012). Indeed, I featured in an image, shown at the very start of these two sections of the chapter, that was posted on the *Saveurs des Aravis* website and which thereby entered into the promotion of the product. Terroir lives through the circulation of images, products, practices and people. The animation of the transhumance, opened to a fascinated public, was a means to promote interest in landscape, product and region, as well as a means for me to attune to and be affected by the living elements of my fieldwork (after Whatmore, 2003; Wylie, 2005; Mol, 2010).

²⁹ Tr : ‘[L]es caractéristiques organoleptiques du « Reblochon » ou « Reblochon de Savoie », sont bien liées à l'alimentation des vaches laitières (pâturage, fourrages), issues d'une flore inféodée aux conditions climatiques décrites ci-dessus et au maintien du *savoir-faire* des fromagers et affineurs fidèles à l'histoire, qui ont toujours travaillé le lait cru de façon à en tirer le meilleur.’

On the way down, we saw the Mont Blanc, and this time free of clouds. It was beautiful, majestic, and invited discovery and adventure. We continued our descent at our relaxed pace and eventually, eventually, I threw my new stick back into the forest and we came upon the rest of the group, waiting for us at the trailhead where we had been dropped off. A few others, the last few, came down, and then we covered the last couple of kilometres by bus to the village and the farm where we had started. Tired and happy, my feet damp inside my boots where the streams had overcome them, I climbed into my car and was ready to begin my motorised descent through the beautiful peaks of the Aravis towards home. I noticed the young farmer's mother had arrived to pick him up. He still had his stick, with which he had now completed his first transhumance. In light of what I had learnt on the way up the mountain about the sustainability of this annual practice, and the active desire to keep it as part of a living agricultural landscape, I reckoned it would not be his last.

5.6. Conclusion

Today, at the other end of France, Clout (2004) reflects that the enclosed pasturing landscape of the Pays de Bray in Normandy appears *natural*, that it attracts tourists and that it is celebrated in terms of regional tradition. But this image belies the many controversies, conflicts and transformations that it underwent over time. Through this chapter, we have climbed into the map, examined the landscape, and arrived at a similar position. Despite the fact that dairying in the Alps underwent profound changes in the 19th and early 20th centuries, today's well-tended pastures and the well-fed cows in *Haute-Savoie* may appear to the observer as part of the '*ordre eternel des champs*' (Renard, 2016), and the terroir of this

region as expressed through products like Reblochon continues to build rhetorically upon a sense of historical continuity and territorial pre-destiny. In many food chains in France, narratives of tradition – the echoes of past ecologies of social life – have replaced the narratives of progress that worked to transform those ecologies in centuries past (cf. de Geest, 2003; Greimas, 1966). A historical geographical exploration, such as that carried out in this chapter, allows us to put this in perspective. I have been able to observe how the implementation of modernity, is as Swyngedouw (1999) argues, ‘deeply and inevitably a geographical project,’ and it is one articulated through social, economic and environmental entanglement. In following a handful of the transformations of modernisation in the dairying landscapes of Savoy, I have been attentive to the more-than-human nature of the processes in question; in assembling varied archival materials, I have been able to find knots in the grains of the eirenic, sometimes romanticised accounts of Reblochon’s provenance, and provide some explanation of the landscape of the present. And in combining present with past, I have made an attempt to respond to Marsden’s (2004: 139-40) call to ‘understand how alternative food networks not only get formed, but then get demarcated and maintained as a socio-competitive dynamic.’ As he argued, and as I found, ‘these are not static events’.

The production of Reblochon cheese was transformed by the propagation of modernity in the 19th century, and its economic destiny has been shaped to a large degree by being exported to urban markets outside the region, and by the frequency of encounters with the region made by winter sports enthusiasts from the middle decades of the 20th century onwards. The legacy of these changes is a food chain that produces a thing called Reblochon which appears steeped in tradition; but the natures of both food chain and end product would be barely recognisable to those peasant farmers who first produced a cheese from the fatty milk of a second milking undertaken to avoid the taxes of a feudal system of land ownership.

Attending to the entanglement of aptitude and adaptation, and contests over territory and tradition, through archival materials allowed me to make the claim that terroir is neither predisposed to stasis nor the transmission of the same qualities that prevailed at its inception. Natural and naturalised encounters with the stuff of terroir allow persuasive arguments for the link to qualities in the product, and for the sustainability of its production, to be made, and multiple means of producing knowledge are available to consumers in France who wish to visit fairs, farms and farming landscapes. The experiences of the now, through immediate visual contact and biomaterial connection, have a troubled relationship to the past, however. Farmers and other actors can frame terroir in terms of continuity and sustainability, but archival epistemologies can produce knowledge that warp and bend these frames. Despite the challenges of using archival materials to rebuild lived landscapes of the past, carrying them into the epistemological spaces of the field facilitated my interrogation of the claims to locality, loyalty and constancy which are assembled and in their own turn filed in national and European government departments, acquiring legal force. In the next two chapters I want to continue to examine how claims are made for terroir and contested, both in the fields of my three production chains, and in national and international discursive spaces. In Chapter 6 I will examine the dynamics of enrolling ecological life in accounts of terroir, and in Chapter 7 I will interrogate how the governance of terroir shapes who can speak for that concept and what they might say.

* * *

Chapter 6: Ecological Engagements

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I want to explore how visual, practical and scientific encounters affect the parameters of what terroir is, what it is seen to be, and how it might be sustainable. I will continue to use the observant participation and interviews I carried out with farmers to examine the implementation of *savoir-faire* and sustainable praxis in the three food chains I have been studying in the thesis so far. I will put debates in academic literature, popular literature and the field in conversation to compare vernacular, scientific and mediated conceptions of how terroir is constituted; and attempt to answer the question raised in the introduction to this thesis of whether environmentally sustainable methods such as organics and biodynamics can facilitate the expression of terroir. As Boisclair and Estevez (2006) argue, there is still a significant knowledge gap as to the effects of ecological interventions in agricultural systems. I cannot pretend to make much progress towards bridging that gap in this chapter, but I do want to offer what I feel are important findings at two levels of ecological concern that were raised by farmers: at the planted surface of the ground, and in the soil. I will then go on to examine how scientific enquiry, variously apprehended in vernacular *savoir-faire*, has opened up a new avenue of research and explanation in terroir at the microscopic scale, and demonstrate some of the risks which follow the pursuit of organic and biodynamic agriculture for static and large-scale conceptions of terroir, and for the viability of individual farms.

6. 2. Scrutinising Stasis

‘From the limestone, the roots draw the characteristic subtlety, wealth, and aromatic richness of Burgundy wines.’ (BIVB, 2011)

‘The notion of being able to taste the vineyard geology in the wine – a *goût de terroir* – is a romantic notion which makes good journalistic copy, and is manifestly a powerful marketing tactic, but it is wholly anecdotal and in any literal way is scientifically impossible.’ (Maltman, 2008, Abs.)

In 2012 I delivered a talk on my plans for this project on terroir, and the preliminary findings I had made up to that point. I attempted to explain to the audience something of the complexity of terroir; its composition of geological, meteorological, soil, biotic and human elements. I talked through the three case studies covered in this thesis, and mentioned some other comparable food products. One audience member asked me the following question: “Isn’t this all just a marketing ploy?” Though wanting to respond in the negative, I found this very difficult to answer, and after struggling to do so for a short while, I told him that I would have to get back to him later on with a more satisfactory response.

As we saw in Chapter 4, terroir has developed as a concept within a specific cultural context. Outside of France, especially in Anglo-American scientific literature, there seems to be a degree of scepticism about claims for terroir which are so smoothly made in marketing literature and which contribute to France’s long-running success in the world wine market (see Girard, 2014b; Johnson, 2014). It may be that there is something in the festive and luxurious place of wine in society today that renders its qualities worthy of informal appreciation, but not acceptable as objective ‘facts’. It seems that certain scientists today wish to ‘uncover the secret’ (Simms, 2015: 43), ‘penetrate the veil’ (Wade, 2013) or find the ‘plausible aspects of terroir that can be scientifically measured’ (*Ibid*). They wish to use

testable hypotheses and the apparatus of laboratory science to expose what may seem to be exaggeration, romance and mystery in explanations of wine quality that rest on the concept of terroir. This is not so much with the aim of improving wines made on the basis of terroir, as Chaptal did, but rather to reduce terroir's credibility as a heuristic device. Jones (2014: 39) has argued that in recent years, 'scientists have been asked to help identify the most important aspects of terroir,' in response, perhaps, to what Erlanger (2013) has described as the 'unwritten conspiracy' between producers and consumers in France that drives terroir's preservation. Jones (2014) attempted to explain the concept of terroir for readers of the popular geology magazine *Earth*; White *et al* (2009) proposed a footloose concept of terroir that would strip Burgundy of its exclusive qualities in their article in *Nature GeoScience*; and Simms' (2015) recent *New Scientist* article asked for its part 'does the idea of terroir stand up to scrutiny?'

Perhaps we should not be surprised that these despatches from popular bastions of American positivist science might scrutinise and question a dogmatic, romantic, ambivalent concept that makes vast sums of money for the old world and is mostly transacted in a foreign language. The problem, as I see it, is that terroir, as an inescapably cultural concept, is not entirely reducible, solvable or explainable through laboratory science. Such a scientific approach represents one possible epistemology in producing warranted knowledge about terroir. But I would maintain that it has its limits. Many scientists admit this much: for instance, in Roullier-Gall *et al*'s (2014a) study in *Food Chemistry*, 95% of the tens of thousands of compounds 'revealed' in wine through mass spectroscopy were unknown to science, or 'could not be annotated' (*Ibid*: 103) by the investigating chemists, such that only a few 'examples' of what was found in such analysis could be presented to the reader ([Figure 6.1](#)). In other words, though we can see wine through a strictly scientific lens as a vast set of

compounds, we can't say much about them. If we used laboratory methods to understand the quality of a work of art,¹ or a marketing poster, or a farmer's attitude, or a history of crop cultivation choices, we would be limited in what we could learn from it. Yet for some, laboratory-based interventions to explain, or to rubbish, terroir, seem to be worth the effort. Latour (2004) has argued that there is an impulse amongst scholars to defend what they see as 'facts' and to attempt to 'prise open' or 'destroy' what they see as 'fetishes'. Ergo:

'This is why you can be at once and without even sensing any contradiction (1) an antifetishist for everything you don't believe in – for the most part religion, popular culture, art, politics, and so on; (2) an unrepentant positivist for all the sciences you believe in – sociology, economics, conspiracy theory, genetics, evolutionary psychology, semiotics, just pick your preferred field of study; and (3) a perfectly healthy sturdy realist for what you really cherish – and of course it might be criticism itself, but also painting, bird-watching, Shakespeare, baboons, proteins, and so on.' (*Ibid*: 241)

The facticity of something such as terroir is not self-evident; it is rather open to multiple modes of enquiry and infinite bases of contestation. The 'unwritten conspiracy' Erlanger (2013) perceives is what I have tried to elucidate using the cultural and historical modes of enquiry of the previous three chapters. But perhaps this would still not be sufficient to convince my questioner, or other sceptics, that terroir is not merely a marketing ploy. I feel we would be well-served to follow Ricoeur (1984) and ask *why* there is a desire in some quarters to investigate terroir using a positivist scientific epistemology. '[W]hen we want respect, solidity, obstinacy, robustness,' writes Latour (2004: 240), 'we all prefer to stick to the language of matters of fact'. Yet sometimes, as he goes on to argue (*Ibid*: 234), a thing can be 'so beautifully complex and entangled that it resists being treated as a matter of fact'; and we would be better served examining how it is constituted as a matter of *concern*. There are many and multifarious ways in which claims may be made and assessed about terroir. It is

¹ A comparison that is not unusual in the appreciation of wine.

by nature (and culture) a complex thing, one which *concerns* many different actors, from producers to merchants to consumers to governments, not to mention the non-human materials and actors from grapes to stables to bees to oak barrels. To the questions of why terroir should be attacked, of course, we should add the questions of why it should be defended. On the former count, we have its commercial success built on hard to ascertain claims to exclusivity; its protected ‘black box’ nature that positivist scientists and wine producers in competitor countries may wish to prise open to ‘unearth its secrets’ (Simms, 2015: 40). On the latter count, the opposite may be true; terroir may function as a cornerstone for food chains that benefit the producers involved (Bowen, 2010; Fumey and Bérion, 2010), and as a national story that allows pride and care to be connected to economic success (Pitte, 2001; 2005), such that questioning its credibility through positivist methods is more of a threat than an opportunity.

Table 1
Examples of unique masses specific to SEs, MEs and Ws and putative annotations.

Exact mass	Formulae	Annotations
<i>Masses from skin</i>		
455.353064	C ₃₀ H ₄₈ O ₃	Oleanolic acid
433.2360429	C ₂₁ H ₃₉ O ₇ P	Phosphatidic acid
343.045805	C ₁₇ H ₁₂ O ₈	3,4,3'-Tri-O-methyllellagic acid
199.00132	C ₄ H ₉ O ₇ P	D-Erythrose 4-phosphate
179.0561165	C ₆ H ₁₂ O ₆	D-Glucose
405.1191286	C ₂₀ H ₂₂ O ₉	Astringin
447.0932873	C ₂₁ H ₂₀ O ₁₁	Quercitrin
463.0882094	C ₂₁ H ₂₀ O ₁₂	Quercitrin 3-O-glucoside
<i>Masses from wine</i>		
300.9989943	C ₁₄ H ₆ O ₈	Ellagic acid
179.0349969	C ₉ H ₈ O ₄	Caffeic acid
161.0455756	C ₆ H ₁₀ O ₅	3-Ethylmalate
153.0193743	C ₇ H ₆ O ₄	Genstistic acid
167.0349925	C ₈ H ₈ O ₄	Vanillic acid
177.019346	C ₉ H ₆ O ₄	Caffeoquinone
181.0717731	C ₆ H ₁₄ O ₆	Mannitol
285.0404564	C ₁₅ H ₁₀ O ₆	Kaempferol
<i>Masses from must</i>		
173.081942	C ₈ H ₁₄ O ₄	Suberic acid
203.0826083	C ₁₁ H ₁₂ N ₂ O ₂	L-Tryptophan
273.170732	C ₁₄ H ₂₆ O ₅	(11-Hydroxyundecyl)malonic acid
299.2591775	C ₁₈ H ₃₆ O ₃	2-Hydroxy stearic acid
311.1136213	C ₁₅ H ₃₀ O ₇	4-Hydroxycinnamyl alcohol 4-D-glucoside
336.108818	C ₁₆ H ₁₉ NO ₇	Indole-3-acetyl-myo-inositol
341.1241571	C ₁₆ H ₂₂ O ₈	Coniferin
425.1817225	C ₂₁ H ₃₀ O ₉	Abscisic acid glucose ester

Figure 6.1: Table of examples of identified or likely (‘putative’) compounds present in grape skin, must and wine examined through mass spectroscopy in Roulier-Gall *et al* (2014a: 106).

Indeed, as a luxury good that receives bourgeois valuation (Bourdieu, 1984; 1991; de Certeau *et al*, 1998), consumers may be wary of the distinction of the wine they buy being reduced through too unequivocal an evaluation of its quality. So whereas biochemist David Mills was quoted by Wade (2013) as saying that '[t]here are high-end courses on terroir, which I think are bunk,' he added that '[m]any people don't want this [terroir] figured out...because it demystifies the wonderful mystery of wine'. Jones (2014: 43), too, asks 'whether we really want to fully quantify...and potentially lose the mystique that makes [terroir] an enjoyable topic over a glass of wine.' And the mystique of famous terroirs (as explored in Maby, 2002 and Roudié, 2007) is used in advertising for some wines on the basis of esoteric knowledge and exclusive inherited savoir-faire as opposed to geology or other more tangible elements. A recent example of this ([Figure 6.2](#)) proposes wine-producing knowledge locked in the obscurity of a candle-lit library populated by historical heirlooms above the cellars of the Château de Beaune. 'Since 1731,' runs the message, 'each one of these bottles is the fruit of an ancestral savoir-faire, recognised by all those who share its secret.'



Figure 6.2: Wine advertisement which appeared in the ‘Ambassadeurs du vin’ ‘So Figaro’ supplement of *Le Figaro*, 19 June 2014 (p.15).

Yet the place of scientific epistemologies in food chains that utilise terroir is more complex than simple attack from outside and defence from within. Science is put to different ends, including by producers themselves, and scientific arguments are harnessed in the rhetorical defence of terroir just as historical, geographical and other arguments are. This happens at different sites and in different media. Roullier-Gall *et al*’s (2014a) recent study adduced evidence of metabolites in wine showing greater marks or effects of terroir once aged. The paper was an output from a laboratory that has published similar findings elsewhere (Roullier-Gall *et al*, 2014b; Jeandet *et al*, 2015). I mentioned this study earlier in relation to the limitations it admitted in terms of what can be known about wine through chemical

analysis. But I would now like to consider the cultural *precepts* that frame the scientific *percepts* of the work carried out. Take this paragraph from the introduction to the paper:

‘Terroir is the greatest determining factor of all great wines. It deals with the quality and the typicality of an agricultural product in relation to its geographical origin, and it wears a major importance in Burgundy, where wines are made with single grape varieties (Pinot noir for red wines and Chardonnay for white wines) planted in a mosaic of vineyards. Burgundy vineyards are indeed characterised by chaotic orientations and variables *lopes* [sic], where soils can exhibit abruptly changing natures beyond a road or a path. This terroir description is definitely brought to its apex in the Côte d’Or area, where – in addition to alternating reliefs and climatic conditions – vineyards sit on up to 11 different soil natures covering geological times ranging from –175 My (Côte de Nuits) to –150 My (Côte de Beaune) within a 50 km distance (Fanet & Brutton, 2004). Each vineyard site has its own unique terroir, which is reflected in the corresponding wines more or less consistently from year to year, and to some degree, regardless of variations in methods of viticulture and winemaking (Mouton, 2006; Wilson, 1998).’

The first line posits no controversy about the idea that terroir makes wine great, nor that the Côte d’Or is home to the greatest terroirs in Burgundy. These are commonplace ideas in France, as I have discussed in this and in previous chapters of the thesis, but they are precisely the kind of culturally-specific claims that are challenged by writers from countries who do not share the same received ideas. Pinot noir also grows in Oregon, USA, and other places around the globe, Jones (2014) points out; and he asks whether, despite the successful marketing of Burgundy’s terroirs (which have now attained UNESCO World Heritage Status (Reynaud, 2015)), the world’s ‘best terroirs have [yet] been found’ (Jones, 2014: 43). Furthermore, the authors’ identification of Pinot noir and Chardonnay as the ‘single grape varieties’ used in Burgundy is partial and normative. The most expensive and the most famous wines from Burgundy are always made with Pinot noir and Chardonnay, it is true; and this is the legacy of the Dukes of Burgundy’s decrees of centuries past as shown in Chapter 3. But the region also has vineyards planted in the Gamay (red) and Aligoté (white) grape varieties. Indeed, a generally cheap and somewhat rustic red wine produced in

Burgundy today is labelled '*Bourgogne Passetoutgrain*,' which is to say, a blend of grapes. Finally, the assertion that the terroir of each vineyard is reflected in the wine produced therefrom 'more or less consistently from year to year, and to some degree, regardless of variations in methods of viticulture and winemaking' implies a character and quality somehow inherent in the vineyards and vinification themselves which logically could not be copied by pretenders and competitors elsewhere. The thing called terroir whose effects the authors are trying to find evidence for in this paper appears to exist for them as a consistent fact rather than an ephemeral thing or a passing fetish even before they subject it to scientific analysis. Where the American articles I mentioned earlier are keen to use scientific epistemologies to put the notion of terroir at risk, this article from a French team investigating wine from Burgundy and Champagne seeks instead to use scientific epistemologies to witness its effects in greater detail, and at a molecular scale, and do not question the legitimacy of geographical protection in wine which builds upon terroir arguments.

A less than solid basis

In the scientific, and quasi-scientific, defence of terroir, geology plays a critical role. In the paragraph quoted above, the authors (Roulier-Gall *et al*, 2014a) refer to different 'soil natures' sitting atop a range of different 'geological times' as constitutive of the apical terroir of the côte d'Or. Solid geology, bedrock, such as limestone, granite, Kimmeridge clay and so on, has for a long time been referred to as conditioning the quality of a terroir and, by extension, the quality of a wine (see discussions in Dion, 1959; Huggett, 2006; Garcia and Labbé, 2012; cf. Fanet, 2008). There would seem to be something peculiarly compelling about the nature of bedrock that means it is adduced as one of the foremost elements of what makes a wine-producing territory special. In the advertisement shown in Figure 6.3, a very

simple connection is made between the nature of the geology of the Alsace region, the grapevines that grow on soil that sits above the rock, and the wine that is produced from their grapes. The linearity of the connection is reinforced in the image, where the stem of the glass is shown as originating within the rock itself, and the golden liquid in the glass could be interpreted as the risen sap of the grape vine that is coiled around it. The wines of Alsace, we are told at the top of the image, are a '*Pure expression de terroir*'; the unequivocal products of a tangible and unique set of mineral and biological elements with, at the base, a named geology '(granite, limestone, pink sandstone...)'.² Stark in its visual economy and clear in colour as well as message, the advert stands in clear contradistinction to that of [Figure 6.2](#). It articulates terroir on a much more physical, if nonetheless rhetorical, basis.

² Tr: '(granite, calcaire, grès rose...)'.



Figures 6.3: Wine advertisement which appeared in the ‘Dossier Vins: Nature Gourmande’ ‘M’ magazine supplement of *Le Monde*, 27 October 2014 (p.141).

This rhetoric can draw upon lines supposed in the land. In Portugal, the longstanding system of wine classifications is based upon different types of bedrock; in Chablis (northern Burgundy), bedrock is also used to differentiate appellations of wine, with those wines produced on soils that *do not* sit atop the Kimmeridge clays thought of as typical of the region being only able to use the label ‘Petit Chablis’ as opposed to ‘Chablis’. And geological explanations for quality continue to persuade; for Muscadet wine produced in the Loire

valley, a new system of classifications has recently been drawn up based on which sort of bedrock the vineyards sit on (Maltman, 2008; Jacquet *et al*, 2013). We know that on bottles of wine from all over the world, solid geological facts are presented as part of the marketing narrative printed on the label, and at a wine-tasting event I attended in London in June 2015, one of the stall-holders placed rocks from the vineyard on the table along with the wine and promotional literature. The authority of geology seems to go without challenge, the placing of rocks next to wine is *de rigueur*. And yet, as a handful of recent critiques have argued, geological conditioning of wine is a dogma that needs to be challenged. For one thing, it is seen as a historical mode of explanation whose epistemological foundations are anything but solid. Huggett (2006: 239) recounts the idea that the geological basis of the 1857 classification of Cognac was little more than convenient lines drawn on a map that ‘no one bothered to check,’ and which may even have been an outright hoax; whilst Maltman (2008: 9) discusses what may essentially be a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy in that ‘limestone is often mentioned as being an ideal vineyard substrate (presumably because it happens to underlie several classic areas in France).’ Finally, Garcia and Labbé (2012) argue that actually a great deal of *similarity* prevails across the sub-soils of the côte d’Or, reflecting the *regularity* identified by Vidal de la Blache in [Figure 4.10](#), and notwithstanding the colourful *diversity* of geological maps of the region and the panoply of different wine appellations. Such critiques build upon the argument the French geographer Roger Dion (1959) made in the 1950s, discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, that the social and economic fate of wines are much more important for their perceived quality than any conditioning of the physical environment of their production, and they support the historical and epistemological focus I have taken thus far in critically analysing terroir. Yet Dion did not succeed in putting the debate to bed (see Pitte, 2010). For instance, while Roulier-Gall *et al* (2014a), in the paragraph quoted above, casually cite Wilson’s (1998) book *Terroir* as evidence of the

perdurable conditioning power of terroir, Huggett (2006) takes issue with that very same work for the inadequacy of its attempted ‘explanation’ of terroir.

In the wine world at least, the narrative is slow to change and geology has remained a mode of explanation amongst others, as can be seen by its evocation in the words ‘géologie’ and ‘sous-sol’ (subsoil) in [Figures 5.4 and 5.9](#). Of all the farmers I interviewed, it was two wine producers on the côte d’Or (Mr D and Mr H) who made most mention of geology and subsoil in their discussion of what terroir means to them. It may be that being in possession of vineyards in highly reputed areas (“il faut de grands terroirs pour de grands vins”, as Mr H put it; “you need great terroirs for great wines”) led these producers to retain the language of geological conditioning in their explanation of terroir, and it is not at variance with the official line from the BIVB quoted at the start of this section, that limestone provides the ‘characteristic subtlety, wealth, and aromatic richness’ of wines from this part of the world. Thus, geology in terroir appears to be a source of epistemological multiplicity and lively debate. Though ‘it is conceivable that physical geological factors do have some role’ in giving wine its unique character, argues Maltman (2008: 12), it is ‘in such an indirect and complex way that science is still some way from unraveling it’.

In defending the uniqueness of a wine-producing region such as the côte d’Or, the BIVB and other actors will often use the relatively fixed elements of geology, climate and slope as apparently impossible to imitate; substantial ingredients in a *sui generis* wine-producing landscape. Yet in reality, approximate combinations of climate, slope and geology are found in many places around the world, and people have taken to producing wine on several continents given such territorial affordance (cf. Whittlesley, 1936; Grigg, 1969). As Jones (2014) sees it, growing Burgundy’s famed Pinot Noir grapes requires, fundamentally, a free-

draining soil and a growing season temperature range of 14-18°C (cf. Schreiner *et al*, 2006; Keller, 2010). These conditions can be found in Chile, in New Zealand, and in pockets of specialisation and growing reputation such as the Willamette Valley in Oregon, USA (*Ibid*). If one of the major constituents of soil is weathered bedrock; solid geology broken down by a particular kind of climate; and if commensurable combinations of these can be found in many parts of the world, where are we to look for the grounded originality or individuality of Burgundy's terroirs?

Furthermore, if soil is part of the evidence adduced for the originality, authenticity, quality or continuity of a particular terroir, there is a problem in that it may itself be substantially changed by human action; not only by the downward movement of fertilisers and the infiltration of pesticides, but also through major landscape and soil engineering works. In the 19th century, the côte d'Or was heavily quarried for limestone, dolomite and gypsum, modifying its topography and leaving a number of cavities in the earth which contribute to the present-day risk of '*mouvement de terrain*' or 'moving terrain' through collapse or landslides (Préfecture de la Côte d'Or, 2012). In the Nuits-Saint-Georges area of the côte d'Or, for instance, there are terraces, cliffs and slopes underlying and backing onto vineyards, which reflect the landscape-shaping work and waste materials of the quarrying that was carried on in the past and continues today (Nanson, 2012). And there is also the less visually striking question of what farmers have put into the soil over time in terms of fertilisers and other additives (*amendements*). As suggested in the previous chapter, and as elaborated in detail by Clout (1983), the various processes of agricultural improvement in the 19th and 20th centuries had an uneven geography in France. Some areas of poor soil were sites of ongoing struggles for cultivation, and others benefitted from being subjected to 'prolonged fertilisation' over time (Clout, 1983: 47). The development of chemical fertilisers in the 20th

century has even been described as a second agricultural revolution in France (Flatrès, 1963). And as Antoine Gerbelle (Gerbelle and Saverot, 2016) has noted, in the 1970s and 80s some wine producers extended their vineyards onto new ground, ‘without taking the nature of the soil into account.’³ This was not necessarily seen as a problem, he argues, because even if not well suited, ‘chemicals and fertilisers would fix all the shortcomings of the terroir’.⁴ The matrix of minerals and microbes in soil is therefore not an entirely immobile inheritance. Producers today sometimes use what they do or don’t add to the soil as part of the tales of terroir in the marketing of their wine, and it may make more sense in explaining the influence of terroir today to focus, as Garcia and Labbé (2012) and Guy (2011) suggest, on the practices of farmers over time rather than the physiographic inheritance of the land.

Indeed, I feel a valuable way to include the dynamism of the world in our analyses of terroir is to examine the diversity of life within the territory itself, and, in particular, how this is encountered, recognised and managed by the producers through their philosophies, practice, and *savoir-faire*. This would involve investigating variation in ecological and potentially microbial spaces of terroir at scales smaller than the AOP zones and the geological strata that underlie and often exceed them. It would involve attending to things that are more aleatory and dynamic across seasons, and from day to day, than the longer term facts of geology, climate and slope. In the next sections of this chapter, therefore, I want to present and analyse some evidence of the place of biotic life in the cultivation and preparation of products of terroir; and I will use this to investigate how we can go about answering the question of whether organic or biodynamic farming might *facilitate the expression* of terroir that I raised in the Introduction to this thesis.

³ Tr : ‘sans tenir compte de la nature des sols.’

⁴ Tr : ‘la chimie et les amendements palliaient tous les déficits du terroir.’

6. 3. In the Ground

“These days there are ecological questions. You can’t go without considering them.”⁵

(Interview with Mrs B (Wine producer, Fribourg), 16 August 2012)

‘We are facing an environment challenge without precedent. We have a pressing obligation to preserve our terroir, and that fragile alchemy that connects it to the grapevine. Condrieu will only be able to secure its future on this condition.’⁶ (Christine Vernay, Wine producer in Condrieu (northern Rhône), in Durand-Bazin, 2015b: 37)

It is clear that organic and biodynamic production are practical idioms of the environmental and ecological imperatives of agriculture attendant to the post-productivist landscape, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis and in Hill (2016a). These imperatives could be expressed through other agri-environmental schemes and forms of action (see, for example, Buller and Morris, 2004; Morris, 2010), but it was, as explained earlier, the growth and recognition of organic and biodynamic production that originally attracted my interest. France amassed some €1.7 billion of retail sales of organic food and drink in 2006 (Padel *et al*, 2008: 133), today has over 5,000 organic wine producers (Agence Bio, 2015b) and the considerably smaller number of 325 biodynamic wine producers (Demeter France, pers. comm., 2015c), but the wider trend in both sectors is towards growth (consider Figures 6.4 and 6.5). Many European consumers like organic wine (Fotopoulos *et al*, 2003; Hertzberg *et al*, 2008), and it has been argued that the wine industry benefits from such eco-friendly labels more than many other product chains (Latruffe *et al*, 2013b).

⁵ Tr: « Il y a des questions écologiques de nos jours. On ne peut pas en passer sans y penser. »

⁶ Tr: ‘Nous sommes face à un défi environnemental sans précédent. Nous avons une obligation impérieuse de préserver notre terroir, et cette alchimie fragile que le relie au cep de vigne. Condrieu ne pourra assurer sa pérennité qu’à cette condition.’

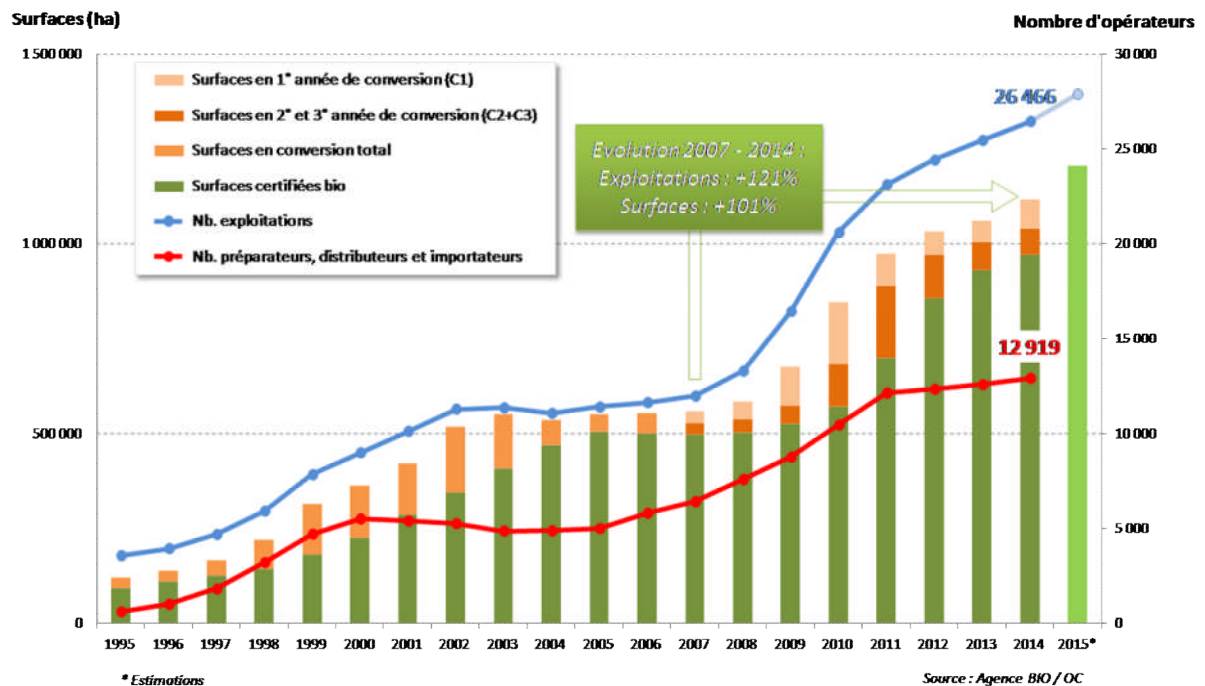


Figure 6.4: Graph showing development of total land area under certified organic production (green bars), number of organic farms (blue line) and number of organic food processors (red line) in France from 1995-2014.

Source: Agence Bio (2015) (URL: <http://www.agencebio.org/la-bio-en-france>)

Development of Demeter certified farms

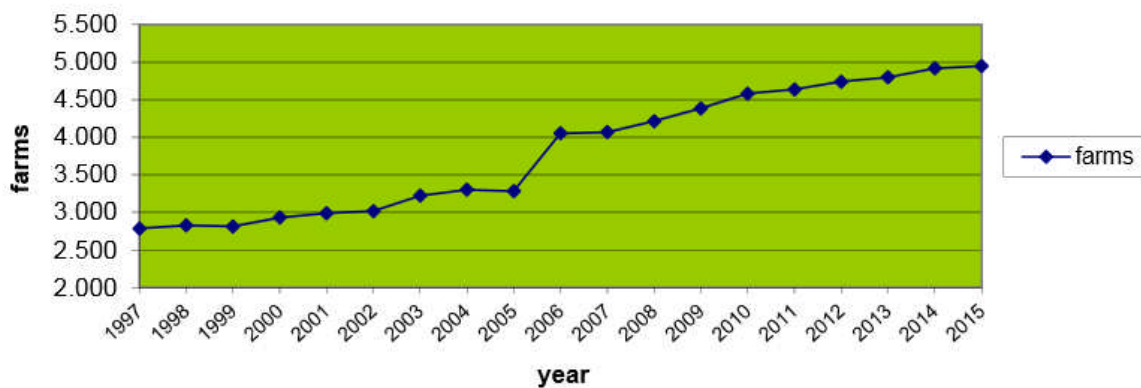


Figure 6.5: Graph showing development of total number of Demeter-certified biodynamic farms in all countries from 1997 to 2015.

Source: Demeter (2015) (URL: <http://www.demeter.net/sites/default/files/di-statistik-entwicklung97-15.pdf>)

I recalled in my notes being confronted with biodynamism one day in August 2012 when I was picking grapes with one of my respondents in Burgundy. When we stopped for lunch I got chatting to an ‘oenologue’ or wine consultant who had joined us for the day. He was a proponent of biodynamic wine production and had written on the subject. I asked him some questions and shared some ideas. At the end, we all climbed into the van and my respondent drove us back to the field for the afternoon shift of grape picking. The wine consultant was sitting in the front next to him. ‘Well, Rory,’ he now turned and asked, ‘what have you learnt so far about terroir?’ I suppose I could have said lots of things but I thought something brief would be best. ‘It seems to me,’ I said, ‘that there are basically two type of terroir.’ His wife turned to listen as well. ‘Umm, there are *terroirs-vivants* and *terroirs-fossils*...those that are dynamic and living, and those that are sort of fixed.’ They both seemed to like this idea. It certainly chimed with the fundamental ideas of biodynamism.

In June 1924, in the town of Kobierzyce (formerly Koberwitz), Rudolf Steiner outlined the philosophical and practical dimensions of the biodynamic method in a course of agricultural lectures. Near to the end of his life, he was able to expound the principles he had been testing for some time, and respond to questions from those in attendance who had also been developing the project. The original concerns that led to Steiner’s development of biodynamism were the decline in the fertility of soils and the ‘inherent food-values’ of crops in the early 20th century (Dreyfus, 2012; Steiner, 2004 (1924): 28); such that Steiner asked his audience rhetorically, ‘Why...is it impossible today to eat such potatoes as I ate in my youth?’ (Steiner, 2004 (1924): 27) What he developed, over the course of that and the following seven lectures, was a notion of agriculture that was connected to life in the field, around the field and beyond the field up to the cosmic scale. These connections were not all visible, but, he felt, for plants, animals, and to some degree humans, they were palpable.

‘[T]he interests of agriculture,’ he wrote, were ‘intimately...bound up, in all directions, with the widest sphere of life.’ (*Ibid*: 18) The rural Europe Steiner had in mind as he lectured was one that had to provide food for a population that had endured the First World War. As the munitions factories wound down production, there was an abundance of nitrates – products of explosives manufacturing – which farmers were encouraged to use for fertiliser (Dreyfus, 2012; Provost, 2011). Scientific cases were made for more rational farming methods, accompanied by the growing professionalization of farming, more advanced technological interventions, and the direct application of chemicals that were understood to improve soil fertility: nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus. But unlike the ‘magic of industry’ that so charmed the poet Delille (Auserve, 1964: 136), Steiner regretted the passing of the ‘first-hand knowledge’ of peasant agricultural practice (Steiner, 2004 (1924): 20), and was determined that it was not necessary to amend soils or plants with synthetic elements. Taking the simple example of a beetroot, he argued that whilst one could examine that vegetable ‘scientifically’ in an environment removed from the farm and assess what it lacked, it would not therein be possible to ‘understand the living-together of the beetroot with the soil, with the field, the season of the year in which it ripens, and so forth.’ (*Ibid*: 19) Life, and the rhythms to which we may be more or less attuned, but to which he felt plant and animal life certainly are, were Steiner’s privileged elements of agriculture.

These foundational ideas have since been developed and refined by a number of writers and practitioners, such as Pfeiffer and Koepf (1980), Schilthuis (1994), Kolisko *et al* (2008), Thun (2008) and Masson (2012), and from there we approach the dimensions of biodynamic agriculture today. Biodynamic approaches typically seek to support the inherent health, vigour and immunity of the plant or animal itself (for instance, through the use of nettle (*Urtica dioica*) preparations to strengthen plant immunity) and to reinforce the connection of

the plant with the earth, and ultimately with both terrestrial and cosmic rhythms. Though organic agriculture does not extend such a comprehensive philosophical programme, it shares a fundamental interest in the life of the soil, and its origins can also be traced in the form of responses to post-war (post-Second World War) industrialisation and intensification in agriculture (Soil Association, 2015a; Provost, 2011). Today, it is probably the most widely recognised system in the developed world that expressly aims to connect farming with ecological health. The precepts of the system are expressed to the outside world through the communications of organic associations such as the Soil Association in Britain and L'Agence Bio in France. From the former, we can learn that '[t]aking its name from the organic matter that farmers use as an alternative to synthetic fertilisers, organic farmers take a holistic, principled approach that respects and harnesses the power of natural processes to build positive health across the ecology of the farm.' (Soil Association, 2015b) And in France, we learn that organic agriculture stands for 'a living and fertile soil,' 'agriculture without synthetic chemicals,' 'diversity at every level,' and 'sustainable and innovative production chains' (Agence Bio, 2015c).⁷ Organic farming has been understood as 'less harmful to nature and allow[ing] for a better integration of agriculture into the rural economy' (Laschewski, 2004); and Harper (2012) has argued that organic management can be good for soil and faunal diversity on farms.

Brady and Weil (2008) have also argued that organic approaches take a focus on soil quality as their point of departure, and they collate mixed evidence to show that '[o]rganic farming usually has positive effects on soil quality' (*Ibid*: 899-900). Similarly, biodynamic

⁷ Tr : 'un sol vivant et fertile,' 'une agriculture sans produits chimiques de synthèse,' 'une diversité à tous les niveaux,' and 'des filières durables et innovantes'.

approaches seek to ‘nourish the earth’ (*nourrir la terre*), with the Demeter biodynamic association (Demeter France, 2015) pronouncing that:

‘The starting point of all agriculture is healthy and fertile soils. That is the reason why the keystone of biodynamic agriculture is a living soil.’⁸

So the living nature of the soil is one the major desiderata that animates organic and biodynamic praxis, and it can be used as the measure of the quality of different approaches to farming. But, as I would find out on fieldwork, and as may be deduced from the literature, soil, like life, is an epistemological minefield. From a natural scientific point of view, Inkpen and Wilson (2013: 171) have argued that soil is a ‘complex phenomenon,’ and Baveye *et al* (2011: Abs.) insist that ‘many basic questions still remain unanswered’ in soil science. Furthermore, the fact that soil hasn’t merited an entry in the *Dictionary of Human Geography* (unlike its Physical Geography counterpart), would suggest that more attention could profitably be paid to it from those working in social science traditions. We know that soil has been troubled by human hands for at least 12,000 years, and functions as a key site of environmental changes wrought in the Anthropocene. David Lowenthal (2000) has recounted how the 19th-century American polymath George Perkins Marsh argued for sustainability ahead of the popularity of the term by reference to the careful cultivation and conservation of soil; just as William Cronon (1995) has argued that Aldo Leopold saw the restoration of the life of the soil as a key tenet of his environmentalist programme. And they are not alone in proposing attending to the soil as a cornerstone of generally sound or specifically remediating environmental practice; Rudolf Steiner (2004 (1924)), Rachel Carson (1962) and Judith Schwartz (2013) have all done the same. But *the* soil is also a repository of cultural meaning and a more or less definite territory of social and political significance, from the value of

⁸ Tr: ‘La base de toute agriculture démarre avec des sols sains et fertiles. C’est la raison pour laquelle un sol vivant est la pierre angulaire de l’agriculture biodynamique.’

muck (DeSilvey, 2003; Eden *et al*, 2008), and the cultural and psychological dimensions of geophagy (Brady and Weil, 2008; Garcia Marquez, 1972); through the ‘blood and soil’ basis of fascism (Demossier, 2012; cf. Cleary, 2001), and the vengeful salting of the soil mentioned in the Bible (Judges, ix: 45). The earthy rhetoric of terroir gains much of its persuasive power from the real or imagined connection people feel with the soil (as we saw in Vidal de la Blache and Ratzel’s writings in the previous chapter). And this becomes an ever less ‘intimate’ connection as ‘human societies become increasingly urbanized’ (Brady and Weil, 2008: 1).

Aggregate Epistemologies

Following the work collated by Landa and Feller (2010), I feel more could profitably be done in geography to trace the perceptual and physical interweaving of notions of the soil. As noted earlier, terroir has its etymological roots in the Earth, and many of its semantic roots in the earth. The soil, so easily personified and conscripted in human affairs, as we saw in previous chapters, is a fertile substrate for terroir’s recognition. It is significant indeed that it was at the level of the soil that so many of my respondents framed their visions of, and explanations of how their practices interacted with terroir, as listed in [Figure 5.4](#) and shown in [Figure 5.9](#). References to ‘sol’ (soil) appear regularly across the product chains, as do those to ‘terre’, a word that can refer to either the land or the earth or the Earth. The soil was a common point at which to start explaining what terroir means. But it developed into a site of polemic, even political discussion, as different practices and philosophical approaches came to the fore from different farmers. None of the epistemological diversity of soil outlined above stopped farmers talking to me about the soil with confidence. Rather, as I will explain, the relative lack of certainty with which I could say things about the soil impeded my ability

to assess claims made by some respondents that the ways in which they worked (with) the soil were more expressive of terroir, more faithful to the terroir, or more environmentally sustainable, than other ways.

The practitioners of organic and biodynamic ideas that I interviewed did not deviate far from them in what they told me. “I am interested in the life of the soil” (“Je m’intéresse à la vie du sol”) was one of the first things I noted down from my discussion with Mr E (Wine producer, Ladoix-Serrigny), for example. That the soil should be a focus of attention for those pursuing sustainable methods is predicted by Brady and Weil (2008: 899), who argue that organic adherents often ‘do not speak of fertilizing crops, but rather of “feeding the soil”’. The soil as primary site of attention and interaction was an idea developed by three organic and biodynamic producers in particular. “The ground, it’s the starting point for all plant life on the planet” argued Mr I (Wine producer, Sciez); “I feed the soil and not the plant”.⁹ Equally, for Mr F (Wine producer, Vaud);

“Every region has its terroir. You need to analyse the soils first. Here, we give lots of attention to the terroir, the soil; not to the plant.”¹⁰

For Mr G (Wine producer, Hurigny) meanwhile, “terroir evolves slowly, under the hand of the farmer”.¹¹ When I asked him what the challenges of organic viticulture are, he argued that the soil was the necessary first site of intervention for those converting to organic modes of production:

⁹ Tr: « La terre, c’est le départ de tous les végétaux de la planète...je nourris la terre et non pas la plante. »

¹⁰ Tr: ‘Chaque région a son terroir. Il faut analyser les terres d’abord. Ici on met beaucoup d’attention sur le terroir, le sol ; non pas sur la plante.’

¹¹ Tr: « le terroir évolue lentement, sous la main de l’homme ».

“You need to rebalance the soil. Often there is a lack of organic matter, and soils that are not well structured. That makes for weak plants. You need ten years to remake a soil – not just three [the period which a new convert to organic agriculture must wait before being able to attain certification]...Often the roots are shallow – thick, perhaps, but gathered just below the surface...when you plough, you might cut them. So you have to work on the root system.”¹²

Furthermore, in place of using pesticides, he talked of his desire to “strengthen the immunity of the plant”,¹³ again through attention to the soil environment it grows in. Keller (2010) has described the suite of infection control strategies, both preventive and curative, possessed by grapevines; and the ‘natural arms race’ in which they are involved along with innumerable pathogens (*Ibid*: 297). The philosophy of supporting this in organic and biodynamic viticulture, as explained to me by producers, begins with feeding the soil to allow the plant to strengthen itself.

This soil environment was also a stage for Mr G’s (Wine producer, Lugny) opposition to *agriculture raisonnée*; the poorly-regulated, often uncertified ‘reasoned’ approach to environmentally sustainable production that farmers can claim to utilise (see Grolleau, 2001; Doussan, 2004). If farmers use fertiliser, he argued, that feeds the plant and separates it from the nutrition it could source in the earth. Furthermore:

“Agriculture raisonnée; there’s ten years now that’s been talked about. But in that time, the use of pesticides has gone up by 20%!”¹⁴

¹² Tr: « Il faut rééquilibrer les sols. Il y a souvent un déficit de matière organique, et de sols peu structurés. Comme ça il y aura des plantes faibles. Il faudra dix ans pour refaire un sol – non seulement trois ans ...Souvent les racines seront peu profondes – épaisses, peut-être, mais regroupées juste en-dessous de la surface...quand on laboure le sol, on risque de les couper. Donc il faut refaire le système racinaire. »

¹³ Tr: « renforcer l’immunité de la plante ».

¹⁴ Tr: « L’agriculture raisonnée; il y a dix ans on parle de ça. Mais pendant ce temps, l’utilisation de pesticides s’est augmentée par 20% ! »

Mr G's family had been in organic wine production for many years, and he spoke very persuasively. As Høyrup and Munk recount (2007: 7) from their fieldwork, when sitting there in the producer's house, 'the quality of terroir and geographic origin seems hard to contest'. Yet, I later became aware that persuasively argued positions for the health of the soil could also be taken by those who had chosen *not* to pursue organic cultivation.

Given its lack of strictures, relative to organic and biodynamic protocols, a farmer adopting *agriculture raisonnée* (AR) is free to develop his or her own style and to create their own combination of practices and products. One wine producer (Mr D) told me that, as well as pursuing AR, his philosophy was to work "en propre" ('cleanly'), and to exclude genetically modified products from his farm. A walnut grower (Mr O, Pont-en-Royans) told me that most of the products he used were in fact organic, but that it was his *choice* to use another that wasn't, and his *choice* not to pursue organic certification. For both farmers, these were personal decisions, but to think favourably towards AR, we should infer that lying behind these choices were *reasoning*, and reasoning with reference to the ecological questions I have noted Ms B felt "you can't go without," and with some eventual desire of sustainability (a connection we will examine further in the following chapter). Indeed, another walnut grower (Mr M, Tullins) told me that, with respect to the support of *enherbement* (grass cover) in his orchard, he followed an "organic approach, without being organic."¹⁵ On discussing this idea further, the grower explained that he felt that "a farm well-run along AR lines was better than a farm poorly run along organic lines".¹⁶ One of the reasons he gave was that, given the extensive range of non-organic agricultural chemicals available, one could better calibrate what was put into the ground. This was a novel insight for me, and it was developed further

¹⁵ Tr: « raisonnement de l'agriculture biologique, sans l'être ».

¹⁶ Tr : « une bonne culture raisonnée est mieux qu'une mauvaise en bio ».

by Mr D (Wine producer, Ladoix-Serrigny), who was in AR, and who brought my attention to a controversy over copper in the vineyards, which he ultimately located in the soil.

Mr D asked me if I had noticed the presence of blue powder on the leaves of grapevines I had come across in my research. I replied that I had. He pointed out that this was copper oxide (CuO), a product of organic (as opposed to synthetic) origin which, along with sulphur or its compounds, basically constituted the choice of agricultural chemicals organic wine growers had in their treatment of mildew and oidium. The problematic presence of those two fungi in vineyards has a long history, is ongoing, and some believe will be intractable. Thus, given the necessarily constant application of copper, a heavy metal that can accumulate in the soil, this wine grower worried that in the long-term, wine-growing soils would be slowly destroyed. He explained that in remaining outside of the organic system, one had the choice to use a range of other products. He pointed in particular to what he described as “systemic products” (“produits systémiques”), which, unlike copper dust, would disperse within the plant upon application and be broken down in the soil within a relatively short time. He believed that using “a small dose of a synthetic product” (“une faible dose d’un produit de synthèse”) was preferable to applying large quantities of organic products such as copper and sulphur. Given this logic, he felt that organic treatments of vineyards could be seen as akin to applying a blunt instrument, and without a choice. Finally, and at the risk of another controversy, the grower posited that using pesticides that did not accumulate in the soil allowed for fewer impediments of the interaction between the vine’s roots and their proximate microbial life; contradicting Mr G’s point about obviating the need to feed the plant from the soil; and ultimately calling into question the expression of micro-biological constituents of the terroir. The supposedly fettered microbiotic life of soil has been part of Burgundy’s image problem in the past. Cerveau (2000: 457) recounts how the (coincidentally named) biologist Claude

Bourguignon exposed ‘the problem of Burgundy’s poisoned terroirs’¹⁷ in the press; arguing in an interview (Bourguignon, 1995) that ‘90% of the soils have impoverished biological activity’¹⁸ Such claims, argues Cerveau, are ‘inconceivable as part of a mission of quality’,¹⁹ and have contributed to the region’s producers and promoters seeking to ‘clean up’ their image. For Mr D, working cleanly involved limiting the use of ‘organic’ copper and sulphur powders.

Soil was for so many of my respondents the most important site in which to look for and make judgments about terroir. It was evocative and it aroused passions, and it was epistemologically miscellaneous. For Mr M (Walnut producer, Tullins), his choice to commission periodical analyses of his soil by an agricultural chemicals distributor made it possible for him to “better calibrate what we put in the ground”.²⁰ Mr Z (BIVB, Beaune) felt that not feeding the top soil around a grapevine is a laudable practice as it will encourage the vine to push its roots down deeper and ‘touch’ more of the terroir; i.e. it will make it search for and access nutrients in the lower profiles of a soil which should be different from the soil of competitor wines and thus contribute to its originality. And Mr G (Wine producer, Lugny) prefaced the explanations of his work in organically remediating soils with a reflection upon parts of the world which have what he called “dead soils”²¹ ; places in the Ukraine and India where there has been a “mineralisation of the bedrock”²² and a grave loss of organic matter.

¹⁷ Tr: ‘le problème des terroirs bourguignons intoxiqués’.

¹⁸ Tr: ‘90% [...] de sols dénués d’activité biologique’.

¹⁹ Tr: ‘inconcevable dans l’optique d’une politique qualitative’.

²⁰ Tr: « mieux calibrer ce qu’on met dans la terre ».

²¹ Tr : « de sols morts ».

²² Tr : « minéralisation de la roche-mère ».

Certainly soil quality can be indexed using various chemical, biological and physical properties, and soil is itself materially formed through factors of time, parent material, topography, biota, and climate (Zaman, 2015, pers. comm; Jenny, 1941; 1980). The degree to which it can be considered 'living' or 'dead' could plausibly be argued by reference to the impediment of cation exchange, or the presence or absence of biotic life: what Bourguignon (1995) called 'biological activity,' what Brady and Weil (2008: 900) have measured as microbial biomass, or what Thomson *et al* (2015) have investigated in terms of microbial density and diversity.

The thing is, soil, for all of its reported and disputed life and death, is not easy to apprehend using the 'primitive epistemological tools' of hand and eye. Proximate activities such as re-seeding or permitting grasses to grow in between the vines and permitting the introduction of various animals to the vineyard do, however, help to create an image which is simultaneously evocative of ecology and anteriority. Given that we have seen that both of these are associations that can attract consumers, this may be a heady mix. Mr G argued that consumers liked to see animals in the vineyard, just as they liked to see grass between the vines. The Domaine de la Romanée-Conti on the côte d'Or took an early lead in this regard. In introducing horses to their vineyards to plough the soil, they took a material, and highly visually compelling, step back to a time before the 1960s, when, as Cerveau (2000) explains, tractors replaced horses in that task as part of wider productivist moves in agriculture (cf. Clout and Demossier, 2003). This practice of equine labour, the image of which, featuring Mickey the shire horse, has pride of place on their website ([Figure 6.6](#)) has inspired imitators elsewhere, and the image has entered the economy of images proper to wine promotion, spreading even to Champagne, as in [Figure 6.7](#).



Figure 6.6: ‘Mickey laboure la Romanée-Conti’. Source : Website of Domain de la Romanée-Conti (URL : <http://www.romanee-conti.fr/images/mickey-laboure-la-romanee-conti-10.jpg>)

POUR CERTAINS,
CE N'EST DÉJÀ PLUS UN SECRET



PHILIPPONNAT

CHAMPAGNE

OÙ LE TERROIR REVIT

En faisant le choix de travailler les sols naturellement, de sarcler à la main et de labourer avec des chevaux de trait, Philipponnat préserve son terroir multi-centenaire, si précieux et fragile. www.philipponnat.com



Figure 6.7: Whole-page promotional image of the Philipponnat Champagne house. Source: *Le Monde des Vins* (12 December 2014), 27.

What is implicit to [Figure 6.6](#), and stated explicitly in [Figure 6.7](#), is a harking back to an earlier period of grape cultivation. Much like the authenticity in anteriority discussed in previous chapters, and in tune with the ‘comeback of terroir’ (‘revanche du terroir’) that *Le Figaro* reported at length in 2012, the Philipponnat Champagne house featured in [Figure 21](#) markets its vineyards as places ‘où le terroir revit’ (‘where terroir gets a new lease of life’) and at the same is ‘preserved,’ through the practices of ‘working the soils naturally’ (‘travailler les sols naturellement’), ‘weeding manually’ (‘sarcler à la main’) and ‘ploughing with horses’ (‘labourer avec des chevaux de trait’). Such embodied practices in the vineyard are often seen to be constitutive of care and the pursuit of quality, as well as connected to secular savoir-faire and beneficial to the environment. When I interviewed Mr D (Ladoix-Serrigny), for example, he explained that, although time-consuming, “it’s better to harvest by hand when you’re top of the range”.²³ Consumers of top-end Burgundy wines appreciate these gestures, Mr D even having clients who specifically ask for it. But the idea that producers can protect the continuity and inheritance of their terroir through more ‘natural’ practices is one that places value in both historical and present-day ecological visions of the concept. It proposes better expressing the inherited propensities of the land even as it implicitly refutes the productivist methods most recently inherited. If reports from geographers of the past are anything to go by, winding back the clock to a time before everyone used a tractor,²⁴ pesticides or synthetic fertilisers would offer a means to reach a more self-contained, autonomous, ‘balanced’ ecology on the farm. In Alsace in the late 1940s, for instance, Jean Tricart (1949:22) writes that :

²³ Tr: « c’est mieux de vendanger à main quand on est haut de gamme » .

²⁴ We may note, for instance, that in a survey of the village of Meursault in 1930, not a single tractor was recorded as being in use. *Recensement de l’Agriculture et du Bétail 1930, Section 3: Economie Rurale*. Dossier 3F16 – Archives Municipales de Meursault.

‘Chemical fertilisers, which can found in the region...are used very little, and almost never on small farms, because their purchase would mean spending money and the small farmer [*paysan*] prefers to raise a few animals that give him the manure required and fit well within the family’s self-reliance.’²⁵

Whilst in the Sancerre region, west of Burgundy, in the early 1950s, J Gilbank (1954 : 123) found that :

‘There is not a single vineyard in the whole Sancerre région that doesn’t have at least one or two animals...Horses are necessary for farming in general, and cows, besides bringing in some supplementary income to the farm, provide the manure necessary for the fertilisation [*amendement*] of the soil.’²⁶

Over time, communicating a concern for nature can allow for a hybrid historical-ecological identity to be established, either by gaining a reputation as a pioneer or long-time adoptee of organic methods; or by virtue of inheriting concerns from parents who had themselves converted to organic, as was the case for three of my respondents; or by materially returning to methods from what may easily be seen by ecologically-minded or nostalgic consumers as a more innocent age. Indeed I was interested to hear Mr O (Walnut producer, Pont-en-Royans) remark that the term ‘*paysan*’ (like peasant, though with a less pejorative sense than in English – see Fleure, 1943) is starting to come back into fashion: “In the 80s and 90s,” he told me, “no-one wanted to call themselves that...they would say ‘farmer’ or ‘farm manager’ (*exploitant*)...but *paysan*, I like; it means protector of the landscape (*pays*) as well.”²⁷

²⁵ Tr: ‘Les engrais chimiques, qu’on pourrait cependant trouver dans la région...sont très peu utilisés et presque jamais dans les petites exploitations, car leur achat nécessite une sortie d’argent et le paysan préfère élever quelques animaux qui lui fournissent le fumier nécessaire et s’intègrent par ailleurs dans l’autarcie familial.’

²⁶ Tr: ‘Il n’y a pas une exploitation viticole dans tout le vignoble sancerrois qui n’ait au moins un ou deux animaux...Les chevaux sont nécessités par la culture en général; les bovins, outre qu’ils fournissent un appoint au budget de l’exploitation, donnent aussi le fumier nécessaire à l’amendement des terres.’

²⁷ Tr: “Dans les années 80 et 90 on ne voulait pas se dire ça...on disait plutôt exploitant...mais paysan, j’aime ; ça veut dire protecteur du paysage aussi. ”

6. 4. On the Ground

We moved to another area of the village where Mr C had some vines. This was a parcel shared with another wine-grower. The point at which the property was divided was not marked in any obvious way; no fence, wall or pickets. But Mr C pointed to the ground. ‘Ce sont mes vignes’ he said. Now it was clear. To the right, I saw an area of vines, about ten lines deep, with grass and various plants covering the soil in between the lines. To the left of Mr C’s hand, however, the vines sat upon ground that was almost totally bare. The difference was outstanding. This patch of vineyard to the left looked sickly, even dead. ‘Pourquoi il n’y a pas d’herbe?’ I asked. ‘C’est du Roundup’ he replied.²⁸

Practices change in viticulture and follow fashion like in other activities, and anecdotal evidence suggests that the decision to convert wine grape cultivation to biodynamic methods on the côte d’Or has been made by some producers under the influence of the example set by the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti and its co-owner, Aubert de Villaine. The power of this example is not new: some thirty years ago it was reported that ‘a comparative newcomer’ amongst cote d’Or producers had adopted ‘a non-filtration policy’ in their wine production, ‘following the example of Romanée-Conti’ (MacQuitty, 1983). The wines from the Romanée-Conti are exceptionally well-regarded and expensive, and considered by many to be the finest in the whole region. The red wine is described in Hugh Johnson’s (2014: 86) Wine Guide, with characteristic brevity, as the ‘[m]ost celebrated and expensive red wine in [the] world’. De Villaine himself, described as ‘charming’ in MacQuitty’s 1983 article, is a major figure in the Burgundy wine trade, launched the successful appeal for the *climats* (or patchwork of micro-terroirs) of Burgundy to be recognised as a world heritage site by UNESCO, and was named Decanter magazine’s ‘Man of the Year’ in 2010. The commercial success and media exposure²⁹ of his domain has given it an importance and influence that has brought close attention to bear on his chosen viticultural practices, and the trajectory from

²⁸ Extract from field notebook, côte d’Or, August 2012.

²⁹ Such as in Bruno Bravo-Maza’s (2010) film *Quatre saisons à la Romanée-Conti*.

organic to biodynamic methods (Durand-Bazin, 2014; Cerveau, 2000). ‘It is not by chance,’ writes Rigaux (2010: 101), ‘that most of the great domains of Burgundy – Romanée-Conti, Leroy, Leflaive and Lafon above all – have opted for organic or biodynamic viticulture. Today they are followed by the vast majority of domains with great reputations.’³⁰

One of the terms which I heard almost without exception amongst those producers who had converted to organic or biodynamic farming, both on the côte d’Or and elsewhere, was ‘équilibre’ or ‘balance’. This has a harmonious ecological resonance, and is convenient shorthand for the philosophy of ecological concern that drives the actions common to those two forms of farming. It is also frequently used in their explanatory and promotional materials. Boisclair and Estevez (2006) write that ‘équilibre’ results in resilience in an ecosystem; the diversity of plants, animals and microbiota benefits all involved and increases the chances of the ecosystem’s long-term survival. Several farmers also used cognate terms such as ‘ensemble’ and ‘assemblée’ to evoke the assembly of different elements (including biotic life) that constitute terroir, as shown in [Figures 5.4 and 5.9](#). I could see, therefore, how for those who had converted to organic or biodynamic methods, the reasoning involved in promoting ecological health and diversity could easily be conjugated with the widespread epistemological precepts of terroir as an assembly of things; and with the promotion of naturally-occurring life in the field commensurate with the day-to-day management of plant and animal life in agriculture.

Organic and biodynamic approaches both encourage the enrolment and alignment of biotic actors through negative prohibition of chemical pesticides, and through positive interventions

³⁰ Tr: ‘Ce n’est pas un hasard si la plupart des grands domaines bourguignons, domaines de la Romanée-Conti, Leroy, Leflaive et Lafon en tête, ont opté pour la viticulture de type biologique ou biodynamique. Ils sont suivis aujourd’hui par l’immense majorité des domaines de grande réputation.’

(such as biological controls) that positions such action in the service of the environmental sustainability of the farm. Mr E (Wine producer, Ladoix-Serrigny) said that he sought to act “alongside nature”,³¹ Mr F (Wine producer, Vaud) said that he looked for “associations” of plant and insect life “that might slow disease”,³² and Mrs B (Wine producer, Fribourg), mindful of ‘ecological questions’ as mentioned at the very start of this section, though not as yet with an organic or biodynamic certificate, recounted that she weeded one line of her vineyard at a time so as to allow insects the chance to move. Mr E recounted to me how, when faced with an elevated number of insects (*‘mange-bourgeons’*) in the summer of 2003, having already converted to organic, and in the process of attaining certification for biodynamism, he did not have the option of synthetic pesticides to deal with the problem. Furthermore, the sustained hot conditions of that particular summer bade well for the success of the harvest (which was, indeed, spectacular – see TF1News, 2013). Given the practical limitation and the economic incentive, therefore, the grower discussed the problem with colleagues and took the decision to introduce hens to the vineyard. These birds ate a sufficient number of the insects to control the problem and protect the success of the harvest. Mr F also attested to using biological controls to deal with *mange-bourgeons*; inciting beetles and other predatory insects into the vineyard. In both of these cases, the limitations imposed by organic and biodynamic regimes, combined with the evolving philosophies of the growers in seeking to promote life in the field, drove the decisions to act with biotic agents.

One set of practices that stood out for me, both in visual impact and frequency of its evocation by farmers, was that related to *enherbement*, or ground cover. It offered clues to fashion in the application of organic ideas, and to the creation of ‘green’ environmental

³¹ Tr : « en accompagnant la nature ».

³² Tr: « associations qui freinent la maladie ».

images. It was a subject relevant to, and discussed by farmers within, both wine and walnut production chains, and the choice to permit or manage inter-crop ground cover has multiple agronomic consequences. Whilst supposed to reduce soil erosion and provide ecosystem services, for instance, ground cover made up of grasses and other plants can also compete with the main crop for water and nutrient resources and present difficulties in harvesting fruit (Hemery, 2001; Ferrero *et al*, 2005; Tesic *et al*, 2007; Celette and Gary, 2013). When Mr J (Walnut producer, Saint-Marcellin) took me to one of his walnut orchards, first we walked and observed, and then dropped to our haunches and cast our glance downwards to inspect the grass among the trees. The location of that moment of the interview was significant because he wanted to talk about the importance of the nitrogen cycle. The helpful role of the grasses and legumes in this cycle, he explained, is that they absorb nitrogen from the air and fix it in the soil. This leads to its availability for the nearby walnut trees. It was also the search for nitrogen that led Mr N (Walnut producer, Luc-en-Diois) to retain lucerne (*Medicago sativa*) and sainfoin (*Onobrychis L.*) in his orchard (though not immediately proximate to the trees themselves), and Mr C made the same point about nitrogen and *enherbement* when we studied one of his vineyards. Though it may not be as efficient a means to increase nitrogen availability as the application of fertiliser, the retention or planting of leguminous vegetation in the field is nonetheless an action which can be taken in the interests of the crop based upon sound agronomic principles. But what's more, the *image* of a walnut orchard, and especially of a vineyard being covered in green vegetation, appears to have attained value in other ways. As I walked through the vineyard with Mr A (Wine producer, Châtillon-sur-Seine) and asked him questions about how he sells his wine, he mentioned the recent visit he had received from a group of wine-buyers from Scandinavia. They came because they knew his production was organic:

‘They weren’t interested in the appellation. One of them said to me: if you show me the grass and plants in between the vines, I will show you quality. Ecology was their main concern.’³³

The presence of a diverse *enherbement* or ground cover in the vineyard has in fact become in recent years a highly visible, even totemic symbol of a winegrower’s concern with the ecological health of the vineyard (Hill, 2016a). It reflects changing attitudes, practices and fashion amongst producers, yet it has received limited academic attention (though see Bond and Grundy, 2001; Boulanger-Fassier, 2007). In my field notes at the start of this section, the comparison of two areas of vineyard under different modes of cultivation was striking. On one side, the potent pesticide *Roundup*® (Glyphosate) ensured the ground in between the rows of grapevines was barely covered by other plant species; on the other there was an array of grass and other species. Mr C’s (Wine producer, Ladoix-Serrigny) adoption of biodynamic methods meant that he could not use *Roundup*® even if he had wanted to. Rather, his approach was one that sought to achieve a “balance” (“*équilibre*”) with what he saw as the “ensemble” ecology of the vineyard. The central act of this balance was to avoid the introduction of synthetic pesticides, and instead to allow other plants to thrive alongside the grapevines which would, he argued, serve as a source of “biological controls” (“*contrôles naturels*”) against pests that might attack the grapevines, as well as encouraging the vines to ‘extend their roots deeper into the soil’.³⁴ He went even further and allowed a part of the vineyard that could have been planted in dozens of productive vines to remain as a hedge or,

³³ Tr : ‘Ils ne s’intéressaient pas à l’appellation. Un d’entre eux me disait : montrez-moi l’enherbement entre les vignes et je vous montrerai la qualité. Leur vrai intérêt, c’était l’écologie.’

³⁴ Tr: ‘jeter ses racines plus profondément dans le sol’.

as he also described it, “a reserve” (“une reserve”) for insects and birds that could operate as biological controls against pests that attack the vines ([Figure 6.8](#)).



Figure 6.8: Part of Mr C’s (côte d’Or) vineyard with grass cover and hedge or ‘reserve’ for biological controls. Source: author.

Though not all producers would go to the lengths of Mr C in making space for foliage as opposed to grapevines, the practice of encouraging *enherbement*, whether, for example, by not applying pesticides in an indiscriminate way, or by not using tractor and associated machinery to pass between the vines, was growing in the region, and I would argue this amounted to a form of microbiogeographical management; enrolling and aligning actors in the interest, and indeed at the risk, of a growing product of terroir. Mr F (Wine producer, Vaud) for instance, experimented with spreading wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*) seeds in

the intervals of the vineyard. His intention was to achieve a high level of ground cover, which would reduce opportunities for other plants with higher nutritional and water requirements to spread throughout the vineyard. The results were moderately successful, though the strawberry plants (Figure 6.9) had not yet dominated as much as was hoped. The method does demonstrate, however, a means by which to exert influence upon the nature of the *enherbement* without recourse to targeted herbicides, but rather through conscious encouragement of particular plant species.



Figure 6.9: Wild strawberry (*fraisier des bois*) plants growing in between Mr F's vines.
Source: author.

These changes in agricultural praxis create visible and rhetorically assimilable elements of ecologically 'healthy' or 'vibrant' terroirs. 'Enherbement increases the richness and diversity of fauna and micro-organisms,' found Boulanger-Fassier (2007: 72); 'something which an

ecologically-conscious consumer might be sensitive to.’³⁵ Where biological controls form part of the set of measures used against unwelcome *mange-bourgeon* insects, for example, retention of a diverse set of plants close to the vines can be considered an important co-requisite.³⁶ The enherbement can also be maintained alongside much larger fauna; Mr N (Walnut producer, Diois) discussed how he has introduced sheep to graze underneath the walnut trees, both as a biological, ‘natural’ means to manage the height and vigour of the plants, and as a supply of fertiliser. With the establishment of this rhythm, he attested to spreading seeds of plants such as rye (*Secale cereale*) for ground cover, to supplement those plants whose seeds arrived without his intervention from elsewhere in the valley. But the presence of diverse plant life for the benefit of animals in close proximity to carefully-controlled, economically valuable plant life for the benefit of humans raises the question of competition. The risk of a too dense enherbement is to reduce the amount of water and nutrients available to the grapevine, or walnut tree. Keller (2010) writes that grapevines usually have to share their habitat with other species, and that they have developed strategies to ensure sufficient access to resources just as other species have. Mr N attested to this when, as mentioned earlier, he talked me through his not spreading *lucerne* and *sainfoin* seed close to the trees, as, despite their nitrogen-fixing properties, those plants could extend deep roots and present a problem of competition for water and other nutrients. Keller (*Ibid*, 290) expands upon this point, arguing that for grapevines, competition can be undesirable ‘if not managed carefully, especially in warm and dry climates (Celette *et al*, 2009; Tesic *et al*, 2007)’. On the other hand, however, several growers have found that the combination of

³⁵ Tr: ‘L’enherbement augmente la richesse et de la diversité de la faune et des micro-organismes, ce à quoi peut être sensible un consommateur soucieux d’écologie.’

³⁶ For those who want further support in this, a farm in the Drôme, France’s most organic département by proportion of total farmers (CORABIO, 2012: 12), breeds and supplies such insects ‘on an industrial scale’ (Le Hir, 2013).

plants in the field has been positive overall. Mr L (Walnut producer, Pont-en-Royans), for instance, notes that the walnut tree is itself “very competitive” (“très concurrentiel”); its leaves being rich in tannin act as a herbicide where they fall, and thus limit the vigour of competitive grasses around the tree. This is especially important in the early stages of the tree’s growth. And, as both Mr C and Mr Z (BIVB) argued, competition from other plants compelled grapevines to extend their roots deeper into the soil and become more entrenched in their terroir; a material relationship with evocative connotations.

The degree to which *enherbement* was valued, or not, became a question I asked frequently in my interviews. The answers provided an insight into the practical problems growers faced, the philosophies that they gave credit to, and the reasoning they used in mediating the two. When I would cycle through the lanes and tracks that passed between vineyards I would notice a sizeable proportion had grass between the rows of vines. And yet, as a different wine producer on the côte d’Or told me;

“There was less *enherbement* forty years ago. It was not the fashion.”³⁷

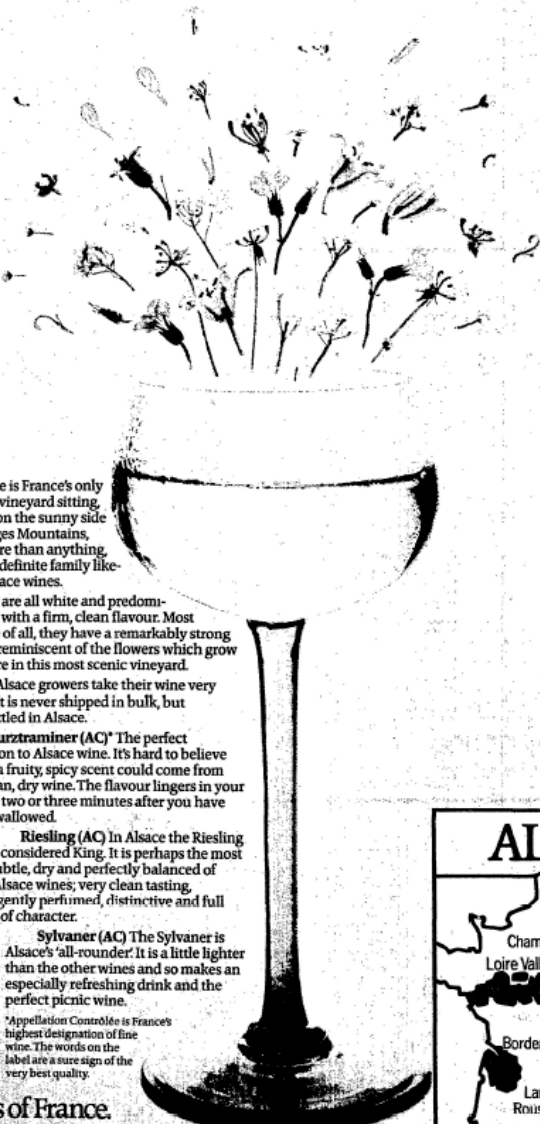
This is not surprising given the widespread ‘vineyard weeding’ and ‘excessive use of chemicals’³⁸ reported in Burgundy in the 1960s (Cerveau, 2000: 448-49). Even into the 1980s and 90s, a winegrower’s association official told me, having grass sprouting up in-between the vines was seen as ‘dirty’ (*sale*) in this region. But attitudes on this matter are changing. Mr A (Châtillon-sur-Seine), on a second visit to his vineyard, said with satisfaction, after surveying it for a few seconds, that it looked “clean” (*propre*) with the grass and plants such as dandelion that were growing in between the rows of vines. In Burgundy overall the

³⁷ Tr: « Il y avait moins d’enherbement il y a quarante ans. Ce n’était pas à la mode. »

³⁸ Tr: ‘désherbage des vignes’ ; ‘utilisation outrancière des produits chimiques’.

evidence of ground cover that presents itself to the eye today is a patchwork. The mix of bare ground, covered ground, and sometimes ground only partly covered with one or two species (resistant to the pesticide in use), betokens different attitudes and practices with regard to the value of *enherbement*, and the lack of simultaneity in their application. In other regions there are longer histories of practices of *enherbement* and its positive associations. In the Jura, for example, Boulanger-Fassier (2007: 78) describes vineyard *enherbement* as a common practice, and in Alsace, adverts from forty years ago extol the virtues of the flowers that grow in Alsatian vineyards and the (fanciful) idea of the flavour they impart to their wines (Figure 6.10); a different focus from the solid geology of Figure 6.3.

Imagine drinking the fragrance of mountain flowers.



Alsace is France's only mountain vineyard sitting, as it does, on the sunny side of the Vosges Mountains, which, more than anything, create the definite family likeness of Alsace wines.

They are all white and predominantly dry with a firm, clean flavour. Most distinctive of all, they have a remarkably strong fragrance reminiscent of the flowers which grow everywhere in this most scenic vineyard.

The Alsace growers take their wine very seriously. It is never shipped in bulk, but always bottled in Alsace.

Gewurztraminer (AC)* The perfect introduction to Alsace wine. It's hard to believe that such a fruity, spicy scent could come from such a clean, dry wine. The flavour lingers in your mouth for two or three minutes after you have swallowed.

Riesling (AC) In Alsace the Riesling is considered King. It is perhaps the most subtle, dry and perfectly balanced of Alsace wines; very clean tasting, gently perfumed, distinctive and full of character.

Sylvaner (AC) The Sylvaner is Alsace's 'all-rounder'. It is a little lighter than the other wines and so makes an especially refreshing drink and the perfect picnic wine.

*Appellation Contrôlée is France's highest designation of fine wine. The words on the label are a sure sign of the very best quality.



Wine, the genius of France.

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ALSACE

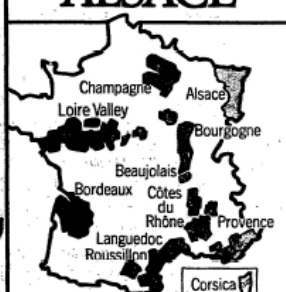


Figure 6.10: Advert for wines from Alsace, taken from the September 21 1978 edition of The Times. Source: Times/Food from France (1978).

Images of vineyards today that are used in the promotion of product and the value of its terroir are scenes that may appear timeless. But a major constituent of a landscape such as that advertised to Parisians taking the Métro in [Figure 6.11](#), for example, is liable to change, and almost certainly has changed over the past century, even over the past three or four decades. Landscapes contain a multitude of ephemeral aspects, as Brassley (1998) and Morse

et al (2014) have argued, and the *côte d'Or* ('Golden hillside') itself takes its name from the amber hue the leaves of the grapevines take on as chlorophyll retreats from leaf to stem during the autumn. But in the case of circulating cultural images of vineyards, such ephemeral, seasonal changes are easier to evoke poetically than the changes to ground cover, whose pattern of change is on a grander timescale, and which attain a level of permanency through human labour (cf. Mitchell, 2001; Duncan and Duncan, 2003). The sense of ecological health, environmental care and even quality that is imputed to a vineyard covered in grass today has not always been the case. Yet the history of changes to the practices with regard to *enherbement* are rarely discussed in the marketing literature, or even histories of wine. Champagne producers, for instance, for all of their evocation of history and prestige, are unlikely to use the extraordinary image of cement-covered vineyards that I discovered in a 1920s edition of the *Illustrated London News* (Figure 6.12) as part of their narratives of historical continuity.



Figure 6.11: Image from advertising campaign for Champagne shown on France 3 Television and in underground stations in Paris in 2012 and 2013. Source: Gonzalez (2013)/Comité Départemental [de la Marne] du Tourisme.



Figure 6.12: Cement-floored vineyard in Champagne. The caption reads: ‘With the ground cemented for the benefit of the grape-gatherers in wet weather: modern methods in a Champagne vineyard.’ Source: ILN/Manuel (1922).

As Garcia and Labbé (2012) argue, an image of continuity so often prevails at the expense of the reality of changes to agricultural praxis. Because of the valuation of measures to protect the environment in today’s agricultural practice, both through CAP payments (Buller, 1996; Clout and Demossier, 2003; Latruffe *et al*, 2013a), through conflation with quality (see European Commission, 2011), and through consumer preferences (Buller and Morris, 2004; Roe, 2006), images such as [Figure 6.14](#) which were lauded for their ‘modernity’ in the 1920s might today cause commercial embarrassment for Champagne producers. Amongst other things, cement, as a material so ubiquitous in cities, might seem out of place and reduce the sense of escapism for those city-dwellers being enticed to reconnect and find their roots in the country (cf. Frayssignes, 2008; Le Caro, 2014; Halfacree, 2014). As Cerveau (2000) has argued, the productivism and environmentally damaging practices of Burgundy grape growers in the 1960s have given way to a wine production industry focussed ever more on quality than quantity, and with this has come the cleaning-up of the image of wine production

mentioned earlier, often focussed on environmentally friendly practices. Boulanger-Fassier (2007:79) has argued that the actions of sustainable viticulture ‘respect the environment and meet the expectations of the consumer,’ and that ‘[i]n terms of image therefore, sustainable viticulture is a means of valorising terroirs and wines.’³⁹

The desires of consumers and the effects of the media are felt throughout the production chain and influence practices in the vineyard itself, such as that of *enherbement*. To repeat my earlier point: practices change, across time and across space. If they change on the basis of reasoning on the part of the wine grower, this reasoning may be to follow what has worked for other producers nearby, it may be to carry on what is understood as traditional, it may be to innovate, it may be to follow regulations, it may be to fit with the producer’s own ideas concerning agronomy, the environment, sale of product, or other aspects of farming, or it may be to follow the precepts of a mode of production such as organics or biodynamism. Indeed, each of these were raised at different times when I asked producers about their attitude and practice with regard to *enherbement*, but it was generally those who had made the transition to an organic or biodynamic mode of production that were the most prolix on the subject. And of course the patchwork prevalence of *enherbement* are so many small spaces that are not spread contiguously through an appellation zone like bands of solid geology often are.

³⁹ Tr: ‘le respect du milieu et pour répondre aux attendats du consommateur’ ; ‘[e]n termes d’image donc, la viticulture durable est un élément de valorisation des terroirs et des produits vitivinicoles.’

6. 5. Microbial Biogeographies

Dreyfus (2012: 22) argued that on the ideal, ecologically sustainable farm, the ensemble of living things creates ‘a true individuality.’⁴⁰ This is a precise point. All of the actors which come together in a territory constitute its individuality, and condition the properties of the end product – that much is familiar from popular descriptions of *terroir*. But in pursuing practices that seek to promote the vitality and autonomy of non-human actors, organic and biodynamic producers are both allowing greater risk in their undertaking *and* attempting to secure its future through ecological sustainability and its eventual valuation. The networks of insects, plants, seeds, microbes, fungi and bacteria which populate vineyards, walnut orchards, pastures and cow sheds constitute the most dynamic and lively elements of what makes those spaces unique from others like them. It is no accident that the most recent work in *terroir* studies has attempted to gauge the importance and variability of yeasts and other microbial life in contributing to the quality, flavour and distinction of food and drink products (see, for example, Yool and Comrie, 2013; Gilbert *et al*, 2014; Garofalo *et al*, 2015). In one such study, reported in the New York Times, it is apparent that microbial life has a highly autonomous character, but can still be aligned alongside other agents in the process of wine production – ‘Microbes are deposited on the grape surface by wind, insects and people, and may fail or flourish because of specific local conditions such as the way the grape vines are trained. And there may be genetic affinities between particular microbial species and each variety of grape, the researchers say.’ (Wade, 2013) Wine growers can thus act in ways likely to benefit from the arrival of yeast microbes through their training of the vines, their choice of variety to plant, and even through purchasing yeasts to incorporate in the fermenting wine

⁴⁰ Tr: ‘De cet ensemble, de cet écosystème naît une véritable individualité.’

(as discussed in Teil *et al*, 2010); though the microbial interactions themselves are visible to the producer only in their effects. In being open to the aleatory agency of organisms such as microbes, wine growers engage in a ‘complex dance’ (Barham, 2003: 131; Demossier, 2011b) with the ecology of the vineyard in their goal of producing a *vin de terroir*. The terroir at stake here, however, is not only one with parameters that are significantly different, and differently scaled, from those of more static explanations that call upon geology, physiography and climate; but one that is less obvious to the basic perceptive tools of hand and eye.

Bokulich *et al* (2013) used bacterial and fungal gene sequencing in batches of Californian grape must to produce evidence of non-random, place-specific populations on different grape types. The case they make for what they call ‘microbial terroir’ is convincing, drawing upon the conventions of studies into microbial biodiversity carried out in other fields and presenting persuasive charts and diagrams that use colour to demonstrate different proportions of specific bacterial and fungal clades across grape musts ([Figure 6.13](#)). Note, for example, in part C of [Figure 6.13](#) the greater relative abundance of *Erwinia* taxa in the Chardonnay grape must (coloured green); and in part D the presence of the *Aspergillus* taxa of fungus in the Zinfandel grape must only (coloured blue). Different microbes are found on different grape varieties and this varies across space. The microbial terroir they propose is a form of terroir that is both dynamic *and* static, small *and* large scale, in that ‘microregional idiosyncrasies’ of climate (i.e. essentially, weather) ‘may have a tremendous impact’ on microbial biogeography, but on the other hand they ‘may also suggest that establishment of regional microbial *terroir* identity resists such ephemeral events.’ (*Ibid*: 145)

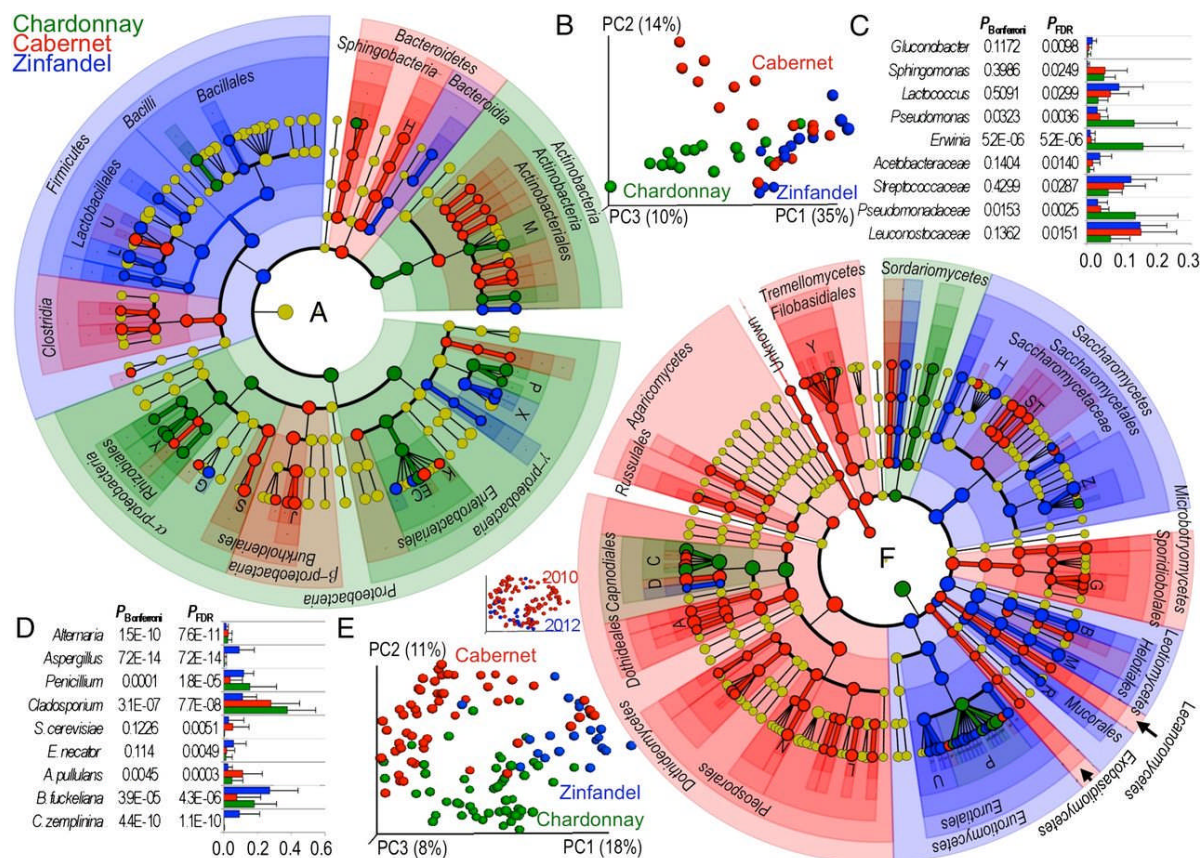


Figure 6.13: Diagrams representing various facets (explained in the paper) of ‘Varietal variation in bacterial (Left) and fungal (Right) communities in Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay grape musts.’ Diagrams A-C represent bacterial diversity; diagrams D-F represent fungal diversity. Source: Bokulich *et al*, 2013 (Available online at: <http://www.pnas.org/content/111/1/E139/F2.large.jpg>)

The thing is, though the little ecologies on these grapes appear stable enough and sufficiently different one from the other for the chemists to impute conditioning of terroir to them, their means of producing their data is not widely available outside of the laboratory. In the field, and in the past, microbial life was not visible, only occasionally tactile (as in the case of dusty botrytis, ‘noble rot’ on grapes), and could not be known in the same way. The regional difference that people did see and sense was thus not generally attributed to microscopic forms of life, but rather to geology, to soil, to climate, and so on. Perhaps this can go some way to explaining why things obvious to sight and other senses, such as soil, slope, rocks and climate, might long have been thought responsible for the qualities of grapes and wine

produced at a particular site; as Mr D asserted, “in the old days, we observed with all our senses”.⁴¹ Indeed, a question which is not resolved in Bokulich *et al*’s paper is whether we can justly attribute regional difference to microbial populations, or whether these are merely epiphenomena of other elements of the site; given, notably, that the microbes discovered through Bokulich *et al*’s methods will not have grapes to live on in the winter. The authors’ concurrent interest in climatic variation betrays some of this uncertainty, perhaps, and they argue this suggests ‘a link between vineyard environmental conditions and microbial inhabitation patterns.’

If it is too much to say that microbial life simply *is* terroir, i.e. to say that populations of bacteria and fungi are the ‘secret’ that science can uncover where other epistemological avenues have failed, we can at least say that focussing attention at the scale of microbial life extends the breadth of terroir’s explanation. Encountering, plotting and mapping these lively microbiogeographies, though not as easy or at hand as larger things, enables existing cases for geographical protection of food and drink to be made even more strongly. In fact, this is already happening. Mrs T (Reblochon producer, Faverges) explained that a few years back, producers of Reblochon, St-Nectaire and Munster cheeses got together to defend their use of the wooden boards on which they place rows of cheeses to mature. In the Reblochon production chain these were made out of spruce (*épicéa*), a coniferous species that grows in the region, and Mr R (Thônes) argued in his interview that they imparted a subtle and distinctive flavour to the cheese. In the wake of new hygiene regulations introduced in the 1990s (discussed in the next chapter), it was said that wood, as opposed to other materials

⁴¹ Tr: « jadis, on observait avec tous les sens ».

such as plastic, was not sufficiently hygienic. The producers protested and pointed to the long standing nature of the practice, but, Mrs T told me;

‘We needed scientific research. Tradition was not strong enough to convince the politicians, etc.’⁴²

The rhetoric of tradition was at a disadvantage against the anxieties and expectations of public health regulation. In some ways this was an echo of the hygienic modernisation that came with *fruitières* in the 1920s. So the group funded a scientific study to provide a form of evidence that would be more convincing. This study found that the boards were sufficiently hygienic, and could even kill *listeria*; the tannins in spruce being found to have a bactericidal action.

If we accept the idea that organic and biodynamic methods of production are beneficial to ecology on the farm, and might support instead of endanger microbial biodiversity by, for example, not using synthetic pesticides, then the microbiogeographical scale would be a propitious base for the arguments of organic and biodynamic proponents. Indeed, the presence of such microbial life in the land (Thomson *et al*, 2015) and at the hand of producers (Paxson, 2013; Brice, 2014a) would make it a relevant scale at which to examine the question of the organic facilitation of *terroir*. But even with investigations of microbial life representing the latest frontiers of *terroir* research, and products of *terroir* continuing to grow, rather than decline, in value, I feel it will take time for the parameters of the arguments to be assessed and accepted, and for their degree of dynamism to put the explanations for *terroir* that draw upon more visible and palpable things at risk. It also remains to be seen how the results of such studies will interact with the extant images of individual *terroirs*; the fact that

⁴² Tr: ‘Il fallait des recherches scientifiques. La tradition n’était pas suffisamment convaincante pour les politiciens, et cetera.’

Burgundy and Champagne trade associations sponsored Roullier-Gall *et al*'s (2014) research programme indicates that those who profit from terroir are not uninterested in new discoveries and 'paradigm shifts' (Bokulich *et al*, 2013) in the dynamics of the concept. The degree to which terroirs expressed, revitalised or simply differently rhetorically mobilised at the individual farm scale can create dissonance in the appellation-wide articulation of the concept is something I began to appreciate in my three production chains, and I will look further into this in the chapter that follows.

6. 6. Sustainable Terroir?

The desire to apply the ideas of life and ecological balance fundamental to organics and biodynamism to the production of an annual crop requires labour, surveillance and reasoning, and is accompanied by increased risk. Mr C (Ladoix-Serrigny), for example, has moved into wine-growing in semi-retirement, and is lucky to receive a relatively high price for the wine he produces; a price in part determined by the visibly biodynamic status of its production, and the attractiveness of this to certain consumers. If we assume that the financial situation of his wine company is not precarious, we can understand that he may have a higher threshold for the risks, and the reduction in scale of production, associated with his dedicating around half of a vineyard parcel's area to non-productive shrubbery ([Figure 6.10](#)). This is a calculation that hinges on the relationship between sustainable production, vibrant ecology, and consumer desire. Wine producers are often rewarded for these efforts because of strong consumer demand but, as Loureiro (2003) and Latruffe *et al* (2013) report, this is not the case universally. A farmer who does not enjoy a similarly reliable *de minimis* level of remuneration for his or her product, or is less reliant upon the image of their farm in the eyes of potential customers, may be less inclined to pursue these methods, or face greater risks in

doing so.

This was made abundantly clear to me in August 2012 when I accompanied Mr A (Châtillon-sur-Seine), a young wine producer who had started his own business in 2007 and completed the organic conversion in 2010, to one of his vineyards. We chatted contentedly in his van, but he was somewhat anxious as some hailstorms had passed over the area a couple of days before and this was the first time he had come up to this particular vineyard since. The archives at Beaune and at Romans are full of claims for government compensation from farmers in years gone by for damage caused by hailstorms.⁴³ Unfortunately for Mr A, what we saw when we got out of the van was the same thing. Hail had fallen violently on these vines: bunches of small grapes were broken and even the shoots of the vines showed bruising where hail had struck them. Mr A looked upset and ran his hand through his hair. 'It's not easy,' he said, 'to lose a harvest like this. And it's not easy when you're starting out and you need to pay money back to the bank...' Conventional production methods would not have saved his grapes from the hail, but it made it clear to me that converting to organics and, for example, reducing options for combating invasive insects, was yet another risk in an activity that is already exposed to several.

Producers I interviewed were interested in different forms of sustainability. This varied across product chains, between those in organics and those not, and amongst individuals. Sustainability as a concept is frequently understood as social, environmental or economic (see O'Riordan, 2004; Adams/IUCN, 2006). Whereas at the start of this project I was most interested in environmental sustainability, as evidenced most obviously by organic and

⁴³ See, for example: Dossier 3F 39 – Calamités – Grêle (Losses to hail), 1902-1916, Archives Municipales de Romans-sur-Isère ; Carton 94, Nos. 14 and 15 – (Damage caused by storms and hail), Archives Municipales de Beaune.

biodynamic modes of production, by the end the matter of economic sustainability, and especially the question of the *interaction* of environmental and economic sustainability, was front of mind. Whereas for the wine producers I talked to on the côte d'Or the financial security of their undertakings appeared assured, and experiments in innovative ecological forms of cultivation were widespread, Reblochon producers were acutely aware of the variable fortunes of dairying in France and were cautious in their attitude towards change. Sitting in the kitchen of one Reblochon producer, I casually asked: “Est-ce que cette production vous paraît durable?” (“Does this sort of farming seem sustainable to you?”), expecting to note down details of grass quality, soil analysis, herd health and so on. “Je l’espère!” (“I hope so!”) came the reply, followed by a discussion of what she termed the “rentabilité” (“viability”) of the farm and the economic and planning changes that could threaten it. The sense of *durabilité* or sustainability I had in mind was solely environmental; but the sense received and responded to by this dairy farmer was solely economic. When I asked another Reblochon producer (Ms T) what the challenges for the future of her farm were, she replied: “continuing to make a living from our farm” (“continuer de vivre de l’exploitation”), whilst a third (Ms P) replied “being able to make a living from our cheese” (“pouvoir vivre de notre fromage”). To summarise the sustainability concerns communicated by the Reblochon producers in interviews, I would note: i) the faith in the organisation and regulation of the production chain, with less internal competition within the region than is typical in wine production; ii) the need to keep supply and demand closely calibrated, given how impractical it would be to quickly stop the herd producing milk; iii) awareness of the precarity of the dairy sector in general and the current buoyancy of the Reblochon market. Yes, innovation could come in the sale of the product, but there was little interest in straying from the regulated production methods that allowed the use of the Reblochon AOP label and the support of the Reblochon producers association, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The physical environment and ecology, which had been the object of so much talk with producers in Burgundy, and which were presented on centre stage in the transhumance I participated in, appeared of less immediate concern to these Reblochon farmers during interviews; “we are basically organic in the summer months, in the high pastures” (“on est presque bio en été, aux alpages”) surmised one of them, reflecting the positive environmental vision of extensive grazing Emery (2010) also found on the North York Moors. Economic viability was, rather, front of mind.

In wine production, however, there was a more variable interaction between environmental and economic priorities. Mr C (Ladoix-Serrigny) hoped that in pursuing biodynamic practices and reaping lower yields than are typical in the region he would contribute to a longer life for the grapevine itself, extending the productive window before needing to re-plant. Mr F (Vaud) and Mr I (Sciez), meanwhile, discussed the risk to the economic sustainability of the vineyard business that comes with implementing biodynamic cultivation. Both explained the number of changes required and both recommended proceeding gradually, with Mr I saying:

“It is better to do a trial on a part of the farm before launching yourself into the whole thing.”⁴⁴

And that:

“There are even those who converted to biodynamism and then went back to conventional, having not met with any success.”⁴⁵

Mr F (Wine producer, Vaud) retained only a portion of his vineyard under biodynamic production ([Figure 6.14](#)), because he wanted to see how it would work over time, and

⁴⁴ Tr: « Il sera mieux de faire un essai sur une partie de l'exploitation avant de se lancer sur la totalité. »

⁴⁵ Tr: « Il y a même ceux qui ont converti et puis se sont revenus en arrière, faute de succès manifestes. »

because he felt at the present time there was not sufficient demand for biodynamic wine to make a total conversion economically sustainable. Indeed, his father, who also sat in on our interview, balanced interest and scepticism in the entire biodynamic project, explaining in the interview:

‘When we started off in biodynamics, I needed to be convinced. I divided up one of the vineyard parcels to try it out. Well, after a while this parcel was affected by mildew. So I rang up [the author of a book on biodynamic farming] and asked him what he would do. I carried out his recommendations, but the mildew did not go. So I contacted him again, and he recommended further action. Well, I split the parcel again, because I didn’t want to risk the whole lot. In the end, though, his treatments worked in that little piece of the vineyard, so I was convinced.’⁴⁶

Here, the connection between not impeding the ability to turn a profit (economic sustainability) and not negatively affecting the life of the soil through conventional treatments (environmental sustainability) was negotiated iteratively.

⁴⁶ Tr: ‘Quand on a commencé en biodynamie, bon, j’avais besoin d’être convaincu. J’ai divisé une de mes parcelles pour la piloter. Bon, après un certain temps cette parcelle a été touchée par le mildiou. Alors j’ai appelé [l’auteur d’un livre sur la biodynamie] et lui ai demandé comment procéder. J’ai suivi ses conseils, mais le mildiou était toujours là. Donc je l’ai appelé de nouveau, et il m’a donné d’autres conseils. J’ai divisé encore une fois la parcelle, car je ne voulais pas mettre le tout à risque. Finalement, ses traitements ont eu de succès dans ce petit coin-là, donc je fus convaincu.’

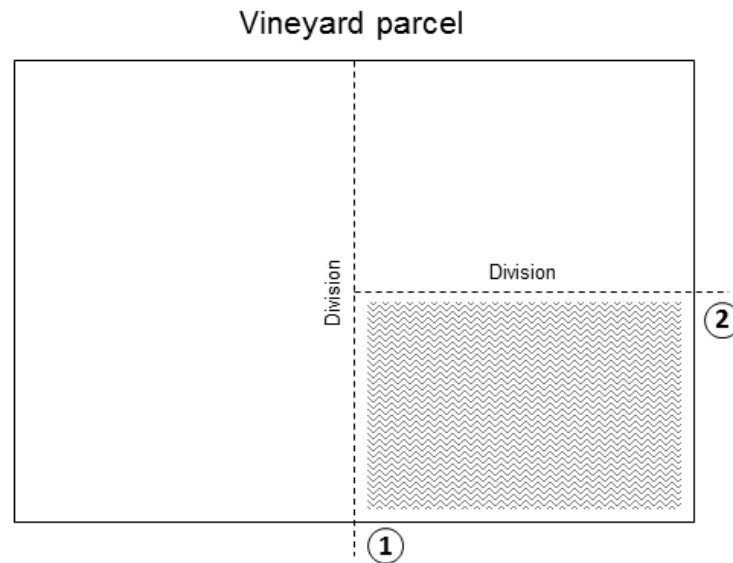


Figure 6.14: Spatial limitation of risk in biodynamic conversion: sub-division of vineyard parcel carried out by Mr F illustrated in lines (1) and (2). Source: Author (adapted from sketch in field notebook).

Ecological returns

As I outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, the compelling and problematic idea articulated, for example, in both quotations below is in many ways what mobilised my work on this research project:

“We find a better expression of terroir with biodynamism.”⁴⁷ (Mr E, Wine producer, Ladoix-Serrigny, Interview, 10 September 2012)

‘Organic wine, to better express the terroir !’⁴⁸ (Pouzenc and Vincq, 2013: 39)

But much like for the concept of terroir itself, the scientific case on environmentally sustainable methods of agriculture is not easy to close. For example, in experiments carried out in Switzerland and elsewhere, soils cultivated using biodynamic and organic methods

⁴⁷ Tr : « On trouve une meilleure expression du terroir avec la biodynamie. »

⁴⁸ Tr : ‘Le vin bio, pour mieux exprimer le terroir !’

presented greater microbiotic activity and hosted more insect life than other soils (Pfiffner and Mäder, 1998 ; Mäder *et al*, 2000 ; 2002 ; Fließbach *et al*, 2007 ; Probst *et al*, 2008; Bougnom *et al*, 2012); and the differences between soils cultivated under biodynamic and organic regimes were found to differ little compared to the difference between those two categories and conventionally cultivated soils (Carpenter-Boggs *et al*, 2000; Reeve *et al*, 2005). However, although they do discuss some positive outcomes of organic agriculture, Brady and Weil (2008: 898-901) describe contradictory results in comparisons of organic and conventional soils; argue that the prohibition (which they oppose to the ‘de-emphasis’) of synthetic fertilisers in organic agriculture ‘has no basis in science’; and stress that ideas about supposedly ‘hard and lifeless soils’ in conventional agriculture (which Mr G mentioned in a foreign context) come from a particular set of theories about plant nutrition popular amongst organic proponents. And in viticulture specifically, although studies have shown that grapes grown under organic and biodynamic regimes display differences compared to conventionally grown grapes in levels of sugar, phenols and antioxidant activity, differences in the taste of the wine are not always evident (Reeve *et al*, 2005 ; Ross *et al*, 2009 ; Mulero *et al*, 2010; Parpinello *et al*, 2015). So there would be some equivocality in attributing direct effects on quality to organics and biodynamics through various dimensions of terroir.

Yet, just as Jones (2013) argued that scientific explanations of terroir itself might ultimately be unwelcome due to the ‘mystique’ of terroir, so incertitude and, perhaps, blind faith and ecological concern support the popularity of organic and biodynamic wine production in the absence of a robust body of evidence. Writing his last ever column as *Sunday Times* wine critic, Bob Tyrer (2014) shared some of the wisdom he had gathered over the years. One of his main assertions was that:

‘Biodynamics - lunar cycles, cow horns, dungs and potions - creates reliably good wine. No one knows why.’

Similarly, Hugh Johnson (2014: 9), in the general introduction to his best-selling *Pocket Wine Guide*, wrote sardonically though appreciatively of those ‘mystics’ who had followed the path of biodynamism and managed to produce wines ‘of beautiful purity and vitality’. In the field, despite proceeding cautiously into biodynamic cultivation, my respondent Mr F confided that sometimes he observed, but ‘wasn’t always able to explain’ why certain biodynamic techniques worked in the vineyard. And in other cases, the explanation offered to me was questionable. Discussing in detail how he sought to add the absolute minimum to his grape must as it fermented, as part of his biodynamic approach, Mr I stated confidently that “If you put something in the wine, you destabilise it.”⁴⁹ Yet later I pondered; in what sense do you *destabilise* it? The exact opposite argument could be made, i.e. that it is conventional to put sugar or sulphur in the grape must to reach a standard alcoholic strength and to stop it from spoiling, respectively; to precisely *stabilise* it.

Farmers who had converted to organic and biodynamic modes of production were in the main happy to demonstrate and discuss their approaches with me. They would often have firm opinions as to the value of the philosophy they put into practice, and though generally modest about their products, their responses to my questions showed that they felt they made the most of terroir as they saw it in the field; that is, as a complex system in which biotic actors play a vital part. Yet the point I have reached is one where I find myself unable to assess the validity of all these claims, given the range of sometimes conflicting epistemologies that are mobilised in their proposition and evaluation. I wonder whether instead of answering the

⁴⁹ Tr : ‘Si on met quelque chose dans le vin, on le déstabilise.’

question of the possibility of a better ecological expression of terroir, all I have managed to do is help to work out what the terms of the debate are, locate the sites at which controversies are unravelling, and identify some of the major issues at stake. One of those issues is the multiple kinds of sustainability that are of concern to farmers depending on where they are and what they produce; another is the variable degree to which scientific explanation enters their philosophy and practice; a third is their choice to share eirenic or polemic ideas with me; and a fourth is the significance of ecological vitality in their vision of terroir. Certainly such findings are a form of response to Pitte's (2001) call for work that investigates the idiography of terroirs in France, a form of response to Ferbrache's (2013) desire to better understand terroir through 'qualitative or ethnographic research at the micro-level' and a form of support for Gade's (2001: 378) argument that geographers benefit from fieldwork by gaining 'insight into other argumentative systems, epistemological parameters, and realms of conceptual meaning'. But they are not enough in themselves to resolve the question of whether organic, biodynamic and otherwise ecology-led or sustainable forms of agriculture can *improve the expression* of terroir. A profounder more-than-human exercise in participant observation and a firmer grounding in biology, ecology and agronomy than my own may help an ontological case to be made. Indeed, I can only encourage more work in the vein of Brice (2014a), Abrahamsson *et al* (2015) and Høyrup and Munk (2007), to 'assemble' the object of enquiry as a matter of concern, following Latour's calls (2004; 2005), and to follow the actors through what are clearly hybrid and dynamic, though sometimes purified and static in portrait, spaces of terroir. The more modest achievement of this chapter is, I hope, to have advanced the debate on this question by opening up French-language interviews and French-language scholarship to anglophone enquiry, and by offering some preliminary findings from three distinct and distinctive food chains in the country where terroir has the longest history of debate and the greatest investment of money, time and labour.

6. 7. Conclusion

For all of its eight hundred years of study and evocation, the work of terroir is never done. Not only must people encounter it, or representations of it, for it to be valued, but the direction of innovation in its transformation by farmers can be towards the latest fashionable ideas just as it can be back to those ideas that animated past generations. ‘Whether they choose organic certification, biodynamic practices or reasoned agriculture, or a return to the methods of their elders previously consigned to family notebooks,’ advertised the Burgundy Wine Board in a recent leaflet, ‘the wine growers of Burgundy aim to give back to the soil its original quality.’ (BIVB, 2011). The simultaneous sense of dynamic change and abiding originality created by this assertion is what has followed me around in the interviews I carried out with producers in three different food chains. Historical immobility in terroir is a fiction, *pace* Garcia and Labbé (2012), yet images of terroir continue to draw upon anteriority in the search for authenticity. In this chapter, therefore, we have examined how both dynamism and stasis have entered into the logics of farmers in working with, and presenting, terroir. We have seen how the longstanding place of geology in the explanation of terroir has become a source of lively debate, and how scientific findings work for and against the *savoir-faire* of producers and the primordial epistemological tools of hand and eye. We have seen how the environmental sustainability promised in organic and biodynamic philosophy is put into practice and informs decision-making on the part of farmers, how it is juggled with the economic sustainability of the farm enterprise, and how the risks and rewards of such ecologically-framed approaches are not spread evenly throughout the agricultural production chains of France. We have also seen how, for producers and for me, events can be attributed to the implementation of organic and biodynamic methods, and claims made in the name of

those philosophies, without sufficient means to verify or evaluate them. Many of the matters discussed were controversial, with different producers holding different views, and those who tried to pin down a definitive answer usually had their own interests in doing so. Finally, given the recent reiterations of the idea that '[i]f you grew a plant without any microbes, you wouldn't have any wine' (Simms, 2015: 42), we have briefly investigated the dynamism present at a much finer scale of terroir analysis; that of the microbiotic life of bacteria and fungi. Already part of the day-to-day work of dairy farmers, as we will see in the next chapter, enrolling and aligning those tiny actors is increasingly a matter of concern in the wine and walnut food chains, under the dual influence of agricultural approaches promoting ecological 'balance', and scientific enquiry highlighting their import.

There is something dynamic within the practices and spaces inherited from the past. Ultimately, however, the question I set out to answer; of whether supposedly sustainable methods like those of organics and biodynamism can really facilitate the expression of terroir; I could not resolve. Certainly evidence can be gathered for that assertion, but in so doing, one notices that the parameters of the notion of terroir themselves change; to include, as I found, greater agency from, and to attribute greater importance to, biotic actors. This indicates to me that the epistemology of terroir is undergoing change, and this is part of the reason that I have foregrounded epistemological analyses in this account. If this chapter has achieved anything, I hope it has been to offer empirical coordinates for what can be a sometimes abstract and nomothetic notion of political, economic, cultural and increasingly ecological import. Soil is an aggregate of minerals and microbes, but it is an aggregate of cultural invocation and evocation too. Between it and the plants that produce products of terroir, there is that 'fragile alchemy' reported in Condrieu whose formula is relied upon to make convincing cases for the unique qualities of geographical products. 'Natural' practices can be strongly evocative of

rural authenticity and environmental health, but they can also attract opposition from farmers who have reasoned differently. These multifarious matters open the door to the question of collegiality, innovation and governance within the bounds of a shared ‘material and symbolic’ resource such as terroir (Paxson, 2013: 188), and this is indeed the threshold we will now cross in the next chapter.

* * *

Chapter 7: Governing Terroir

7.1. Introduction

Whilst one of the analytical routes out of the problematic geological vision of terroir discussed in the previous chapter is the consideration of terroir's cultural apprehension and natural currency, another is to analyse the role of those institutions which oversee both the interactions of farmers with terroir and how the notion is transmitted to consumers and, in many cases, to political actors further removed from the grounded spaces of agriculture. Jean-Claude Hinnewinkel (2004; 2007) has taken the matter of governance, especially in the form of unions of farmers, to be the centrifugal force in the production of terroir, and this focus has been shared to some degree by other French geographers, notably Raphaël Schirmer (2007; 2010). For Hinnewinkel (2007 : 19-20), 'appellations of origin, and therefore terroirs, are union constructions'.¹ His rationale for this proposition is that the unions or associations of farmers are 'the actors who have structured and continue to really structure terroir because they manage the relations between all the different components of the system'.² Hinnewinkel recognises that this position entails 'a major retreat from the powerful dogma of soil-based explanation which reigned in the years following the Second World War',³ and focussing on human governance of the terroir food chains appears to him compatible with Roger Dion's now seminal argument for the predominantly human direction of the fortunes of terroir (Dion,

¹ Translation: '[l]es appellations d'origine, et donc les terroirs sont des constructions "syndicales"'.

² Tr: 'les acteurs qui ont structuré et structurent véritablement le terroir car ils gèrent les interrelations entre toutes les composantes du système'.

³ Tr: 'un recul majeur par rapport au dogme des lendemains de la seconde guerre mondiale, où régnait l'impérialisme pédologique,'.

1959 ; cf. Clout, 2010; Pitte, 2010), wherein the inherited physical elements of a wine-growing territory are worked by producers to economic ends within a particular social and historical set of circumstances.

Much of what can be seen as ‘alternative’ about products of terroir is to be found in their close links to their territories of origin and their differentiation in quality from mass commodity production ; but there is also a significant degree of difference from the production of other agricultural goods in the shape of their collective governance. Indeed, collective governance is an obligatory part of each AOP food chain in France, in the form of *Organismes de Defense et Gestion* (ODG) (‘Protection and Management Organisations’) ; which is to say, unions which represent the interests of producers and promote the product. Within AOP food chains, I will argue that terroir is a convention but also a matter of contention. Because terroir is one of several simultaneous concerns for farmers, it may be operationalised, and fettered, in different ways according to their other priorities and the influence of other actors. As a countrywide apparatus of the rural economy, the ‘interactive dynamic between individual strategies and collective professional constraints’⁴ that characterise the AOP system merit empirical attention (Pivot, 2000:128; cf. Schirmer, 2010 ; Flutet, 2013). But to examine the governance of even one food production chain in detail could be a thesis in itself, and that is not what I intend to do here. Rather, I want in this last chapter to draw upon more of the interviews I carried out whilst on fieldwork, and some recent interventions in the literature, to critically communicate a set of pressing issues that show how terroir is both protected and put at risk within AOP food chains ; how the nature of the national legal framework of collective governance of terroir is itself both exceptional and

⁴ Tr: ‘dynamique interactive entre stratégies individuelles et contraintes professionnelles collectives’.

under threat ; and how the farmers who have converted to environmentally sustainable methods of production manage to navigate the governance of terroir through the more particular set of parameters suggested in the previous chapter.

7.2. Organising Conventions and Contentions

Every single geographically protected product in France has to have an organisation or collective of producers that manages its production in various ways. Mr AZ, my respondent in the INAO (L’Institut National de l’Origine et de la Qualité),⁵ argued that ‘*groupements*’ (groupings) were fundamental to the organisation of products of terroir. These are now generically known as ODGs (Organismes de Défense et de Gestion) though are often individually called *syndicats* (unions), and it is a requirement of AOP regulation that an ODG be identified for the product. The national agency my respondent worked for could accompany, orient and assist them in obtaining legal recognition and protection for their product, but the farmers had to come together and make the claim for geographical protection in the first place, and it is obviously with their labour that the product would emerge. For Reblochon producers, the ODG is the Syndicat Interprofessionnel du Reblochon (SIR), based in Thônes; for Noix de Grenoble walnut producers, the ODG is the Comité Interprofessionnel de la Noix de Grenoble (CING), based at Chatte; whilst for wine producers in Burgundy, there are several bodies, in light of the large number of individual AOP classifications, and there is partial oversight of the whole region through the Bureau Interprofessionnel des Vins de Bourgogne (BIVB). I interviewed agents of these ODGs along with agents of organic associations and an agent of the INAO as part of my fieldwork (Figure 2.7 in the

⁵ The body that oversees most labels of quality and origin in French food and drink, which until 2006 was called the *Institut National des Appellations d’Origine*.

Methodology Chapter), and they provided perspectives on terroir from different parts of the production chain from farmers.

One of the first things that became clear from these interviews is the multiple missions the ODGs pursue, which include marketing, education, lobbying, technical research and development, and the very broad sense of support to farmers that comes in the term, which I so often heard, of *accompagnement*. Some respondents saw their agency as operating in between producers and consumers, others saw it acting in between producers and politicians. Certainly ODGs are in the business of representing the interests of farmers (and often of others who process or sell the product in question), but they are also in the business of representing the product to the outside world, doing the work of connection described in Chapter 3. Many ODGs, including those for Reblochon and the Noix de Grenoble, host colourful and informative websites that promote the product. They also produce printed promotional material, sponsor events, and work to raise awareness of the product in other ways, such as the CING's recent 'Balisage' campaign, which emplaced representations of the Noix de Grenoble along the roads that pass through the territory of its AOP zone ([Figure 7.1](#)). Furthermore, ODGs often work in concert with other agencies in the promotion of their product, and can be the co-ordinator for regional tourism and heritage initiatives in which the product plays a role. It was during my interview with Ms X at the Syndicat Interprofessionnel du Reblochon, for instance, that I learnt of the possibility of participating in the transhumance recounted in the previous chapter. This was organised by Saveurs des Aravis, a tourism and food organisation whose office is located just a stone's throw from the Syndicat in Thônes ([Figure 7.2](#)). Also nearby are the Amis du Val de Thônes, a heritage organisation which printed a book on the history of Reblochon from which I drew citations in Chapter 5; and the Reblochon producers' cooperative, which holds tastings and delivers cheese throughout the

region. The embeddedness of the product in its territory of production and the collective promotion of the place of origin as brand (Murdoch *et al*, 2000; O'Neill and Whatmore, 2000; Valceschini and Mazé, 2000; Miele and Murdoch, 2002; Horlings and Marsden, 2014; Medway and Warnaby, 2014) is instantiated through the collaboration of these agencies, and facilitated by their close proximity.

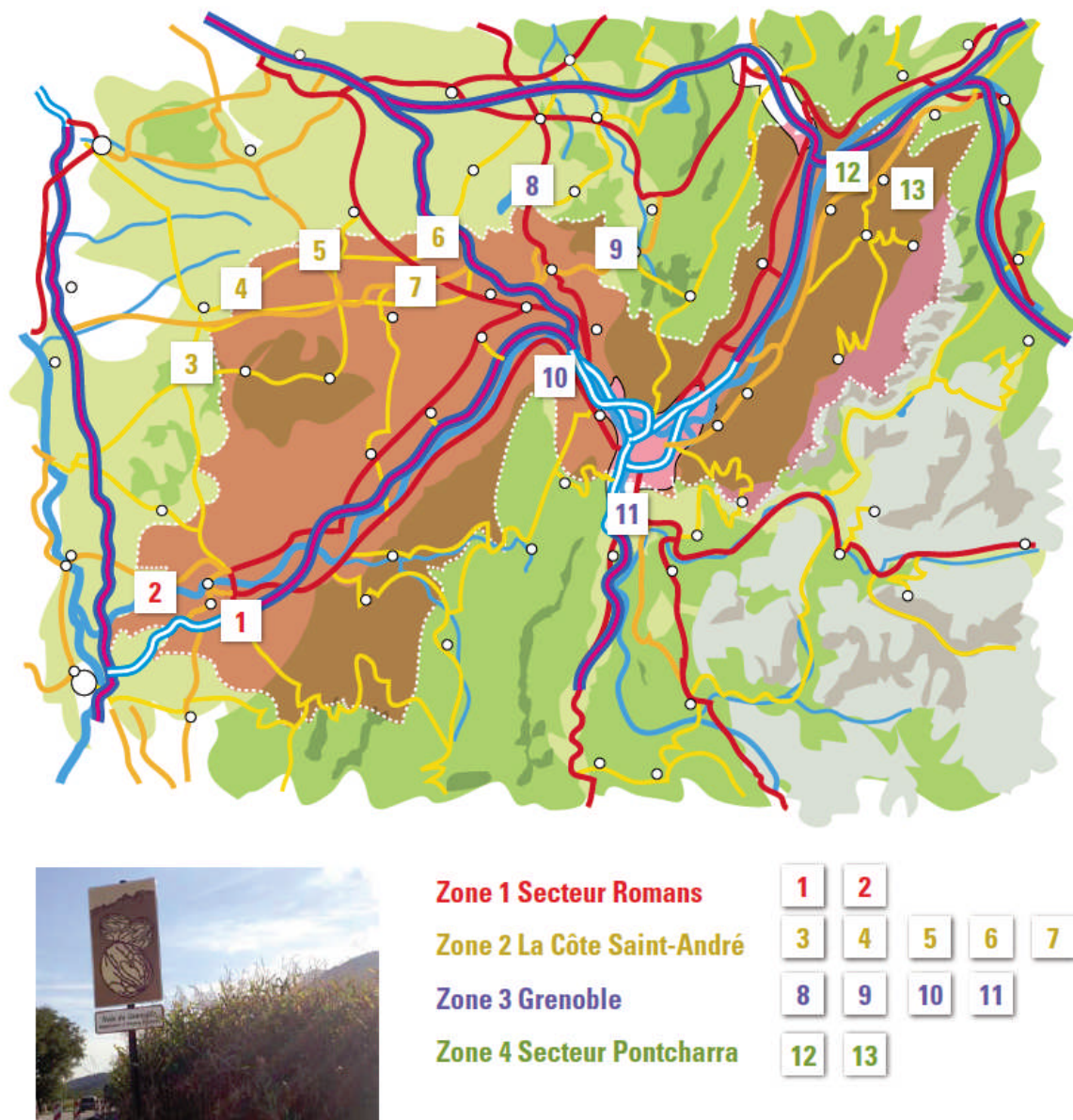


Figure 7.1: Plan of ‘balisage’ (signposting) campaign launched by the CING in the Isère Valley, France. The objective is to place 13 copies of the sign marked at bottom left on the roads that pass through the Noix de Grenoble AOP zone of production and thereby increase awareness of the product and its territory of origin. Source: CING (2015).

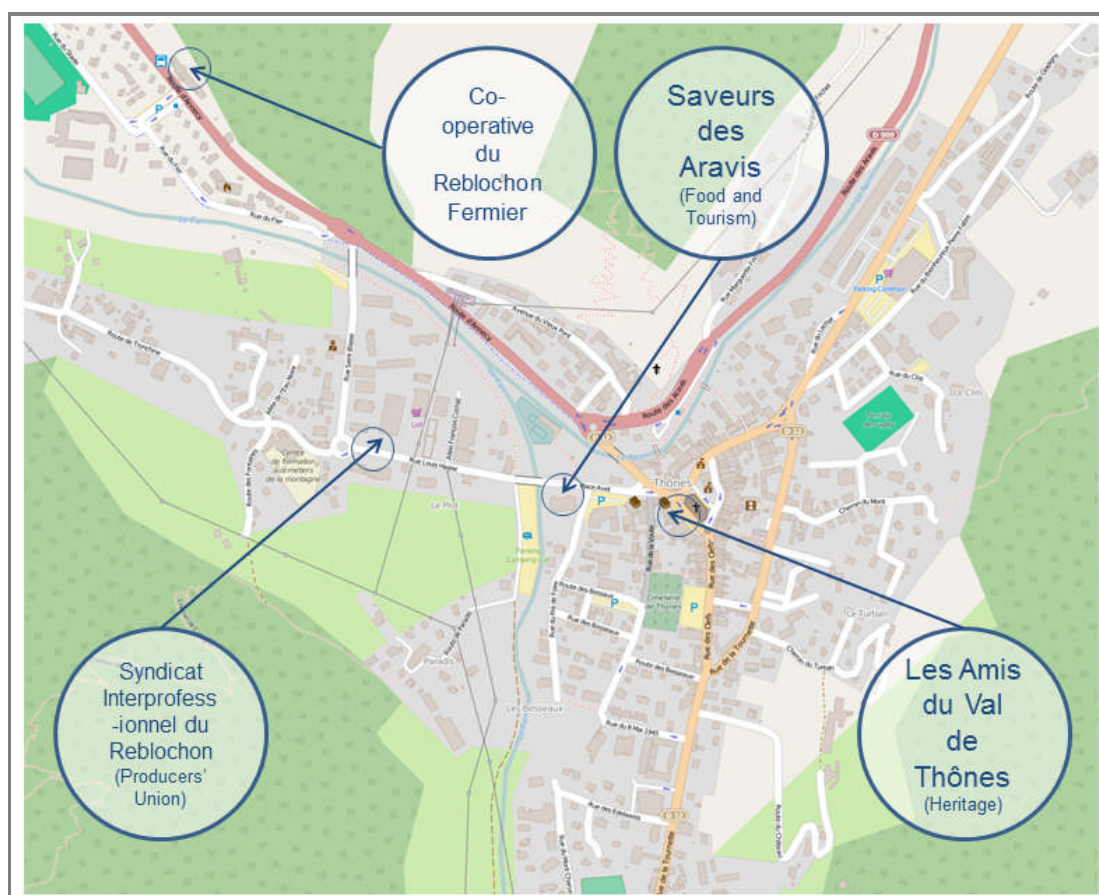


Figure 7.2: Map of Thônes town centre, showing locations of four agencies involved in the protection and promotion of Reblochon cheese.

Drawn by Author. Cartographic data: OpenStreetMap/MapQuest.

The Cahier des Charges, or production manual, is the key element that connects individual farmers to the regulations of their product chain. The text, generally prepared through a collaboration of INAO and the ODG, details methods of production and transformation in ways that are more or less restrictive, expounds the link between product and place, and forms a quasi-legal basis for claims that the way a product is made is local, loyal and constant. Policing of compliance with the regulations laid down in the document falls within INAO's purview, and checks can be made on farms through documentary analysis, visual analysis, and tasting. Present in every geographically protected food chain in France, it is a document in relation to which much of the tension between dynamism and stasis in those food chains is

articulated. From reading the content of examples of these Cahiers, and in listening to parts of them being recounted by farmers, I have learnt that they cover a diverse set of regulations. In some Cahiers, *positive* lists of the only products which may be used to supplement cattle feed are included; in others, certain fertilisers are outlawed, with anything *not* specified being thereby permitted. In the Reblochon Cahier (INAO, 2015c), some of the things that are stipulated are: the minimum period for which the cattle must be kept in the *alpages*; the breed of cow whose milk may be used to prepare the cheese; and the regulation that 80% of the hay used to feed the cattle must come from within the defined AOP area for those farmers who are at an altitude of above 600 metres, and 100% for those who are lower down. This latter point has been a bone of contention within that production chain. The reasoning behind the regulation was “so as to be more connected to the terroir and the territory,”⁶ said Ms X (Reblochon producer, Thônes), and she noted it was something INAO wanted too. Certainly, the idea fits within the logic of a product having its origin in, and being expressive of, a particular place. But, as she went on to explain, ‘the problem is in finding and keeping enough space to produce the hay required by the Cahier des Charges’.⁷ This was, as we saw in Chapter 5, a historic problem for self-sufficiency in Alpine farming, and a point expanded on by Ms P (Reblochon producer, Ugine), who in considering what might change in the Cahier in the future, remarked :

“The idea that the hay has to be produced with the AOP zone – well, that might change because there are fewer good pastures from which to produce it. There is pressure on land in the valley to build second homes for tourists...although in the high pastures there isn’t a problem because it’s too high to build. Maybe the zone will be enlarged...if not, things could be bad in thirty years time.”⁸

⁶ Tr: « afin d’être plus en lien avec le terroir et le territoire ».

⁷ Tr: ‘le problème est de trouver et de garder de l’espace pour pousser le foin exigé par le Cahier des Charges’.

⁸ Tr: ‘Que le foin doit être produit dans la zone d’appellation – ça peut changer car il y a moins de bons pâturages où en élever. Il y a de la pression sur le foncier dans la vallée pour les résidences secondaires...

As Mr AZ (INAO, Montpellier) informed me, changes to the Cahier des Charges can be asked for by groups of producers, and relayed by the ODG, and INAO will investigate the demands. However, as Ms X pointed out, this process can take a long time. The most recent modifications to the Reblochon Cahier had taken ten years to institute. She advised me that they included;

“Developments in technology, cattle feed, techniques, equipment, but not in the geographic zone...which was already quite big.”⁹

She explained that to begin the process, a special committee was formed to examine the proposed changes, a committee that included members of other AOP food chains; and which, in other cases, can include geographers as experts (Ricard and Rieutort, 2013, pers. comm.; INAO, 2010; Flutet, 2013). The propositions were then opened to public consultation and, much like a planning application, letters from the public in support or in opposition to the changes were received. The final set of proposals then had to be examined by the INAO, the French Ministry of Agriculture and then the European Commission. The document was eventually approved in May 2012 and it was the latest working version that Reblochon producers had to abide by when I interviewed them.¹⁰

Amongst farmers, the value placed in the Cahier des Charges varies. For Ms P, she had faith in the document because it was originally made by farmers like her, and it was something

pourtant aux hauts alpages, il n y a pas de problème car c'est trop haut de construire. Peut-être qu'on agrandira la zone...sinon, les choses peuvent être difficiles d'ici trente ans.'

⁹ Tr: 'Evolutions en technologie, l'alimentation des bêtes, techniques, matériaux, mais non pas dans l'aire géographique...qui est déjà assez grande.'

¹⁰ It was replaced by an updated version in May 2015 (INAO, 2015c).

discussed in twice-yearly meetings of the farmers in her product chain. In this sense, she saw the document as to some degree a credible product of consensus, in the manner discussed in Dumont *et al* (2015). For Mr M (Walnut producer, Tullins), it formalises a “respect for the environment and careful application of pesticides”¹¹; For Ms X, the document is part of the structure that ensures “a good valorisation of the product...economic viability”¹²; but for Mr I (Wine producer, Sciez), it is part of the constraints that risk ‘formatting’ or standardising AOP wine production. Overall, it appeared that those who felt positive about producing AOP products saw the benefits of that system being relayed through the Cahiers des Charges, whilst those who had reservations about, or operated outside of the AOP system, saw in its regulations barriers to innovation. Ms S (Reblochon producer, Thônes) argued that:

“The Cahier des Charges limits the opportunity to innovate, yes, perhaps, but it’s necessary; it’s profitable to follow the conventions.”¹³

I will go on to develop that particular point later, but on the basis of the varied evidence above I would argue that the nature of feeling towards the Cahier des Charges is a pertinent means of understanding the subjective assessment of sustainability of the product chain that a farmer operates within. For example, if a farmer feels that more money can be made by not abiding by the regulations of the document, and therefore of the AOP, he or she may do so. This matter of the economic fortunes of the farm was discussed by Mr M, who presented the example of the Lara walnut variety. Lara is a recent hybrid variety, a heavy-cropping walnut which, unlike the Franquette, Mayenne and Parisienne varieties, described as ‘endemic’ to the region in the Cahiers Des Charges (INAO, 2015c:11), does not have a long history of

¹¹ Tr: ‘respect de l’environnement et de traitements raisonnées’.

¹² Tr: ‘une bonne valorisation du produit...la rentabilité’.

¹³ Tr: ‘Le Cahier des Charges limite les opportunités d’innover, oui, peut-être; mais c’est nécessaire – c’est rentable d’être dans les normes.’

cultivation in the Isère valley. But given the high prices for any kind of walnut on the global market, he said farmers in the region who were looking to convert to or expand existing walnut production may choose to plant their orchards with that variety, rather than those less abundant varieties which *are* included in the regulations of the Cahier des Charges. Indeed, in a separate discussion with Mr K (Walnut producer, Saint-Marcellin), he reckoned that the Lara variety will itself eventually make it into the Cahier des Charges, because producers want it.¹⁴ For others, however, the Cahier des Charges represents a form of economic protection for the extant product chain, in much the same way that Bowen (2010; 2011) discusses with the example of Comté cheese. Dairying, as recent events attest (Girard, 2015a), has apparently intractable problems of economic sustainability in Europe (cf. Ricard, 1998; Bérard and Marchenay, 2004; Dubois, 2015). The fact that the Cahier des Charges limits so many aspects of the production of a cheese which, as one producer (Mr R) put it, currently enjoys “un marché porteur” (a buoyant market); can easily be seen as a mechanism of convention that is profitable for all involved, and codifies the quality characteristics which should permit the comparative advantage of the product in the market place (Valceschini and Mazé, 2000; Loureiro, 2003; Dumont *et al*, 2015). Mr AZ (INAO, Montpellier) argued that the Cahier des Charges may be read as a necessary minimum set of regulations within a geographically protected food chain, and that producers can attain a profit of distinction by arguing, in their communications with consumers, that they go beyond what is stipulated in the manual in terms of their attention to the environment or, for that matter, the transformation and quality of the final product. Two of my respondents did, in answering my questions about the Cahier des Charges, argue that they are “further advanced”¹⁵ (Mr C, Wine

¹⁴ For Mr M’s part, he has planted six hectares of the Lara variety so that he can experiment and observe its properties, whilst remaining within the regulations of the AOP and the Cahier des Charges for the rest of his production.

¹⁵ Tr: “en plus haut”.

producer, Ladoix-Serrigny), and use “practices that go beyond those demanded by the Cahier des Charges”¹⁶ (Mr R, Reblochon producer, Thônes). Teil *et al* (2010) have also argued that these AOP regulations can be seen by some farmers as a starting point in their elaboration of a product of terroir, a set of *de minimis* restrictions which individuals may choose to go beyond, in particular years, or in general.

Mr N (Walnut producer, Luc-en-Diois) felt that industrial food production can be “éloigné du terroir” (“distanced from terroir”). He wanted to remain close to terroir through his practice, and he talked me through a particular part of this mission. Growing the ‘rustic’ Franquette variety of walnut at altitude (c. 700m), and pursuing organic methods, Mr N’s harvests are in general later and smaller than those of lower and more intensive farms, and his farm is not in the Noix de Grenoble AOP zone. Yet he compounds these relative disadvantages by using the traditional method of drying his walnuts in a *séchoir*. These are partially-covered drying lofts which are found throughout the Isère and Drôme départements ([Figure 7.3](#)) and signal to visitors that one is in an area of country with a long walnut-growing tradition. However, the examples we see in the landscape today, whilst certainly *emblems* of terroir (Hinnewinkel, 2007: 20), are mostly relics in practice. I learnt in the field that given the advances in drying technology, imported from the USA, which extended the profitable pre-Christmas sales season and reduced the amount of labour required to dry the product out, séchoirs gradually fell out of use as more and more growers purchased or shared the use of drying machines. All the other walnut producers I talked to used such gas drying machines. Mr N, notwithstanding, stocks and regularly rakes the walnuts in the séchoir over a month-long period, according to the old fashion, before they are ready for sale. This he does because, in his philosophy, it

¹⁶ Tr: « des pratiques au-delà de ceux exigés par les cahiers de charges ».

improves quality. I feel this is a debatable point. There is something to be said for rapidly processing the walnuts so that the required moisture level for consumption is attained. But what it demonstrates is his commitment to *tradition* as part of terroir, and his prioritisation of *quality* over other concerns. His practices are coherent with his philosophy, though they are not stipulated in a Cahier des Charges. When I asked what terroir meant to him, he replied that one should “produire des choses liées à son territoire” (“produce things connected to one’s territory”). This could, of course, lead to intensification, as had occurred in parts of the Isère valley, because the product was linked in multifarious ways to that territory and grew so well within it (as discussed in Ricard and Rieutort, 2013, pers. comm.; Janin, 1972). But the more industrial the production becomes, he felt, the further estranged from the terroir and its capacities it becomes. “La mécanisation s’ensuit” (“mechanisation follows”) he remarked, and noted that the lengths this can go to extend to walnut growers sharing the cost of chartering a helicopter to fly over their orchards and create sufficient wind to shake their trees and expedite the harvest (Figure 7.4). The calibration of technology, tradition and quality discussed by my respondent in the context of his walnut-drying equipment, and also, for instance, by Dumont *et al* (2015) in the context of flour-milling equipment, and by Paxson (2013) in the continued use of old barns, demonstrate decisions made by those producing the goods, in line with their own understanding of the qualities of the raw materials, their own philosophies, and their own assessments of the market.

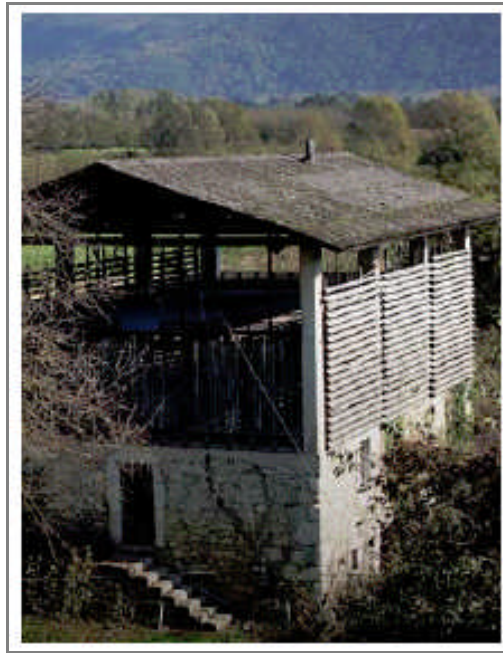


Figure 7.3: A *séchoir* or walnut drying loft in the Isère valley.
Source: CING (2015).



Figure 7.4: Walnut harvesting with helicopters in the Isère valley, October 2009.
Source: Anterion (2009).

But in the Reblochon production chain, the intersection with hygiene regulations and the day-to-day management of micro-biotic life in the fabrication of cheese mean the stipulations of the Cahier des Charges have a different resonance. Paxson (2013: 199) has argued that ‘[m]icroorganisms are no less cultivated by human activity than are livestock, though human-microbial relations remain less understood,’ and this is something we examined in the

previous chapter in terms of farming methods that seek to promote ecological health. But it is also something that I began to appreciate through interviews and participant observation in the dairies of the Reblochon producers I got to know. It is incumbent upon these producers to enrol and align biotic actors to arrive at their finished product, much like Callon (1986) asserts in his classic study of fishermen in northern Brittany; but in this case, the biotic actors are to be governed in specific indoor ecologies. As Mr R (Reblochon producer, Thônes) put it in our interview, ‘living bacteria are essential for cheese’.¹⁷ Working with this bacterial life is not easy, however. Producers have several concurrent concerns: the production of quality (a major desideratum of Reblochon producers, as shown in [Figure 5.9](#) in Chapter 5), conforming to national hygiene and local Cahier des Charges regulations, and planning for matched supply and demand. As Ms S (Reblochon producer, Thônes) put it, when working with milk;

“We are working with something that’s alive. The milk changes, because of the weather, the exercise the cows have had, what they have eaten and drunk...it’s up to us to adapt ourselves to it at the production end...sometimes I feel that I haven’t yet mastered it.”¹⁸

Ricard (1998) and Paxson (2013) have discussed at length the consumer predilection and public health controversies related to raw milk that interact differently in different countries (cf. Latour, 1988; Scholten, 2014); and Reblochon producers, on the front line of the production of raw milk, appeared vigilant in their handling of it. “We worry about listeria”¹⁹ explained Ms Q (Reblochon producer, Thônes). Although she and her husband had yet to encounter an outbreak of listeriosis, she discussed with me the steps she takes to reduce the

¹⁷ Tr : ‘la vie des bactéries est essentiel pour le fromage’.

¹⁸ Tr: « On travaille avec du vivant. Le lait change, à cause du temps, de l'exercice que les vaches ont fait, de ce qu'elles ont mangé et bu...c'est à nous de s'adapter au niveau de fabrication...parfois je ressens que je ne l'ai pas encore maîtrisé. »

¹⁹ Tr: « On craint la listérie ».

chances of that happening, from washing the cows before each milking, to changing their hay twice a day. Similar practices were described by the other producers I talked to. Yet each of the Reblochon producers I interviewed and accompanied were strongly in favour of retaining raw milk in the product chain. “If we banned raw milk, we would break the link with terroir,”²⁰ argued Ms Q. Evidence adduced for this assertion included the changeable character of the milk; its yellower colour in early summer, when the cows first take to the high pastures, for instance; and the floral taste that some can detect in this milk and its eventual cheese. And the use of raw milk is a key stipulation of the Cahier des Charges, such that producers who would wish to use pasteurised milk would lose the right to use the Reblochon AOP label. The living variability of raw milk has to be worked with as part of the production of Reblochon as an authentic product of terroir. That work, and meeting the other constraints of the Cahier des Charges, are, according to Mrs S, what allows those in the Reblochon food chain to “continue to make a quality product”.²¹ This is the profitable convention mentioned earlier; where things which appear as *constraints* in the Cahier des Charges can in fact be *resources* for those within the production chain to continue to make a product that enjoys a reputation for quality (Valadier, 2012). Mr R concurred with this sentiment, and in effect also included the hygiene regulations, in arguing that their dairying practice involved “working cleanly, without excesses, for a good milk”.²² Mrs Q even added that the milk they produce is now so ‘clean’ that extra lactic acid bacteria have to be added to the milk to help it set into cheese. But as I continued to interview Reblochon producers, it became clear that those who remained in the production chain after changes to hygiene

²⁰ Tr: « Si on interdisait le lait cru, on romprait avec le terroir ».

²¹ Tr: « continuer de faire un produit de qualité ».

²² Tr: « travailler proprement, sans excès, pour un lait correct ».

regulations in the 1990s had to develop their expertise in working with bacteria. Ms T (Thônes) explained that;

‘With the new norms that came in 1994, we had to change premises. We were obliged to have washable surfaces, etc. Changes like that are expensive, and there were those who made the changes, and those who simply gave up (small producers above all). Saying that, there were subsidies to help...

When we changed from one cheese cellar to another, we put our old equipment in the new cellar. This mitigated the effect of the change in terms of the presence of bacteria in the air to ripen the cheese. Sure, the atmosphere was slightly different, but we worked with it.’²³

So as well as controlling temperature and humidity, and maintaining a scrupulous level of cleanliness within the dairy (my visits involved putting on disposable plastic shoe covers), Reblochon producers also have to manage a veritable microbiogeography if they are to succeed in their production. Mr R explained that different bacteria were present in different environments, from the farm, to the medium of liquid milk, to the cool rooms in which the wobbly curds matured into cheese. Indeed, it appeared that by virtue of repeatedly using specific rooms for different steps of the maturation process, different bacterial ecologies had developed in those rooms, which helped the maturation of his cheese to complete. We could see this as an ecology directed by the Cahier des Charges and its insistence on the use of raw milk, certain kinds of premises, specific rhythms of ageing the cheeses, and the spatial separation of different practices used in the preparation of the final cheese. If the premises were to change, the producers might not be able to still produce Reblochon; and if the stipulations of the Cahier were to change, there might plausibly be a discontinuity in the

²³ Tr: ‘Avec les nouvelles normes en 1994, il nous a fallu changer de cadre. Il fallait des plafonds lavables, et cetera. De tels changements coûtaient cher, et il y avait ceux qui l’ont fait, et ce qui se sont simplement arrêtés (surtout les petites exploitations). Toutefois il y avait des subventions pour aider...

Quand on a changé de cave, on a mis nos anciens matériaux dans la nouvelle cave. Cela a mitigé l’effet du changement en termes de présence de bactéries dans l’air pour faire mûrir le fromage. Oui, l’ambiance était un peu différente, mais on a marché avec.’

production of the cheese as the changed levels of bacteria created knock-on effects throughout the bacterial ecology of the dairy. And bacteria are not the only form of life which must be managed if the cheese is to reach its mature state. As an illustrated poster in Ms P's (Ugine) dairy and shop explained:

‘During the maturation process a fungus grows on the Reblochons that gives them a whitish colour. It is also important to monitor and “combat” the development of bad fungi such as the *Poils du chat*.’²⁴

Mrs Q explained that the former, whitish, fungus was also known as *géotricum*, and was indeed responsible for the white mousse characteristic of the skin of Reblochon cheese. She told me that she washes it off when it first populates the outside of the cheese, and then leaves it to grow a second time. “This fungus protects the cheese,” observed Mr R, “and helps the crust to form”.²⁵ But he is also careful to manage its spread, covering the cheeses at one stage in paper to limit its further growth, and selling those it does happen to overrun to food service outlets as ‘second class’. Such tiny life forms act upon the appearance, taste and eventual saleability of the product, and managing their life and death is, as Paxson (2013) has chronicled, and as Brice (2014c) argues in the context of wine production, a necessary part of producer’s praxis and *savoir-faire*. Producers were keen to share these insights with me, and they were counted amongst the specificities of the production chain that were commensurate with the uniqueness of its terroir. Mr R expanded his discussion of fungi by taking me into another cool room where he was maturing Tomme de Savoie, a hard cheese made with the same milk as Reblochon, but which is processed differently. The scent in this room, though still sharp and lactic, was slightly different from the others. ‘What do you notice?’ he asked

²⁴ Tr: ‘Au cours de l’affinage se développe sur les Reblochons un champignon lui donnant la couleur blanchâtre. Il convient de surveiller et « combattre » le développement de mauvais champignons tels que les poils du chat.’

²⁵ Tr: « Ce champignon protège le fromage, et contribue à la formation de la croûte ».

me, pointing at the cheeses which were stacked and laid out on thin spruce boards, in the same manner as the Reblochons. ‘Well, they’re bigger,’ I said, ‘and the colour is different.’ ‘That’s right,’ he said. ‘There is a different mould that grows on the Tommes, we call it ‘*Poil du chat*’ (‘Cat’s fur’). Here, touch it!’ I reached out and wiped the skin of the cheese with my finger. The mould was smooth, like felt, and grey-green in colour. Mr R explained that the structure of this fungus was as I have drawn in [Figure 7.5](#), a little pole supporting a globe-shaped top. ‘When we rub the cheese, the spores are released into the air, and they stay in the room.’²⁶ In this room, for the production of Tomme cheese, the *Poil du chat* fungus was welcome, and the fact of the room being an environment full of its spores was critical for the maturation and the characteristic green-grey crust of that cheese. But, as described in the poster mentioned above, its presence on Reblochon is not appreciated, and producers have to monitor and manage its spread as far as possible.



[Figure 7.5](#): Approximate shape of the *Poil du chat* fungus (not to scale), as sketched in my notebook.

Cahiers des Charges vary in their length, specificity and detail, and go from ensuring a *de minimis* level of compliance with practices that should result in a degree of consistency across an AOP area, to being a prescriptive, and often debated, set of rules that functionally limit practices in a way that can lead some to exit the AOP system if they see better opportunities outside it, and others to be grateful to have protections which fit well with the various necessities of the production process. Mr AZ argued that whilst farmers were at

²⁶ Tr: ‘Quand on frotte la Tomme, les spores sont libérés dans l’air, et elles restent dans la cave.’

liberty to profit symbolically, psychologically or economically from ‘going beyond’ the stipulations of the manual, they did not generally wish to make the central, shared document change so that others had to do the same as them. Not only would such changes take a long time to implement, being examined and adjudicated upon by many different actors inside and outside of the production chain; but they would call into question the shared predicates of practice that lie at the centre of the food chain from which all farmers may profit – elements of the ‘loyalty’ in what is identified as ‘local, loyal and constant’. The collective governance of AOP products means that any changes to Cahiers des Charges must really be all for one and one for all.

7.3. Sustaining Terroir

The historical developments which led to the present-day dimensions of the *aire d'appellation* or AOP production zone for Reblochon were discussed in Chapter 5 and shown in [Figure 5.30](#) therein. We learnt that outside of the Thônes valley, so often described as the ‘*berceau*’ or cradle of Reblochon, there are many large-scale producers of the cheese. Within the *berceau*, Ms X argued, “the farmers know each other better – they are more closely packed together”.²⁷ These comments reflect the two-speed situation described in Chapter 5, wherein *Reblochon fermier* producers are clustered around the Thônes valley, and *Reblochon laitier* producers are diffused throughout the Savoy region. But she feared that conflict would emerge if the zone were reduced in size. Although in that case a more specific geographical argument could be made for the cheese’s link to *terroir* (focusing on the physiography and climate of the Aravis mountain range that surrounds Thônes, for instance; or the historical

²⁷ Tr: « les fermiers se connaissent plus – ils sont plus resserrés les uns aux autres ».

geographical evidence of its production therein, and not having to extend the focus to the industrial corridor of the Arve valley, which is at present within the production zone) a reduction in its size would disenfranchise those who found themselves left outside of the new limits. Changes to AOP zones do occur; Ms X pointed to the recent slight expansion of the zone for the Chevrotin cheese²⁸ to include a dairy processor and cheese maker on the outskirts of Annecy, who was not theretofore within the zone and who could not produce Chevrotin with its AOP label. Elsewhere, groups of producers within a pre-existing zone have sought to have their own sub-zone recognised as an AOP in its own right. Mr Z (BIVB, Beaune) explained that this was the case for a group of growers in Bouzeron, a village on the Côte Chalonnaise, who after being part of a regional-scale, undistinctive Burgundy appellation, received their own AOC in 1998. At La Clape in Provence, a similar process of distinction for a wine-producing enclave took place, as discussed by Richer (2012); and a new system of *crus communaux* were fashioned out of the general Muscadet appellation, as recounted in Schirmer (2007) and in Moulènes *et al* (2013). In general however, although groups of producers may like the idea of achieving greater distinction through more discrete geographic recognition in the AOP system, Mr Z considered that INAO were wary of making changes, and noted the case of an area of Provence that didn't apply for an AOC when many others did in the 1950s, and has now taken a long time to receive it following its more recent application.

If we consider the model of parallels between language and terroir developed in Chapter 4, we may appreciate the slow, hesitant changes to the compendium of spatial forms that INAO police as being comparable to the slow, hesitant changes to the grammatical structure of

²⁸ A product similar to Reblochon, but made with goat's milk, which I tried at the end of the transhumance.

French which are permitted by the Académie Française. Yet pressure to change rarely lets up, in either case. In the quarterly meeting of the INAO held on the 11th of February 2010, for instance, the assembled committee made decisions on no less than ten separate applications for changes to the geographic zones of wine appellations (INAO, 2010). Some of the decisions taken were to establish commissions to investigate claims and produce reports on the applications; others were to approve those reports which has previously been prepared, giving some clue to the ongoing nature of requests for change. Amongst the changes that were being made to Muscadet wines in the Nantes region, discussed by Schirmer (2007), we may note that the application to add a set of three village names to the existing Muscadet Sèvre et Maine appellation met with the following response:

‘The national committee will be in favour of the addition of the complementary geographic denominations of ‘Clisson’, ‘Gorges’ and ‘Le Pallet’ to the AOP of ‘Muscadet Sèvre et Maine’ on the condition that experts verify the existence of a link to terroir for each one of these.’²⁹

Here, INAO is effectively policing the processes of adjunction and hyphenation of names we discussed in a historical context in Chapter 3. In insisting on expert assessment of the ‘link to terroir’ (‘lien au terroir’), they are sanctioning discernment of the substance of claimed relationships between product and place. Terroir is the *logos* whose presence must be tested for if the growers are to achieve the distinction they have requested. But this is not to say that fixing the recognition of terroir in a territory is to the benefit of all. Elsewhere, Gade (2004) has recounted discontent in the Cassis region east of Marseilles where, following the establishment of AOP zones, wine producers were prevented from selling plots and realising significant income from property developers. Terroir, sustainability and collegiality also

²⁹ Tr: ‘Le comité national s’est prononcé favorablement à l’adjonction des trois dénominations géographiques complémentaires « Clisson », « Gorges » et « Le Pallet » à l’appellation d’origine « Muscadet Sèvre et Maine », à la condition que l’existence d’un lien au terroir soit vérifiée pour chacune d’elles par les experts.’

intersect here, but Gade surmises that, whilst the AOP system ‘has been a major force in defining tradition, territory, and terroir,’ nevertheless:

‘Unlike their cohorts in St-Emilion, a prestigious inner appellation of Bordeaux, or Beaune, the nerve center of the Burgundy trade, Cassis winegrowers do not venerate the moral or cultural value of wine. In the absence of strong determination to ensure a time-honored activity, conversion of parcels for other purposes remains an eventual possibility. Land-use legislation, however restrictive, cannot mandate continuation of farming.’ (Gade, 2004: 861)

Where a particular terroir is seen as bearing the potential to contribute to the economic sustenance of wine producers, they may gather together to protect it; and a different expression of this would be the Reblochon producers who feared land being sold off as it would reduce the ability to produce sufficient hay. In this sense, terroir can be the keystone of an ‘eco-economic strategy’ which a group of producers can effectively pursue (Horlings and Marsden, 2014). Where economic opportunities lie elsewhere however, producers, often acting independently, may seek to shake off the territorial strictures of the AOP, whether that be in producing a wine that reflects their personal reputation, or that of the method of production they follow; or whether it consists in exiting wine production altogether. The evidence suggests that terroir is valued as a convention at the centre of a production chain, following the thinking of Bowen (2010), Brice (2014a) and Dumont *et al* (2015), so long as it can generate, or is perceived as likely to generate, economic returns. For the INAO, however, the need to promote terroir at the heart of a collective agricultural undertaking remains to some extent a logocentric project. It is, as intimated above and in Chapter 3, their role to organise and help to format propositions concerning terroir. Mr AZ (INAO, Montpellier) discussed how in his work with farmers and groups of farmers he warned of the danger of short-term choices that might affect the long-term integrity of the terroir and the ability to

make claims for it. ‘We try to remind them,’ he said, ‘to make them take stock’³⁰ of questions of tradition and their place in the ongoing success and integrity of the product. For him, a *terroir* is a system in balance, an *équilibre*, such as many growers talked about (and I discussed in the previous chapter), and sustainability can thereby be seen as a means of keeping that balance going for as long as possible. For Ms U (CING, Chatte), on the other hand, representing the interests of the Noix de Grenoble producers, she wished that INAO would ‘take the economic side more into account’ when it weighs different forms of evidence to make decisions on changing the limits of an AOP area or the regulations of production manuals.

As discussed in the previous chapter, economic sustainability was for several of the people I interviewed of more immediate concern than environmental sustainability. And indeed the French term ‘durabilité,’ which when I began this project I found to be just an awkward translation of ‘sustainability,’ does in many ways better reflect the nature of the concerns that were articulated to me. For one thing, I had to use that former term when I attempted to ask questions about sustainability because my interviews were in French, and so without intending to, it framed the discussion in its terms. This meant that ‘durability’ or the ability to last was foregrounded, rather than the ability to maintain conditions for the reproduction of circumstances of the present, or stewardship, that is generally expressed by the term ‘sustainability’ in Anglo-American scientific literature (O’Riordan, 2004). But it turned out, and I have argued along the lines, that the ability to persist through time is exactly the achievement that separates successful products of *terroir* from those that have little reputation or go out of production. If the products of *terroir* we see today are, as Demossier (2011b),

³⁰ Tr : ‘On essaie de les rappeler...de les faire prendre conscience...’

following Bérard and Marchenay (2004), argues, generated out of sustained commercial activity within regulatory and trade environments which can facilitate their protection and diffusion, it is sensible to include the historical dimension in our analyses. For Ms X (Syndicat du Reblochon, Thônes), Reblochon is a product that has lasted “dans le temps” (“through time”) and in making this point she referred to how children often take on farms from their parents (something I saw for myself in several cases across the food chains I studied). Elsewhere in that food chain, as discussed earlier, producers argued that a significant threat to the future of the product was the reduction in the availability of good pastures at accessible altitudes, given the increasing cost of land and the growth of tourism and second home ownership. Just like the Reblochon producer who, as I recounted in the previous chapter, replied to my question about whether her activities were sustainable by expressing her hope that the farm would carry on, thereby switching my focus on the environment to her focus on economic viability; the ability of a product to persist through time was a central concern of the institutional actors I interviewed, and they were conscious of their role in trying to create and maintain the economic conditions for that persistence.

Given the status of an AOP product of terroir as a more or less lucrative form of intellectual property, but one shared between a number of producers, it is logical that disputes concerning its operationalisation should arise given divergent individual and group strategies. One of the *desiderata* that farmers expressed to me was that of autonomy. This is something understood relative to different things and something which can be pursued in different ways (Stock and Forney, 2014; Dumont *et al*, 2015). Schirmer (2010) surmises that leaving the AOP system can be a form of freedom for farmers, whilst Dumont *et al* (2015) found that individual autonomy can, paradoxical though it might seem, be secured within a cooperative. The co-operatives we examined in Chapter 3 were, in the context of early-20th century France, with

its recovery from the crisis of phylloxera, and the continuing spectre of overproduction, organisations that permitted a minimum return for grape growers' labour without producing wines eminent in their quality or distinctive in their connection to terroir. Today, however, the situation is more complex. Although they still mutualise risk; 'the things that you've got no control over...[l]ike the weather, the exchange rate, the markets' (Stock and Forney, 2014: 168), they are also focussing on quality over quantity so as to improve returns in a market context of lower, but higher quality, wine consumption (Pitte, 2007; Girard, 2014b). As Damien Leclerc (in Durand-Bazin, 2015: 35), director of the largest co-operative of the Chablis region of Burgundy, has put it:

'The cooperatives were created over a hundred years ago, but they will only survive if they succeed in concentrating on quality. They have to put to work a modernising pact so as to develop a new model which has yet to be defined. They also have to change how they are seen by consumer. They need in the future to be synonymous with wine houses of quality. Some of them have already achieved that reputation...'³¹

And indeed this 'dynamic' co-operative (La Chablisienne) has been recognised in Johnson's (2014: 54-55) Wine Guide as 'a major player...with high standards (and many of its own labels)'. As part of this calibration of quality, Schirmer (2007) has argued that co-operatives are (re-)producing links to terroir, and using it as an organising principle with the aim of improving economic returns. He identifies three specific modalities in this: conversion to organic viticulture and vinification; regulation of production practices (above all through Cahiers des Charges); and the invention of different classes of grape-growing territory, in practical imitation of the terroirs and spatially defined *crus* of Bordeaux and Burgundy. This

³¹ Tr: 'Les coopératives ont été créées il y a plus d'un siècle, elles ne survivront que si elles réussissent dans l'avenir à se concentrer sur la qualité. Elles doivent mettre en œuvre un pacte de modernisation pour évoluer vers un nouveau modèle qui reste à définir. Il faut également arriver à faire changer le regard des consommateurs sur les coopératives. Elles doivent être dans l'avenir synonyme des maisons de vins de qualité. Certains ont déjà acquis ce statut...'

is a very different project for co-operatives from the ‘mutual correction’ of terroirs marketed in the Mâconnais in the 1930s that we examined in Chapter 3. Terroir here is rather operationalised to increase returns in an economy of qualities, and can be seen as a *convention* in the manner discussed by Wilkinson (1997), Pivot (2000), and Dumont *et al* (2015). I didn’t interview any representatives of cooperatives myself, though I sense it would be a profitable avenue for future work. The ODGs I have investigated, although they do not mutualise risk or returns in as direct a way as a producers’ cooperative, nonetheless assemble and regulate stakeholders in the ‘shared resource’ of the AOP product (Pivot, 2000; Raynaud and Sauvée, 2000). Having a product at the centre of an association whose aims are to protect and promote it along with the interests of those who produce it allows a united front to be presented to the market and works against the fragmentation of producers through individual contracts with private companies; a significant problem in the UK and elsewhere (Bowen, 2010; Renton, 2011; Stock *et al*, 2014; Emery, 2015). Given that each AOP product has its ODG, there is collaboration and collective oversight to some extent in each one of those food chains, such that governance by farmers and their autonomy vis-à-vis vertically-integrated production by corporations (Bowen, 2011; Fumey and Bérion, 2010) is possible. On this basis, it is a commonplace to see producers as defenders of terroir; those who profit from it but also have its interests entirely at heart. As one wine producer (Mr E, Ladoix-Serrigny) put it:

‘Terroir, AOCs, they should be about valuing small producers, family farms...and not big corporations.’³²

The family farm is the scale at which terroir is commonly evoked, and, as Morgan *et al* (2006) argue, the scale for which the model of origin-as-quality which the EU promotes should

³² Tr: ‘Le terroir, les AOC, ils doivent valoriser les petits producteurs, les fermes de famille...et non pas les grandes entreprises.’

generate benefits. As the farmer quoted above implied, terroir should be something that can support the livelihoods of small farmers. In each of the food chains I studied, and often in responding to my question about what terroir means (tabulated in Figure 5.18) there were producers who were uncomfortable with industrial actors using the word ‘terroir’ in their marketing and benefitting from its public recognition. Ms Q (Reblochon producer, Thônes) described to me how she felt terroir was “an important word in France; a word that sells”³³, and Mr R (Reblochon producer, Thônes) concurred that consumers were interested in terroir, and its promotion helped to sell Reblochon cheese. Yet he argued in favour of “real [*vrais*] artisans of terroir – not industrial production described as being ‘of terroir’”³⁴. He followed this with the idea that ‘terroir is our great opportunity’³⁵ which he outlined in terms of the ensemble of elements he saw as specific to the Reblochon-producing region and not present elsewhere. And, as discussed earlier, in elaborating his vision of the place in terroir in agriculture, Mr N (Walnut producer, Luc-en-Diois) talked of industrial producers being “distanced from terroir”.³⁶ Yet some large companies have entered the governance of AOP food chains by virtue of involvement in production, in ways that could be seen as parallel to the increasing presence of corporations in the governance of organic food chains in France (David *et al*, 2010) and in the USA (Howard, 2009; Cornucopia Institute, 2014; Scholten, 2014). As Ricard and Rieutort (2013, pers. comm.) explained, large companies can enter AOP production chains by virtue of processing food that is delivered by farmers in a relatively raw state (liquid milk, for example, within a cheese production chain); or by buying up farms or even cooperatives. Société, for example, the largest producer of Roquefort AOP

³³ Tr: ‘un mot fort en France, un mot qui fait vendre’.

³⁴ Tr: ‘de vrais producteurs artisanaux de terroir – non pas de l’industriel dit ‘de terroir’.

³⁵ Tr: ‘notre chance – c’est le terroir’.

³⁶ Tr: « éloigné du terroir ».

cheese, is now a part of the multinational dairy group Lactalis. Whether having multinational food and farming corporations involved in the production and governance of products of terroir would fetter their quality or authenticity is a matter of debate. On the one hand, there is at least one example of where large dairy firms have initiated and supported the creation of AOPs for products they are substantially involved in (Ricard and Rieutort, 2013, pers. comm.) But on the other hand we may note the dispute over the production of Camembert cheese in which Lactalis became embroiled in 2008, where it was one of two large companies that wished to change the regulations in the Cahier des Charges of that product such that only pasteurised milk could be used, much to the ire of the farmers who produced it in the traditional way using raw milk (Clavreul, 2008; Girard, 2014a). Bowen (2010) has charted how the substantial involvement of foreign corporations led to a ‘neoliberalisation’ of the governance of the Tequila production chain in Mexico, and ultimately imperilled the incomes of small producers, and she compares it to the more closed ranks of the Comté production chain in the Jura region of France. Bardsley and Pech (2012) have also argued that neoliberal (non-)governance at the regional, national and international scales can work to reduce farmer autonomy and fragilise the economic sustainability of their farms, just as Stock and Forney (2014) have mapped the threat to farmer autonomy posed by ‘neoliberal selfhood’ in the old and new world. Autonomy of one kind, that of a free hand in production methods, may be achieved by leaving the strictures of appellation, certification or even the more peer-to-peer oversight of less formal quality food chains (as discussed in Dumont *et al*, 2015 and Whatmore *et al*, 2003). However, autonomy of a different kind, that of protection from free market imitation, vertical integration and individual corporate contracts, is possible within cooperatives and under the governance of geographically protected foods. Possible, that is, but not guaranteed, as the concerns for economic sustainability within AOP production raised

in interviews in Chapter 5, and the fate of those cheeses ‘wiped off the map’ in Chapter 4 have suggested.

Indeed, whilst Pouzenc *et al* (2007: 33) have noted that the argumentation which connects product to terroir is ‘concretised’ in the Cahier des Charges of an AOP product, there are those producers who wish to exit the system to become *more* faithful to terroir, not less. In several of the interviews I carried out, I found the relationship between terroir and the AOP system to be a source of controversy. With or without prompting, these farmers would develop their initial responses to what terroir means to them, shown in [Figure 5.4](#), by discussing the AOP system. For the walnut farmers, an appellation could serve as a “link between a terroir and the product”³⁷ (Mr J, Saint-Marcellin) ; the recognition it provides for the Noix de Grenoble allowing for profitable walnut cultivation (Mr M, Tullins) ; and whilst labels of geographical protection were seen as less relevant for consumers in the local area, they were a useful symbol of trust when the product had to travel further afield (Mr N, Luc-en-Diois). And in the Reblochon food chain, as discussed earlier, the AOP label was seen as a form of protection for farmers in what can be a highly precarious dairy sector, and the apposite symbol for the traditional dairying way of life in their region. “We live from our land,”³⁸ Ms P (Ugine) told me; whilst Ms Q (Thônes) argued that “we are fighting for our terroir to last into the long-term”³⁹ ; and Ms S (Thônes) saw the constraints of the Reblochon Cahier de Charges as so many affordances to “produce quality”⁴⁰ in the final product.

³⁷ Tr: « lien entre un terroir et le produit ».

³⁸ Tr: « On vit de nos terres ».

³⁹ Tr: « on se bat pour que le terroir soit pérennisé ».

⁴⁰ Tr: « faire la qualité ».

But it was in wine production that the connection between terroir and the AOP system was most fundamentally problematized. Certainly, there was variation in the commercial value of the *appellation* areas that the different wine producers I talked to were in. ‘If I was on the côte d’Or, this wine could sell at 20 Euros a bottle,’⁴¹ remarked Mr G (Lugny), whose vineyards were part of the côte Mâconnaise that has traditionally lacked the prestige of those on slopes further north. Indeed, the côte d’Or, where medieval monks had experimented with different vineyards and first talked of terroir and *climats*, was seen as a reference for wine producers elsewhere specifically in terms of its terroirs. For Mr H (Ladoix-Serrigny), who possessed vineyards in several of the top Burgundy appellations, his vision of the value and salience of terroir did not stray far from that promoted by Burgundy marketing bodies, with him talking of “great terroirs for great wines”⁴². But for Mr I (Sciez), the situation was more complex. In discussing the côte d’Or, he argued that ‘there are the greatest terroirs in France,’ but that ‘there are those who manage them badly’⁴³. A key problem, he felt, was the relative power and stasis of the AOP/AOC system, at its most acute in that region. ‘You are formatted in the AOC,’⁴⁴ he explained; winemakers are trained to produce a wine that fits with an expectation of a typical flavour (‘typicité’) from what may be fifty years ago or more. Mr C (Ladoix-Serrigny) thought along very similar lines, even though he was on the côte d’Or himself; the “more or less fixed limits of the *appellations*”⁴⁵ meant, he felt, that terroir had been essentially – and we may say epistemologically – frozen in time since the end of the Second World War. Both Mr I and Mr C admitted that they were not enamoured with the AOC system that prevailed in French wine production, and in producing wines that were not

⁴¹ Tr: ‘Si j’étais sur la côte d’Or, ce vin pourrait se vendre à 20 Euros la bouteille,’.

⁴² Tr: ‘grands terroirs pour grands vins’.

⁴³ Tr: ‘il y a les terroirs les plus grands en France,’ ; ‘il y a ceux qui les gèrent mal’.

⁴⁴ Tr: ‘On est formaté dans l’AOC,’.

⁴⁵ Tr: « frontières plus ou moins fixes des appellations ».

marketed on the basis of their *appellation*, argued that it took them a lot of work to change minds and promote their own vision of terroir apart from it.

After expressing his concerns with the inherited system, Mr I (Sciez) went on to tell me that: “I am in the process of making my own AOC,”⁴⁶ Though his business seemed to be going well – he had just sold about a third of his year’s production at an open-day weekend, the biodynamic certification and reputation he had attained were resources which allowed him to reach consumers outwith the qualification of a prestigious appellation. This chimes with what actors in AOP food chain governance recounted to me in interviews, of strategically communicating using different terms depending on which audience of consumers is being addressed, including the vocabulary of environmental sustainability. Ms X (Syndicat du Reblochon, Thônes) felt that “better economic sustainability, and political weight”⁴⁷ could be anticipated within the AOP system, but, as I have tried to show, the terroir for which it speaks is open to other articulations, and the sustainability which it can promote can be captured in different ways. For those who were lucky enough to possess *grand cru* and *premier cru* vineyards, the cleavage of intangible value from tangible soil had already been undertaken by many years of epistemological convention. For those who were not, the transmission of the value of terroir remained a battle to be fought through language and image as much as through the inherent qualities of the wine itself.

⁴⁶ Tr: « je suis en train de faire mon propre AOC ».

⁴⁷ Tr: « une meilleure rentabilité et du poids politique ».

7.4. L'Exception Française

If, as I have argued in previous chapters, the logic and rhetoric of terroir has spread from France to other parts of Europe, and been coincident with the growth of geographically protected products throughout the continent (see [Figure 0.4](#) in the Introduction), the latest indications are that the trajectory of its political organisation within Europe may be about to become more parabolic. Certainly we can identify changes in European agricultural policy and vision that have created the conditions for the spread and success of terroir-based production chains over the last three decades. The CAP reforms of 1992 and 2003 decoupled payments to farmers from the quantity of goods produced, facilitating a post-productivist logic of quality which the European Union has not abandoned (Clout and Demossier, 2003; Whatmore *et al*, 2003; Buller and Morris, 2004; European Commission, 2011; Guy, 2011), even as production of many food and fodder crops has since significantly grown in per hectare terms (Bourgeois and Demotes-Mainard, 2000; Potter, 2006; Ausubel *et al*, 2012; Ridley, 2015). Family farms were, as Morgan *et al* (2006) argue, privileged as the sites of production of quality food, as opposed to the large-scale, corporate agribusiness whose interests the USA and other countries have promoted in ongoing disputes in the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The scale of the family farm appears well-adapted to the production of goods which reflect the local area, traditions, and savoir-faire, and the aggregation of such production into geographically protected food chains has been repeated throughout the continent, as shown by [Figure 0.4](#) in the Introduction to this thesis. Family farms also, of course, provide actors who can promote the qualities of the goods produced and speak to the uniqueness of the product's origin (MacClancy, 2004; Demossier, 2011b), and the history of western European family occupation of agricultural land means that the predominance of

family farms is the situation the European Union inherited and is more or less bound to defend on the international stage (Morgan *et al*, 2006). Finally, the multifunctional rural spaces that EU agricultural policy promotes, not least through CAP payments for environmental services, along with national schemes to promote diversification, lays the ground for a broad sense of sustainability; one that is concerned with the practices of food production, but also with the continued value of farming in rural employment, culture, landscapes, and quality of life (Buller, 2003; Whatmore *et al*, 2003; Buller and Morris, 2004; Morgan *et al*, 2006; Whatmore and Clark, 2008; Bardsley and Pech, 2012; Bardsley and Bardsley, 2014). Products which achieve geographical protection are usually presented as originating in such rural spaces of culturally embedded quality agriculture, according to the territorial logic and rhetorical connections between product and place explained earlier in this thesis. Indeed, as I have argued, *terroir* has served in France as the central heuristic device in this process. Yet the pre-eminent position of the regulatory and political apparatus which has grown to protect *terroir* in France and which has served as the model for the European system of protected designations of origin is now under threat. My respondent in INAO (Mr AZ) advised me that as well as new applications for protected status, proposed changes to the Cahiers des Charges of existing French product chains have to go to the EU for approval. The problem is that, as he said, ‘some things are seen differently in Europe’:

“The vision in Europe can be more focussed upon science...soils, crop varieties, etc. There is less of the human story. But some of the best products are not the result of a simple equation.”⁴⁸

For this respondent, the fact of a history of production is central to the attribution of an AOP, and an integral part of the *terroir* that would be eventually recognised. Indeed, as we saw in

⁴⁸ Tr: « La vision en Europe peut être plus axée sur la science...les sols, le cépage, etc. Il y a moins de l’histoire humaine. Pourtant, parmi les meilleurs produits, il y a ceux qui ne sont pas issus d’une simple équation. »

the previous section, he actively encourages farmers to take the long view. But in the perspective of decision-makers in the European Union, this element of the rationale for geographical protection may be much less valued than is the case in France. For all the influence of France's geographic organisation of claims to quality, it seems that other countries can now push back on that logic and temper it with their own through the shared governance of the European system of designations of origin. The suspicion of ambiguous sources of quality and the use of 'scientific' evidentiary practices discussed in the previous chapter may in this way enter the heart of the system that is supposed in France to protect products of terroir. Experts may make decisions on the persuasiveness of cases for connection between product and place in a French cheese or wine who themselves come from countries where the valuation of food traditionally proceeds on different lines from those of France, and for whom the European system of geographical protection is a regulatory innovation. Indeed, Valceschini and Mazé (2000) have argued convincingly that today's disputes between the WTO and the EU over the status of geographically protected foods were prefigured by disputes between France (with Italy and Spain as allies) and northern European countries such as Britain and the Netherlands at the drawing up of the rules governing the EU Common Market in the early 1990s. In some ways, they argue, this could be seen as a dispute based on different cultural conceptions of the place of food and the origins of quality, with the Mediterranean nations using place of origin as basis for qualification, and northern European nations traditionally investing value in brands (and indeed in Royal warrants, as discussed with Ricard and Rieutort, 2013, pers. comm.) (Parrott *et al*, 2002). This difference is borne out by the predominance of geographically protected foods in France and southern Europe shown in my map ([Figure 0.4](#)) in the Introduction.

However, it is in the shape of the regulatory apparatus, and more precisely in the polymorphism of the separate national apparatuses, that a yet graver threat to terroir was indicated by my respondent, and has also just been outlined in a paper by Marie-Vivien *et al* (2015). The INAO, the body that was established in France in 1947 to manage the national recognition of products with specific qualities from specific places, does not have a counterpart anywhere else in Europe.⁴⁹ As the loci of national regulation of geographically protected products in Europe have become centred on national ministries of agriculture (in the UK, for instance, the Department for Food and Rural Affairs), the INAO agency, which is separate from the French Ministry of Agriculture,⁵⁰ remains an exception to this European norm.⁵¹ This exceptional status is, as Marie-Vivien *et al* (2015) argue, seeing it being squeezed out of decision-making. The European Commission has in recent years become more assertive in the regulation and ‘more accurate in the scrutiny’ (*Ibid*: 6) of geographically protected products than had traditionally been the case, and the French Ministry of Agriculture, which both France and the EU recognise as the sole competent interlocutor of the EU in agricultural policy, has had to intervene more regularly, ‘to the disadvantage of the central services of the INAO’ (*Ibid*: 6). Furthermore, the assessment of the evidence that contributes to successful geographical protection has changed, with a more ‘check-list’-style process being implemented under the influences of practices of third-party certification, for other types of label, and the example of the less empirically dense requirements of the IGP label as opposed to the AOP. Mr AZ recounted that often groups of

⁴⁹ Though we may note in the Walloon (French-speaking) region of Belgium, the regional government has recently supported the creation of a working group to assist groups of farmers in fulfilling the requirements of geographical protection, drawing upon expertise in research centres at the Universities of Liège and Namur (Université de Liège, 2012).

⁵⁰ Currently, *La Ministère de l'Agriculture de l'Agroalimentaire et de la Forêt*.

⁵¹ And it is even, as Scheffer and Ronçin (2000) point out, exceptional in its quasi-governmental status within France.

producers will ask for AOP protection, because it is seen as more prestigious and potentially more lucrative. Certainly in French wine production, the difference between AOP and IGP is substantial; there are hundreds of AOPs, which may only cover areas of a few hundred hectares, whereas the IGP category is much less spatially specific, sometimes covering whole regions (such as the Alpes de Haute-Provence IGP, with an area of over 6,000 km²) and has inherited wines which were formerly simple *vins de pays*. He provided a hypothetical example to help me understand the difference:

“If in a cheese production chain, the milk came from all over, and was pasteurised, etc, we would say that an IGP would be more appropriate. For an AOP, everything should be in the region of production.”⁵²

But it is the expertise, and the political competence (exceptional in Europe) of INAO to judge whether there is enough of a link between product and place to merit the AOP, as opposed to the IGP label. The INAO works closely with producers in the effort to establish what may be considered unique and deserving of geographically protected status (Scheffer and Ronçin, 2000; Flutet, 2013), and these assessments can take factors of ‘taste’, ‘memory’ and ‘know-how’ into account (Marie-Vivien *et al*, 2015: 4). The ‘local, loyal and constant’ arguments so common to the defence of terroir, not to mention the knowledge of distinctive taste signatures from different areas (Rigaux, 2010), are part of this collaboration with producers (Pitte, 2007; Flutet, 2013). But, as Marie-Vivien *et al* (2015: 7) argue, this work is under threat:

‘PDOs⁵³ recognize local and constant usages which are collective. It is distinct from the assessment of conformity used for a standard [such as *Label Rouge*]. But with the introduction of PGI in 1994, the two concepts of production conditions and characteristics of the product were replaced by specifications that are more normative. The PDO/PGI specification now comprises a long

⁵² Tr: « Si dans une filière fromagère, le lait provenait de partout, et il a été thermalisé, et cetera, on dirait qu'une IGP sera plus approprié. Pour une AOP, tout devrait être dans la region de production. »

⁵³ PDO being AOP; PGI being IGP.

checklist that downplays these points, such as the method of production prompted by the link to the origin, or the sensory typicity of the product, which are said to be too difficult to check, which is of course true if the producers, whom INAO considered as experts in their products, are no longer involved in the control.'

The historical dimension of practices in particular agricultural spaces is, the authors argue, at risk from a check-list logic of standards which are typical of organic, *Label Rouge*, and other forms of certification; standards described as 'normative' by Scheffer and Roncin (2000: 67) and by Ricard and Rieutort (2013, pers. comm.). The contention of Marie-Vivien *et al* (2015) is that with INAO now being the competent authority for all such quality labels in France, and in light of the burgeoning number of IGP-labelled products in Europe, the risk is of 'diluting INAO's specific skills for appellation of origin that have been acquired progressively throughout its long history' (*Ibid*: 8) such that 'the concept of "origin" in France...appears to be being assimilated into the mere concept of quality' (*Ibid*: 2). The INAO has a history of expertise in determining the link to terroir, first for wines, and, from 1990, for all geographically protected foods. Its methods have developed over time, involve collaboration with farmers, close idiographic interpretation of the territory concerned, and since the 1990s, have made more and more use of ethnographers and historical and cultural geographers (Scheffer and Roncin, 2000; Flutet, 2013). I would argue that the risks of epistemological and regulatory incompatibility are ultimately combined, because, given that INAO explicitly states one of its core missions as 'la protection des terroirs' (INAO, 2013), decision-making on geographical products which use predicates that differ from how it has traditionally appreciated products of terroir, and differentiated AOP and IGP, may progressively slip out of its control. The political and economic sustainability of the concept of terroir is in this way under threat.

Furthermore, the wide diffusion of terroir into French culture, as discussed in Chapter 4, and the diversity of food labels that evoke fidelity to terroir in some degree, as discussed in Pouzenc *et al* (2007) and Schirmer (2010), mean that the AOP label, with its long history of representing terroir (Valceschini and Mazé, 2000; Pitte, 2007; Flutet, 2013), is not the only way to transmit the value(s) of terroir. Beyond even the Label Rouge and TSG⁵⁴ labels which, whilst less closely linked to individual places and production methods than the IGP and AOP labels, still fall within the regulatory purview of INAO; the term terroir is not protected *in se*. Wine labels use it ceaselessly, and beyond wine, to give just one example, the *Reflets de France* range of food and drink (Figure 7.6), produced by the Carrefour supermarket group and widely distributed throughout France and overseas, uses the following generic wording on its labels:

‘Les produits Reflets de France renouent avec les savoir-faire du chaque terroir qui ont fait de notre pays le symbole du bon goût.’⁵⁵

Some of its range of over 150 products do have AOP or IGP labels (such as the *Clémentine de Corse* IGP), but others simply come from a particular region (such as the *Miel du Jura*). The constant use of the formula copied in above, and the consistency of the golden label across all its products allows for an impression of terroir to be created by any and all of its products, whether they are also recognised as AOP or IGP or not. This represents a risk to those ODGs who have come together to protect and produce a product of terroir that allows them to make a profit given other relative disadvantages (remoteness, lower yields, etc), and could be seen as constituting a kind of ‘greenwashing’ or at least industrial appropriation of a term which enjoys such wide cultural recognition and valorisation in France. In this way, the

⁵⁴ ‘Traditional Speciality Guaranteed’; mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis.

⁵⁵ Tr: ‘Our ‘Reflets de France’ products maintain the savoir-faire of each terroir that has made our country the symbol of good taste.’

AOP label, with all of its regulatory apparatus, risks becoming simply ‘one form of marketing amongst others’⁵⁶ (Valceschini and Mazé, 2000: 40).



Figure 7.6: Corsican oranges (Clémentine de Corse IGP) from *Reflets de France*.
Source: Reflets de France (2015)

7.5. Terroir and Global Ambition

Internationally, the concept of terroir in the commerce of wine, and the system of geographical protection in product chains more widely, have both made inroads and faced determined opposition. Morgan *et al* (2006) recount how the European Union has tried to have its system of geographical indications in food recognised internationally through the

⁵⁶ Tr: ‘un support marketing parmi d’autres’.

WTO, but was knocked back in a ruling made at the 2003 meeting of that organisation in Cancún, Mexico. ‘The ruling was a major victory for the US and Australia,’ they write (*Ibid*: 33), ‘which argued that many of the names the EU wants to protect are now generic and that the whole GI system is ‘simply a new form of protectionism for Europe’s already cosseted farmers’ (Alden, Buck and Williams, 2004).’ This may be understood as just one episode in a series of agricultural and trade disputes between Europe and other rich western nations (in which other topics have included the use of GM crops, farming subsidies and export tariffs) which play out in the forum of the WTO and which highlight very different expectations of agriculture and betray ‘how regulatory models ultimately reflect political values and cultural conventions’ (Morgan *et al*, 2006: 45; Whatmore *et al*, 2003; cf. Bové and Dufour, 2001). In wine production specifically, Mr AZ argued that as there are different definitions of terroir established by the INAO and the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), as shown in [Figure 7.7](#), they may come to different conclusions about the claims made in terroir’s name by producers or other interested actors.

INAO Definition 2006 (my translation)	OIV Definition 2010 (their translation)
A terroir is a delimited geographic space, within which a human community has constructed, over the course of its history, a collective knowledge of production based on a system of interactions between a physical and biological environment, and an ensemble of human factors. The socio-technical processes involved betoken an originality, give a typical quality, and lead to a reputation for the product that comes from this geographical space.	Vitivinicultural “terroir” is a concept which refers to an area in which collective knowledge of the interactions between the identifiable physical and biological environment and applied vitivinicultural practices develops, providing distinctive characteristics for the products originating from this area. “Terroir” includes specific soil, topography, climate, landscape characteristics and biodiversity features.

[Figure 7.7](#): Comparison of definitions of terroir communicated by the INAO and the OIV.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Original INAO French text : ‘Un terroir est un espace géographique délimité, dans lequel une communauté humaine, construit au cours de son histoire un savoir collectif de production, fondé sur un système d’interactions entre un milieu physique et biologique, et un ensemble de facteurs humains. Les itinéraires socio-techniques ainsi mis en jeu, révèlent une originalité, confèrent une typicité, et aboutissent à une réputation, pour un bien originaire de cet espace géographique.’

We must remember that these definitions in [Figure 7.6](#) were drawn up for different purposes and within different cultural, commercial and political contexts. Whereas in the former text, the matter was one of arriving at a definition of terroir which would serve as a practical compromise between the agronomic/scientific epistemologies of INRA and the geographic/historic epistemologies of INAO, both of whom work with terroir day-to-day but with different scientific approaches;⁵⁸ in the latter case, the matter was one of establishing a definition of terroir that would ensure the viability of French wines sold on its basis, and allow other member states of the OIV to recognise its value and potentially talk in terms of terroir for their own wines. The former definition attempted to make the familiar strange, so to speak, while the latter sought to make the strange, familiar. In the OIV text, tangible elements that may be included in the representation of terroir are explicitly listed – soil, topography and so on. In the INAO text, such specificities are not mentioned, permitting both the continued value of institutional expertise in making decisions on such matters, and the continued validity of claims to terroir made on many and varied bases (as discussed in detail in Jacquet *et al*, 2013). In the resolution from which the OIV definition is taken, it is made clear that the organisation is conscious of the

‘economic and cultural consequences of vitiviniculture zoning and the use of the concept of “terroir”’; and conscious that ‘once a “terroir” is described, it can contribute to the recognition for the vitivincultural products originating from that “terroir”.’ (OIV, 2010)

Original OIV French text: ‘Le « terroir » vitivincicole est un concept qui se réfère à un espace sur lequel se développe un savoir collectif des interactions entre un milieu physique et biologique identifiable et les pratiques vitivincicoles appliquées, qui confèrent des caractéristiques distinctives aux produits originaires de cet espace. Le « terroir » inclut des caractéristiques spécifiques du sol, de la topographie, du climat, du paysage et de la biodiversité.’

⁵⁸ Flutet (2013) points out that it took some thirteen years of negotiation to arrive at this definition.

Moreover, it is conscious of ‘the need to prevent confusion between the descriptive definition of “terroir” and the legal definition of a Geographical Indication’ (*Ibid*). In this latter sense, the resolution may be interpreted as an attempt to allow OIV member states other than France to materially benefit from terroir by improving their rhetorical access to and mastery of the concept, and yet simultaneously to also maintain something of the mystery and superiority of terroir by drawing a distinction between it and the evidence collated to achieve a more widely-used geographical indication. It is as if terroir may be put to use in the service of demotic methods of place branding, but still retain an esoteric substance which would contribute to the value of those wines whose producers are most seasoned in its usage.

Schirmer (2010) has recounted how that latter body, the OIV, of which France was a founding member and in which it still exerts significant influence, has been weakened by the departure of the USA, and that country’s hand in the establishment of a rival organisation, the World Wine Trade Group (WWTG). Schirmer has mapped the global geography of influence of these two groups (reproduced in [Figure 7.8](#)) and notes that the WWTG permits wine-producing practices that the OIV does not, and is pursuing free-trade agreements between its member states. Noting the sphere of influence of that group in the Pacific rim, Schirmer (*Ibid*: 193) wonders: ‘how indeed will wine be governed in this part of the world that has become, let’s not forget, the most dynamic ?’⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Tr: ‘quelle sera justement la gouvernance des vins dans cette partie du monde qui est devenue, rappelons-le, la plus dynamique[?]’

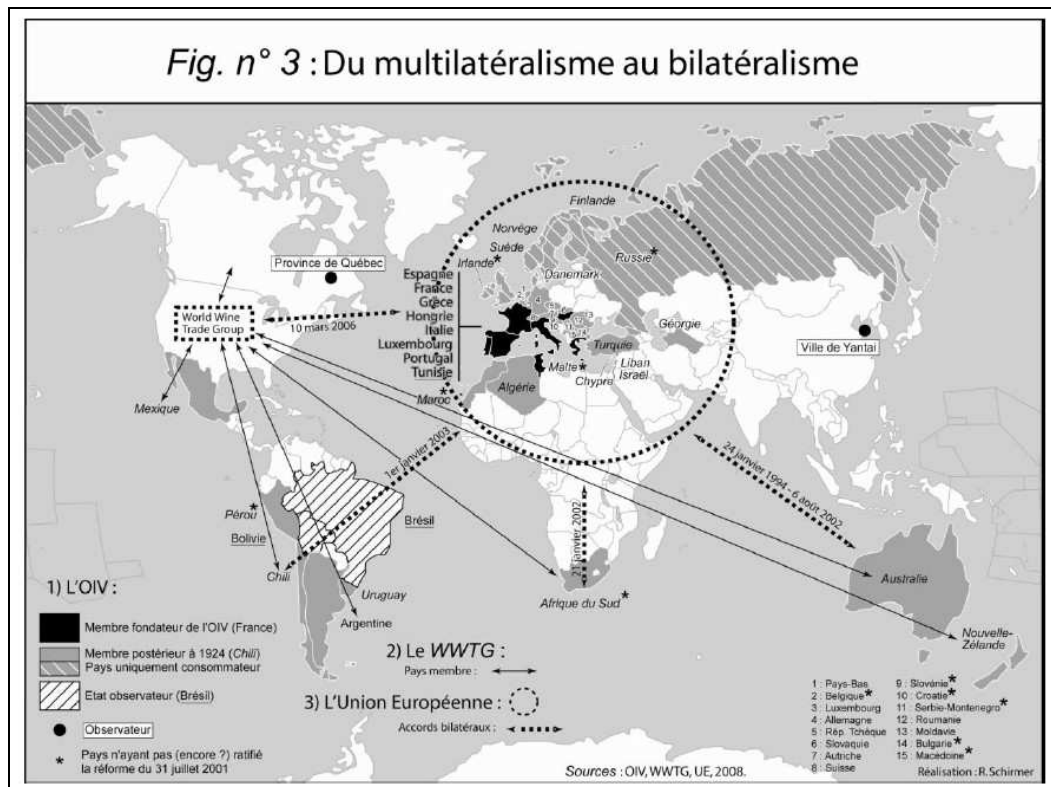


Figure 7.8: Map of membership of the OIV and rival organisation the WWTG. OIV members are marked in black and solid grey. Source: Schirmer (2010: 194).

The regulatory and commercial competition mapped out here is important because it limits the degree to which French cultural norms, as discussed in Chapter 4, can be imposed on the global wine trade. Terroir, above all, must stand out as a conceptual bone of contention, given the lack of a translation of the word in any other language, the suspicion it has been subject to (as we saw in Chapter 6), and the fact of its extraordinary value to French wines as opposed to others (as shown in the Introduction). A sense that the cultural predicates of terroir need to be exported to permit the sustainability of wines sold on the basis of terroir is visible in the stakes of this global competition. And yet the economic success of new world wines cannot entirely escape the predicates of terroir for, as Jones (2014: 38) admits, ‘the concept has become woven into the thinking and commentary of nearly all journalists, winemakers and educators who discuss wine.’ Indeed, where Jones goes on to discuss American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) as a simplified form of terroir’s spatial logic, Schirmer (2010) draws our

attention to the Ara Single-Estate Wines in New Zealand, Brice (2014a) discusses how terroir is used in Australia, and in our interview in Montpellier, Mr AZ contended that South African wine producers have been interested in terroir for some time. Schirmer (2010), retaining an interest in governance, argues that such new world iterations of the idea of specific qualities in a wine coming from a particular place lack the formal regulation of the French AOP system, and instead ‘seem to be legitimised by competitions and the media, and thus *in fine* by the market’⁶⁰ (*Ibid*: 199). But whether embedded in tradition and collective governance or utilised for nothing more than marketing, terroir and its purported distinction is attracting a following amongst those who produce and sell wine in the new world. Bailly’s (2000) argument that *cépage* or grape variety will dominate over terroir in the organisation of global sales probably came too early, for Johnson (2014), in an overview of the wine trade, surmises that whilst the *cépage* and terroir models are in competition, the balance is leaning in the favour of the latter. Despite the evident international standardisation of taste in wine shown in Nossiter’s (2004) *Mondovino*, the logic and rhetoric of associating a wine with a particular place has become too well-known, too compelling and too lucrative to show any signs of being abandoned. An interesting composite of these two trends may be witnessed in a news story that broke while I was on fieldwork in France in late 2012, and on which a couple of respondents asked my opinion. In the course of trade negotiations between the USA and the EU, it emerged that the former was asking for the right to use the terms ‘Château’ and ‘Clos’ on the labelling of its wines. The news generated opposition in France (see, for example, Girard, 2012; *Revue du Vin de France*, 2012), and even prompted an open letter from the French Senator Robert Navarro to the President of the European Commission, who was in charge of the negotiations with the Americans. In it, Navarro (2012) argues that there is a risk

⁶⁰ Tr: ‘semble légitimée par les concours et la presse, et donc in fine par le marché’.

that, under current American regulations, grapes could enter wine labelled as the product of a ‘château’ which are really from vineyards far away, resulting in ‘standardised products, without real identity, without terroir’.⁶¹ He also sees fit to highlight to the Commission President that:

‘It is an elected representative of the Languedoc-Roussillon, a territory whose wine-producing heritage extends back to before the Gauls even came to the region of Narbonne, who makes this solemn call !’⁶²

The English reader will surmise that there is a problem with American wines being labelled in terms of ‘châteaux’ because there are no ancient castles in America. But the sense in which the label would potentially be used would be as a generic reference to the production of one single property, as is mostly the case in Bordeaux. Nor should we forget that following the formalisation of the use of the term ‘château’ in Bordeaux in 1855, many wine-producing properties in that region have taken to calling themselves ‘châteaux’ whilst being of modest proportions (such as shown in [Figure 7.9](#)) or very recent construction. There is even a castle that has been built in California’s Napa Valley – the Castello di Amorosa ([Figure 7.10](#)) – which is run partly as a winery and is surrounded by land planted in vineyards. The image this creates is evocative of the Old World, and a shot of a couple walking with a bicycle through the vines with the castle in the background has been used since 2013 in a Californian tourism television advert (Visit California/YouTube, 2013). Indeed the common opposition between old world and new world, in which terroir is easily viewed as a tool of protectionism and exceptionalism for wine in the old world (Valceschini and Mazé, 2000; Morgan *et al*,

⁶¹ Tr: ‘des produits standard, sans réelle identité, sans terroir’.

⁶² Tr: ‘C’est un élu du Languedoc-Roussillon, un territoire au vignoble très ancien datant d’avant la fondation de la Gaule narbonnaise, qui vous lance cet appel solennel!’

2006; Jones, 2014; Brice, 2014a), is breaking down. Mr Z (BIVB, Beaune) argued in our interview that:

‘American wine producers want to talk more and more about geography and about terroir, given the competition of Chile, where there are excellent conditions for grape-growing and the potential to produce great quantities of wine.’⁶³

Such comparative disadvantage on the quantity front may lead American producers to seek means by which to differentiate their production and thereby retain an important position in the global market place. This is not an unusual situation for wine producers to find themselves in, given an ever more liberalised global market (Loureiro, 2003; Brice 2014a; Bardsley and Pech, 2012), and given the new assessments of and investments in the wine production capacities of places like England and Belgium (Boschman *et al*, 2009; Gallagher, 2016). Terroir is, in the wine industry above all, a particularly compelling means by which to make a case for quality, instead of, but also potentially in combination with existing brand names (Valseschini and Mazé, 2000; Jones, 2009). Its epistemological conventions are gaining ever greater acceptance, and its infiltration of the American wine production landscape is such that the quadrennial terroir congress, which has always been held in France, will in 2016 be held for the first time in the USA. This information was given to me by Mr AZ and discussed by us as a sign of the times, and times that are changing.

⁶³ Tr: ‘Les vignerons americains veulent parler de plus en plus de géographie et de terroir, vu la concurrence du Chili, où se trouve des conditions idéales pour les vignes et la possibilité de produire de très hautes quantités de vin.’



Figure 7.9 – Château Petit Fourie de Soutard, producer of a St-Emilion *grand cru* wine.
Source: Le Figaro (2011/2015)



Figure 7.10: Picture of the Castello di Amorosa in the Napa Valley, California, taken from the front page of their website. URL: <http://www.castellodiamorosa.com/> .

7.6. Managing Organic Terroir

The calibration of economic and ecological sustainability takes place within its own particular set of parameters for organic farmers, as suggested in the previous chapter. David *et al* (2010: 134) have argued that some want to convert to organics in the interests of supporting traditional agricultural practices and landscape management, whilst others seek to benefit from a profitable market niche, wherein '[t]he general aim is to improve economic viability'. And Leblanc and Cloutier (2006) and Foster (2014) have argued that others use innovative technology to ensure efficient levels of production whilst avoiding the application of products that may be harmful to the environment. Indeed one organic producer (Mr G) told me: "you have to be technically-minded in organics to really succeed...it's precision work...we're not talking about hippies from the 70s anymore".⁶⁴ Whether it is framed in terms of tradition or innovation, organic and biodynamic farmers have stewardship of the natural environment – of insects, birds, plants, soil microbiota and so on – as part of their obligations and part of the means by which they can communicate what is valuable about their mode of farming. And as I argued in the previous chapter, this can profitably run alongside the historical durability more widely perceived in a product's terroir. For those who pursue organic agriculture in France, given the regulations they must comply with to enjoy use of the AB organic label, and my interest in the potential organic 'facilitation' of terroir, I saw the opportunity to ask questions about the interaction of the AOP system with organic farming. Mr AZ (INAO, Montpellier) advised me that "[o]rganic farming cannot enter the

⁶⁴ Tr : « il faut être technique en bio pour bien réussir...c'est un travail de précision...ce n'est plus les hippies des années 70 ».

Cahier des Charges as a prescription, but it can be compatible with it.”⁶⁵ Amongst the organic farmers I interviewed, most did not experience (or had managed to resolve) problems in satisfying the simultaneous exigencies of AOP and organic production. But there were a handful of conflicts. Ms V (SEDARB, Beaune) argued that the organic regulations were “stricter” (“plus strictes”) than those of the AOP Cahiers des Charges, just as Mr G (Wine producer, Lugny) noted they were “more demanding” (“plus exigeants”). In the matter of hay supply to cattle discussed earlier in this chapter, an already limited local production of hay is exacerbated by organic regulations, as Ms Y (ADABio, Annecy) argued:

‘In terms of hay, the AOP requires that 80% of the hay be from local sources, whilst for organic production, 100% of the hay has to be organic. There is therefore a potential problem if there is not enough organic hay within the AOP zone. Indeed, there are few organic hay producers within the zone, so it is a delicate balance...the important thing is that there be enough hay at the moment farmers need it.’⁶⁶



Figure 7.11: The French and European Organic (‘Agriculture Biologique’) food labels. The former is now usually not seen on packaging without the latter.

Some practices can occupy an ambivalent position between the two sets of regulations. Mr L (Walnut producer, Pont-en-Royans), for instance, discussed the prophylactic use of essential

⁶⁵ Tr: « Une démarche bio ne peut pas entrer dans un Cahier des Charges en tant que prescription, mais elle peut être compatible. »

⁶⁶ Tr: ‘Pour les foin, l’AOP exige que 80% du foin soit local, tandis que pour la bio, il faut que 100% du foin soit bio. Il y aurait donc un problème s’il n’y avait pas suffisamment de foin bio dans la zone AOP. Effectivement, il y a peu de producteurs de foin bio dans la zone, donc l’équilibre est fragile...il est important qu’il y ait suffisamment de foin au moment où les éleveurs en ont besoin.’

oils which is known in organic (and biodynamic) agriculture but which is not addressed in the AOP Cahier for the Noix de Grenoble. All products that a farmer might use against the *mouche du brou* insect, however, must be detailed in a file which is then inspected by the ODG as part of their ongoing programme of surveillance against that insect. There is therefore the possibility that in the future, within a programme of collective action against an insect, virus or other threat, certain organic practices may be outlawed, or certain practices which are not compatible with organic agriculture, made compulsory. Where organic farmers refuse to use products that are against their principles, whether or not derogation for their use has been made within the organic governance of the food chain (as had been the case for copper sulphate in walnut production), court proceedings may even ensue. One Reblochon producer told me about a court case involving producers who did not use antibiotics in their cattle, and a different case reached the national news in 2014 of a biodynamic wine producer in Burgundy who refused to spray his grapevines with a synthetic product that had been made compulsory as part of a regional campaign against a new and dangerous virus ([Figure 7.12](#)) (Garric, 2014).⁶⁷

⁶⁷ The danger of not playing one's part in collective action is also recounted in the archives; at a viticultural congress in Mâcon in 1938 it was argued that: 'Wine producers need to work in concert to spray the whole of the vineyard area at the same time, because the existence of unsprayed parcels represents a grave danger of reinfection for those that are otherwise well defended' ('Les viticulteurs devront s'entendre pour traiter en même temps la totalité de la surface du vignoble, l'existence de parcelles non-traitées représentant un grave danger de réinfection pour les vignes bien défendues'). Fédération des Associations Agricoles et Viticoles de l'Arrondissement de Mâcon 1938 *Compte rendu et rapport général du conseil régional pour l'étude de la lutte contre les ennemis de la vigne tenu à Mâcon, les 16 et 17 janvier 1938*. Dossier 300 - BH 246, p.32 -- Archives Municipales de Mâcon.

Procès du viticulteur bio : « Je n'ai pas traité mes vignes et je l'assume »

Le Monde.fr | 24.02.2014 à 20h36 • Mis à jour le 25.02.2014 à 10h38 |

Par Audrey Garric ((Dijon, envoyée spéciale))

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Quand il apparaît sous le grand soleil de la fin de matinée, c'est une salve d'applaudissements et de hurrahs qui résonne devant le tribunal correctionnel de Dijon. Emmanuel Giboulot prend la parole face à une foule de plus d'un millier de personnes venue le soutenir dans son procès.

Figure 7.12: Reporting in *Le Monde* of a biodynamic wine producer who refused to spray his grapevines. The headline reads: 'Court case of the bio wine producer: "I did not spray my grapevines and I stand by it"'. Source: Garric (2014)

What became apparent to me is that the joint undertaking of organic or biodynamic and AOP agriculture presents challenges, and offers reward, in different ways according to the food chain in question. In Reblochon production, Ms X felt that:

“The Cahier des Charges is already quite strict. Those who convert to organic do so to meet a need that can only be met by an organic label – even if they have explained to their customers that the Cahier des Charges already has enough protections...As I was saying earlier, we are in a competitive market,

and the label communicates a lot in that small amount of space and time we have where a consumer is making a decision about what to buy.”⁶⁸

Aside from the problems of feed supply, Ms T felt that the Cahier des Charges of organic agriculture was actually *less* constraining than the AOP Cahier for Reblochon in terms of the regulation of farming practices. She pointed out that only a minor change was required to satisfy organic regulations in how she dealt with fir and pine saplings in the field; that is, to pull them out manually rather than using a herbicide to kill them, as she did before. The regulations in the dairy itself were already fairly strict and comprehensive for all Reblochon producers, and this was probably specific to dairying food chains because, as Ms Y pointed out, and as discussed earlier, any production therein had to satisfy the national *Réglementation sanitaire générale* (hygiene regulations) before, and whilst, it satisfied anything else. Furthermore, she argued that the price per litre that Reblochon producers receive for their milk was already good relative to other dairying chains in France (a point corroborated by Ricard and Rieutort, 2013, pers. comm.), and that there would not be much of an organic premium left for producers to enjoy given the costs that would come with conversion. In general, my respondents in organic associations were clear that conversions in some food chains were easier than others; Ms W (Agribiodrôme, Crest) argued that converting a walnut orchard was relatively straightforward compared to converting a peach orchard due to the latter plant being much more susceptible to a wide range of pests. But in the Reblochon food chain, there had been few conversions. Ms Y noted that given the mostly extensive nature of their pasturing practices, and the specificity of the Cahier des Charges,

⁶⁸ Tr: « Le Cahier des Charges est déjà plutôt stricte. Ceux qui le font [la bio], le font pour répondre à un demande qui n'est satisfait que par le label bio – même s'ils expliquent que le Cahier des Charges suffit... Comme j'ai dit tout à l'heure, on n'a que peu de temps devant le consommateur, et le label communique beaucoup dans son petit créneau d'espace et de temps. »

“the farmers are already well anchored in the territory”⁶⁹ and that organics is a very small section of the market at each level of the Reblochon food chain:

“There are only four or five cheese producers that have an organic product, and very few farms. The market for organics is limited, and cheese production firms do not encourage it. There has not been a single conversion to organics in the Reblochon production chain in the last ten years.”⁷⁰

She argued that the public do not view Reblochon production as unsustainable or environmentally damaging, so making too much noise about organics within the food chain might raise awareness of environmental problems or controversies that might otherwise have been ignored, and thereby tarnish the image of the product overall. Given the circulation of apparently natural, montane, verdant, ‘pure’ images through which Reblochon travels, including in the practice of transhumance that I discussed in the previous chapter, she felt that “one shouldn’t stress the difference between organic and convention too much...it’s not necessarily good for the brand overall”.⁷¹ And with the profile of organics so low in this food chain, a further conflict emerged at the juncture of the AOP Cahier des Charges and the regulations governing organic certification. We discussed how most Reblochon producers send new-born calves (*génisses* in French) to specialist farms that raise them until they are six months old and ready to consistently produce milk. To maintain the organic continuity of the food chain, however, organic dairy farmers are not permitted to send their calves away unless they are sent to specialists who are themselves certified organic. Given how few organic dairy farmers there are in the part of France that Reblochon is produced in, the corresponding

⁶⁹ Tr: « les éleveurs sont déjà bien ancrés dans le territoire ».

⁷⁰ Tr: « Il n’y a que quatre ou cinq fromageries qui ont un produit bio, et très peu de fermes. Le marché du bio est limité, et les laiteries ne l’encouragent pas. Pendant ces dix dernières années, il n’y a eu aucune conversion en bio dans la filière Reblochon. »

⁷¹ Tr: « il ne faut pas trop marquer la différence entre bio et conventionnel...ce n’est pas forcément bon pour la marque en général ».

lack of calf-rearing farmers presents a barrier to maintaining their herd for those few who do want organic certification.

7.7. Organic Resources

Having talked to organic co-ordinators in each of my three food-chain case studies, I learnt something of the structure of organic governance in each region. They had much in common, and reflect the vertical hierarchy of governance and oversight that is common, in its essence, to many nation states and business organisations. Ms V, in Burgundy, explained the hierarchy that she worked in to me, as did her counterparts in the other two regions I worked in, and I have schematised this in Figure 7.13.

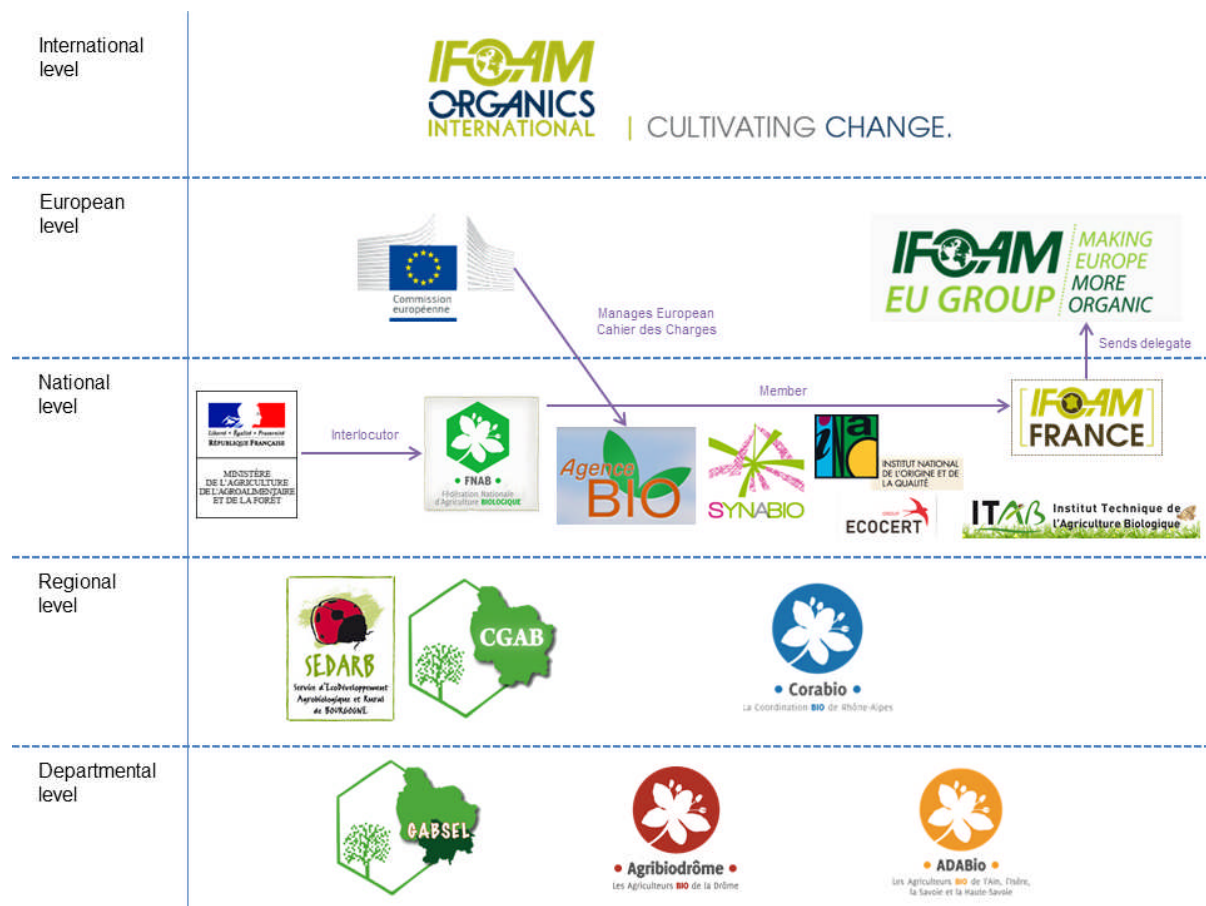


Figure 7.13: The scales of organic governance for farmers in the three regions of France where I conducted fieldwork. Drawn by author.

The organic body in each department sits below a regional Conseil Général, such as CORABIO or the Conseil Régional de l’Agriculture Biologique (CGAB), which sit below the Federation Nationale de l’Agriculture Biologique (FNAB), which has a technical and research arm, the Institut Technologique de l’Agriculture Biologique (ITAB) and has the ear, ultimately, of the French Ministry of Agriculture. At the national scale there is a suite of organisations, namely the Agence Bio, which implements European directives on organic agriculture; SynaBio, which represents organic food processors; EcoCert, which operates as an independent certifying body for organic farmers and processors; and INAO, which has had oversight over the organic label along with its portfolio of other quality labels since 2006. Finally, IFOAM, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, has

national and European delegations.⁷² Questions and problems are generally passed up the scalar chain; answers and regulations are fed down it. Pernin (1994) has traced the development of this situation in France. Funding for the local associations⁷³ comes partly from the subscriptions of members (who can number into the hundreds), and partly from departmental, regional or national government grants; though the latter appear not to be guaranteed. I was alerted to this concern for the sustainability of the organic organisations themselves by a farmer (Mr G; Wine producer, Lugny), who had been involved in an organic association, and explained that such bodies sometimes had budget problems. He hoped that they would receive ‘a fair percentage of the national agricultural budget’ as part of a more general recognition of the value of organic agriculture within France.⁷⁴ But for this much will still need to change. Ms W (Agribiodrôme, Crest) told me in our interview that “lack of funding is a major brake on the activities of the organisation”,⁷⁵ and when I asked Ms Y (ADABio, Annecy) what challenges lay ahead for the organisation she replied simply:

“To survive. The funding we receive is not always in line with our needs. We recently had to let four employees go.”⁷⁶

The role of the organisations within the political structure of organic farming was discussed in subtly different ways. Ms Y saw her association as sitting between producers and the state, whilst her counterpart Ms W saw her association as mediating between producers and certifying bodies. After my discussion with Ms V (SEDARB, Beaune), I gathered a strong

⁷² And was itself founded in France in 1972 (Paull, 2010).

⁷³ Organised mostly, but not exclusively, at the departmental scale.

⁷⁴ One may compare the matter of government funding in other European countries in Ilbery and Maye (2007).

⁷⁵ Tr: « le manque de financements est un frein majeur aux activités de l'organisation ».

⁷⁶ Tr: “De survivre. Les financements ne sont pas toujours en accord avec nos besoins. On a dû licencier quatre employés récemment.”

impression of its operation in between producers and consumers. In any case, these organisations of organic governance and mutual assistance have missions similar to those of the ODGs discussed earlier. They defend the interests of organic growers, research solutions to locally apparent problems in organic agriculture, accompany farmers, promote organics to consumers, and lobby for funding and recognition of organic food-chains to various parts of government. A central part of the associations' work is to assist and accompany growers who wish to convert to organic agriculture ([Figure 7.14](#)); and after this, to continue to offer advice and training sessions ([Figure 7.15](#)). Laschewski (2004: 9) has identified this as 'the provision of a knowledge and information infrastructure' to organic growers. The value of this should not be underestimated, as many people convert to organic farming and have to learn and adapt to a new set of methods and rhythms. Myers (2005: 65) has argued that '[i]f you are attempting to work with Nature as a practising organic farmer, the most powerful tool at your disposal is knowledge', and the sessions organised by organic associations work, as Mr J put it, to "gather people together" ("rassembler les gens") and allow such knowledge to be shared among them.⁷⁷ Indeed, much of the focus of these sessions is to share expertise and develop the autonomy of producers in overcoming problems that might present themselves, and for which there may not be one simple solution that is compatible with organic philosophy or regulations. In the 2012-13 training programme of the organic association of the Drôme département (Agribiodrôme, 2012), for example, we find sessions on:

- *Making your own innovative tools for working with perennial crops*
- *Optimising your own market gardening production*
- *Getting to know your soil to optimise its fertility*
- *Bio-indicative plants : a tool for soil diagnostics*
- *Plants to strengthen or heal other plants*

⁷⁷ Dreyfus too (2012: 32) argues that 'the very essence of biodynamism encourages collective action' ('l'essence même de la biodynamie invite à agir collectivement').

- *Diversifying your cereal farm into field vegetables*⁷⁸

Also available were sessions on setting up one's own farm shop, promoting colleagues' products, and undertaking biodynamic projects. In all, it is clear to me that the training sessions aim to promote the *autonomy of the producer*, whether in building their own tools for permanent cropping, raising their own crops from seed, or establishing a farm shop; and , as part of organic and biodynamic philosophy, the *autonomy of the plant or animal life* on the farm, with the examples of using plants that can strengthen the immunity of other plants, and better understanding the soil to optimise its fertility. Certainly the French biodynamic organisation Demeter France (2015b) contends that with biodynamics, the farmer becomes more autonomous in their thought and in their action; and the practices taught within these training sessions may be seen as efforts towards greater ecological sustainability in farming.



Figure 7.14: Advertisement for an organic conversion training session.
Source: Agribiodrôme (2012: 5)

⁷⁸ Tr: 'Autoconstruction d'outils innovants pour le travail en planches permanentes ; Optimiser l'autoproduction de plants maraîchers ; Connaître son sol pour optimiser la fertilité ; Les plantes bio-indicatrices: un outil de diagnostic des sols ; Les plantes pour renforcer ou soigner les plantes ; Diversifier mon exploitation grandes cultures en légumes de plein champ.'



Figure 7.15: Advertisement for an organic soil fertilisation training session.
Source: Agribiodrôme (2012: 23)

But another way to understand these efforts by organic associations would be as helping farmers make ends meet in the context of diversifying, multifunctional rural spaces (Bourgeois and Demotes-Magnard 2000; Buller, 2003; Clout and Demossier, 2003; Bardsley and Pech, 2012), and as a continuation of the kind of collegial mutual help that is common to farming, but which organic farmers might be less able to draw upon within their local area as their methods and markets change. In the execution of the regulations listed in their Cahiers des Charges, and in developing what was learnt in their initial training, I learnt that many growers express a desire for *accompagnement*. This is a term used in a very wide set of situations in France, as discussed in the Methodology chapter, and my impression is that it is generally seen as a positive thing. Historically in agriculture, as we saw in Chapter 3, problems often got solved more rapidly when they were brought to the attention of the appropriate body as a group or class.⁷⁹ Furthermore, today, farmers are in the habit of being accompanied in their activities by various persons, from chemical company salesmen, to

⁷⁹ And group action can still yield results: the recent protests by dairy farmers which began in France and spread to other European countries led to the French government 'writing a €3 billion cheque' to appease them (Sage, 2015); and a promise of €500 million of support from the EU, at a 15th September 2015 meeting of the member states called by the French government (Girard, 2015a).

mechanical technicians, to government inspectors, to tourists, colleagues and *stagiaires* (see Birlouez, 2000). Given the relatively recent growth of certifiably organic and biodynamic agriculture (see [Figures 6.4 and 6.5](#) in the previous chapter; see also Willer *et al*, 2008), and the degree to which some of its practices can be unfamiliar, it is understandable that growers who convert to these systems seek support from technicians and their peers. I would also argue on the basis of my findings that the desire to be *encadré* (supported, recognised) by a service or organising body runs alongside the desire to maintain good relations with one's *confrères*. This dual desire is to be found among young and old, and is expressed through practice, even where barriers related to certification emerge. Mr J (Walnut producer, Saint-Marcellin) for example, discussed how agricultural machinery was shared between growers, with occasional exceptions where organic Cahiers des Charges could not permit non-organic walnuts being fed through a machine. The aim, apart from the practical expediency of sharing an expensive resource, was to maintain “une bonne entente” with his colleagues and his community. The degree to which this is important, and might seem so obvious as to remain unarticulated, is typical of rural communities where farming families know each other well, and where the majority of farms are family farms (David *et al*, 2010; Sutherland and Burton, 2011; cf. Morgan *et al*, 2006). Organic bodies, such as SEDARB in Burgundy and CORABIO in the Rhône-Alpes region, see *accompagnement* as an integral part of their missions, and this was attested to during interviews. Further, in a recent press release, the national organic agency, l'Agence Bio (2011), which sits one level above them ([Figure 7.13](#)) first draws attention to its action in ‘accompanying producers’ and later envisions ‘the sharing of results and synergies between actors’⁸⁰ as the organic sector continues to develop in France. In the context of growth, the agency makes it clear that interpersonal support is

⁸⁰ Tr: ‘L’accompagnement des producteurs’ ; ‘la mutualisation des résultats et synergies entre les acteurs’.

key.⁸¹ Farmers, through reasoning and acting, seek to do so in concert with others; and this interaction is framed, or *encadré*, by a hierarchy of organic bodies.

For those who pursue organic and biodynamic modes of production, there are also specific challenges in attaining greater autonomy, and this is a matter that emerged from our interviews. One organic walnut grower (Mr L, Pont-en-Royans) discussed an idea he had to introduce hens and ducks to the orchard. They would be a source of manure internal to the farm, and would allow him to diversify into some market gardening without needing manure from external sources. This certainly fits with the concepts of equilibrium and natural intervention in the nitrogen cycle that were discussed in the previous chapter, and has a parallel in Mr E's introduction of fowl to his vineyard to manage insect populations also discussed therein. But for such birds, the walnut grower noted;

'You need cereals for them to eat, and I don't have any, so I would have to buy them, and that would really depend on the price...and it's a price affected by the world market...and there aren't many cereal producers around here...so in the end I would have less autonomy than before.'⁸²

The hoped-for increase in autonomy with which the idea was first conceived would not, it appeared, materialise in practice. Stock and Forney (2014: 169) argue that:

'Farmers' autonomy in practice takes many shapes, including resistance to market logics, agri-environmental schemes, and checklist auditing, the embrace of cooperative mobilization, or the prioritization of non-economic goals in farm strategies.'

⁸¹ Indeed, a profitable analysis could be undertaken comparing the growth in the number of organic farms in France between 1997 and 2001, and again from 2007 to 2011, with the growth of specialised organic associations throughout the regions and departments of the country.

⁸² Tr: 'Il faut des céréales à bouffer, et moi j'en ai pas, donc il faudrait en acheter, et cela dépendra le prix...un prix qui est touché par le marché mondial, d'ailleurs...et il n'ya pas beaucoup de producteurs de céréales dans les alentours...donc j'aurais, enfin, moins d'autonomie.'

I feel that examining efforts towards autonomy has promise for investigations of sustainable agriculture, because it makes us ask how and why farmers are positioning themselves in certain ways vis-à-vis the market and the governance apparatus of the production chain they are in.⁸³ For those producing food and drink that has a value related to its particular geographical or processual origin, the ever-greater standardisation and mechanisation that Birlouez (2000) discusses may not be necessary if they can generate sufficient returns to maintain their livelihoods. As discussed in previous chapters, the food produced under AOP or organic regulations is sold on the basis of its authenticity, whether that is related to a particular place, its history and savoir-faire, or whether it is related to a degree of naturalness and ecological benefit. *A fortiori*, we may oppose geographically protected and organic methods of production with those intensive forms of production which have integrated genetically modified crops, or entered into large-scale chains of distribution and multinational control, and resulted in flagrant evidence of unsustainability ranging from farmers taking to the streets to protest about the fragility of their livelihoods, to boar lying dead on beaches, poisoned by nitrates in effluent from farms (see, in these instances, Girard (2013); and Durupt (2011) and Bockstaller *et al* (2010)).

What is clear from what I discovered on my fieldwork is that for those who pursue organic and biodynamic methods in their cultivation of products of terroir, ecological sustainability is a major concern, and something that lies at the heart of both their logic of practice and their rhetoric of communication to consumers. The calculations these farmers had to make in the interests of the economic viability of the farm and their own autonomy of practice had to take the limitations of impact on the environment into account. Acting in a way that would be

⁸³ Fortunel (2014), for example, has undertaken work in this direction with reference to agroecology in the Sarthe region of France.

faithful to terroir was acting in a way that would be respectful of the environment. Thus terroir, for the organic and biodynamic farmers I talked to, was something that had critical ecological predicates. That lively ecological vision of terroir animated their practice, and it could serve as the basis for criticisms of the promotion of terroir in other places where ecological sustainability was, it appeared, questionable. There are even those, like Patrick Baudouin, a wine producer in the Loire valley, who have called for ‘a redrawing of the divisions of appellations to really value terroir once more. Let us talk of hedges, trees, environment...’⁸⁴ (Galinier, 2014: 128). Authenticity, for these farmers, was not solely synonymous with anteriority, but also demonstrable in the present through the ecological integrity of the farm. And as we saw in the previous chapter, such visible materials as hens in the vineyard, a naturally ventilated drying shed, or grass between the grapevines, could be used by consumers with the same ecological concerns to make their own judgments about quality, authenticity and terroir. Whilst most of the organic producers I talked to were content to manage the simultaneous exigencies of AOP and organic production, operationalising a notion of terroir that drew upon both authentic anteriority and ecological vitality; there were others who felt restrained by the AOP apparatus from pursuing their organic projects to the lengths they wished to take them. Whether by dissatisfaction with the inherited divisions of the AOP and *grand cru* system, or through desire for greater control of the means by which they could distinguish the quality of their production, these farmers were taking terroir into their own hands and communicating it to consumers on their own terms.

⁸⁴ Tr: « resegmenter les appellations pour remettre en valeur les terroirs. Qu'on reparle haies, arbres, environnement... ».

7.8. Conclusion

What the interviews I carried out in France showed me is that terroir is at much at risk, and as much sustained, in its governance as it is in the field. Indeed, the two cannot be meaningfully separated. I have attempted to show in this chapter how the regulatory apparatus of the national AOP system is enacted through the practice of farmers and the oversight of farming associations, especially through the Cahier des Charges. I have attempted to show how multiple competing visions of terroir can be used in the pursuit of multiple notions of sustainability, and draw upon different sets of cultural predicates according to the arena they are deployed in. And I have attempted to show how efforts to manage and fix the epistemological and ontological co-ordinates of terroir slide on the shifting plates of political and economic circumstances. Sustainability in farming is about individual choices, as we explored in Chapter 6, but in addition, as O’Riordan (2004: 118) argues; ‘sustainability is about governance, i.e. patterns of managing, accommodating, sharing and acting that generate the goals of resilience, well-being and livelihoods.’ In this chapter we have seen how the questions of who can speak for terroir, and what kind of language they will use, are connected to who stands to benefit from it. Family farmers often have different strategies and different constraints from those of larger, industrial producers, and may defend terroir as an intellectual property that should be shared by others like them, both in the abstract sense of its authenticity and the very material sense of its economic rewards. Furthermore, the French state apparatus which governs the geographical protection of food, with terroir as its conceptual convention and measure of authenticity, is under threat from a European Union whose system of geographical protection in food, whilst ‘drawing largely on French tradition’ (Marie-Vivien *et al*, 2015: 4), nonetheless makes decisions based on a qualitatively different

set of criteria. And at the global scale, the evidence we have seen suggests that what Hinnewinkel (2007) has described as the ‘liberal dynamics’ (*‘dynamiques libérales’*) of new world wine sectors threaten the old world and its models of protectionist governance, but that those countries are also increasingly interested in terroir as part of economic strategies to attain profits of distinction in an increasingly crowded and connected global marketplace. The notion of terroir as something ‘local, loyal and constant’ is substantially challenged by the ongoing processes and contests of governance, several of which I have presented in this chapter. The three case studies I have used in this project each contained their own stories to draw out, and I would repeat the point, however obvious it might seem, that the dimensions of terroir and the means by which it is put at stake are different in each food chain. The nomothetic study of terroir has to be grounded and nuanced by empirical examination of its idiography; and this is just as true of the day-to-day controversies of its collective governance and protection as it is for the different physiographic bases of terroir throughout France.

In this chapter I have also made further enquiries into the connection of sustainability and autonomy, with both being concepts that interview respondents wanted to talk about, and usually as part of the same narrative of what they wanted to achieve in farming. As Stock and Forney (2014: 169) argue, farmers’ autonomy in practice ‘takes many shapes,’ relating notably to the market, the environment, production regulations and collegiality, and I would suggest that examining the pursuit of autonomy by farmers offers substantial promise for better understanding what sustainable agriculture actually looks like. By focussing attention on organic and biodynamic agriculture in this chapter and the previous one (and in Hill, 2016a), I have charted the emergence of a sense of terroir with a set of parameters that have subtly, but significantly, changed. Those I interviewed who pursue organic and biodynamic farming in the elaboration of products of terroir see the ecological life of their farm as central

to the authenticity and value of their activity and their product. Although, as mentioned in the last chapter, the environment can barely escape the attention of any farmer today, those who have converted or started out in organic or biodynamic agriculture have a particular set of constraints in practice and, from what I have seen, a particular set of philosophical principles which tie the promotion of biological life closely to their agronomic calculations. Proceeding down this avenue usually happens within the context of a collegiality common to agriculture in France, although the funding and sustainability of specifically organic associations is not, as I learnt, guaranteed. Nor are the claims of organic and biodynamic approaches as widely proposed or accepted as those for *terroir*. Having their efforts justly rewarded requires reaching consumers who share the same concerns for the environment and product quality and often some mutually informing admixture of both. In this at least there is a parallel with the notion of *terroir qua* territory in wider relation which I outlined in Chapter 3. But there are those producers, some of whom I found in my interviews, who see the inherited dimensions and hierarchy of the AOP system as constraining their aspirations of making products of *terroir* in tune with the earth, and who therefore market their products alongside, or entirely outwith, the extant AOP structure. This raises fundamental questions about who has the right to speak for *terroir*, and the degree to which *terroir* can be expressed through individual, instead of collective, enterprise. Given France's geographical culture, *terroir* is seen to be important by most agricultural actors, but the degree to which both productive and regulatory practices are faithful to its expression is a matter of ongoing public performance, representation and rhetoric.

* * *

Conclusion

Making Space for Terroir

Part of the contribution of this thesis is, I hope, to have improved our understanding of the territorial logic and geographical rhetoric through which terroir is mobilised. This enterprise should be of interest to anglophone geography and to those interested in food and farming outside of the discipline. Indeed, I would argue that improving our understanding of terroir is an endeavour which has the potential to reach wider audiences and put our discipline at the forefront of encouraging people to ‘appreciate the landscapes and places around them’ and make links between what is on the map, what is in the world, and what is on the plate or in the glass in front of them (Myers *et al*, 2003: 91; cf. Bonnett, 2003; Fumey, 2010). On the 22nd of February 2016, wine critic and writer Jancis Robinson will deliver a lecture at the Royal Geographical Society in which she will speak to ‘Geography in a bottle: the evolving map of wine’. In this address to Britain’s oldest geographical institution, we are told that she will cover different wine-producing territories from around the globe (RGS, 2015: 14), and ultimately claim that ‘Terroir is all’. Connecting product to place in the identification of quality is in the ascendant. Territorial logic and geographical rhetoric are culturally-moulded means of selling and appreciating food and drink which now have global dimensions.

In discussing the currency and consequence of the increasingly territorial, AOC-like trend for geographical classification in Australian wine production, Brice (2014a) notes the following view of the European AOC (now AOP) system:

‘The AOC regulations...codified the proposition that the quality of wine was contingent upon the distinctive characteristics of its place of origin into a regulatory system in which the authentication of a wine's provenance could serve to guarantee its quality - and therefore its worth (Demossier 2010; Teil 2010; Unwin 1991).’

In Chapter 4 of my thesis, I explored and attempted to explain how quality and worth are related to geographical provenance and, in investigating the crucial next step that terroir makes, how such provenance is *adduced as cause* for, or ‘serves to guarantee’ as Brice puts it, that quality and worth. Terroir is used in France, and is increasingly used elsewhere, as a kind of shorthand for territorial quality in the provenance of a product. Something I have aimed to do in this thesis is demonstrate the cultural, historical and epistemological specificity that allows terroir to be used, and widely understood, in that easily persuasive way. Sustainability, as I argued in Chapter 7, is also about the ability of an idea to persist through time and prevail in space, and given the cultural, economic and political resonance of terroir, its role in sustainable agriculture in the French regions is as much an epistemological as an ontological one. For terroir to contribute to the sustainable production of a food product outside of France, some predicates of their geographical culture need to be shared or imported. In the justification of the Great British Food programme, and the longer-term plan for the economic future of British food and farming developed by DEFRA, learning about and valuing geographical provenance of food within Britain was proposed as a necessary step. In explicitly encouraging groups of producers to apply for the geographical protection of their products, DEFRA is promoting the use of territorial logic and geographical rhetoric. Britain, like many other countries, is making space for terroir.

But it is not enough for terroir to be identified and then to just ‘be’. As explored in Chapter 5, it has to become, and efforts to make known the qualities of products of terroir do not pay off

equally throughout France, with so many cheeses and other products being ‘wiped off the map’ over the years. This raises questions about the nature of terroir residing in a particular territory, being identifiable in soil, geology, animals, microbes or whatever else. Can terroir in the sense of territorial quality or aptitude live on? What use is it if it does not provide for farmers and, ultimately, consumers? Certainly some of the wine producers of the Cassis region in southern France appear keen to let their grape-growing land be concreted over and used for housing, as Gade (2004) found. And in Savoy, a wine producing area on the banks of Lake Bourget attained an AOC in the 1990s, but was lost to urbanisation at some point in the early 2000s (Benoît Oenophilie, 2015). The colourful, commercial evocation of its terroir is now just a souvenir ([Figure 8.1](#)). Yet with terroirs lost there are terroirs found. Moustier and Fabre (2007) have written of the abandoned olive groves brought back into production in Provence given greater interest in local produce and certain government subsidies. One of the walnut producers I interviewed told me about an abandoned orchard he inherited and which he worked to bring back into commercial production. And with the latest decision by the French government to rescind the old laws governing where grapes can and cannot be planted (Girard, 2015b), there is the possibility that new territories will be planted under vines, new land made brighter by ‘son riant feuillage’ (‘their joyful foliage’) as Roupnel (1932: 246) poetically wrote of the historic plantation of the côte d’Or over a thousand years ago. But how will these new territories be understood as terroirs?



Figure 8.1: Wine label from Charpignat, Savoy; first a VDQS, then an AOC. Now defunct.
Source: Benoît Oenophilie (2015)

The success of products of terroir is, as I have argued throughout this thesis, down to the use of terroir; to its mobilisation in spaces of commerce, evaluation and adjudication; to its export from the territory of origin; to its organisation into maps and compendia of similar geographic propositions. And just as importantly, it is down to its evocation; the stories through which terroir is told; the connection it mediates between land and people, present and past; the culture which is receptive to rural aesthetics and folklore, and, increasingly, images of ecological harmony. Products of terroir need to become economic as specialised goods within a national economy, and be valued within the culture of the countries they are consumed in.

The sustainability of the concept inevitably intersects with the sustainability of agricultural production at the individual farm level, and this is an intersection I have tried to cast some light on in this thesis; in Chapters 6 and 7 above all. The challenge of making a proposed link between product and place economically and culturally valuable is something farmers in

Britain will face if they wish to use the concept of terroir to their advantage, and which they already face with the system of geographical protection that we are becoming ever more invested in. Significantly, there are two cheeses in Britain which received AOP and IGP protection in the 1990s but have since gone out of production. Teviotdale Cheese IGP and Bonchester Cheese AOP were both invented in the early 1980s and produced by the Curtis family at Easter Weens Farm on the Scottish Borders. John and Christian Curtis had developed the products with the expertise of their dairy manager, and lobbied for the recognition of the work of specialist cheese producers like themselves given the regulatory sensitivity of working with raw milk and the financial disincentives of the EU milk quota regime which prevailed in the 1980s and 1990s (Edmonstone, 1996; Scotsman, 2003). The cheeses gathered praise from newspapers in Britain and in the USA (Grigson, 1990; Edmonstone, 1996), and Bonchester cheese was even served on British Rail restaurant cars that shuttled up and down the country, and featured in their on-board magazine (Hawick News, 2007 (1987)). The family invested in a new dairy facility, costing tens of thousands of pounds (Grigson, 1990), and when John Curtis retired in 1998, he hoped that ‘The Bonchester can carry on without me - that's what I would like to see happen’ (Edmonstone, 1996). That would not be the fate of the cheese, however, and now the AOP which it attained, along with the IGP which Teviotdale attained, are relict; stranded assets of agricultural endeavour and the particular more-than-human network which prevailed for a time in the place of production. The producer had prepared the dossiers required by the EU to bestow geographical protection on the cheeses, and included maps which showed the geographical extent (Figure 8.2) within which other potential producers could make the cheese. It would seem, however, that other farms or dairies did not begin production, and when Curtis retired, the cheese retired too.



Figure 8.2: Label and map of geographic origin of Teviotdale Cheese IGP.
Source: (Easter Weens Enterprise, 1997)

The geographical dimensions of this story are interesting. Should we say that the territorial aptitude of that area remains as it ever was? Can we say that the pastures of the Scottish Borders and Northumbria retain their ability to contribute to excellent cheese? And would all the pastures within a 90km radius of Peel Fell be amenable to the production of a cheese with consistent quality? Certainly, in the IGP dossier for Teviotdale cheese it is mentioned that ‘the flavour of these pastures passes into the cheese’, and that this ‘combined with the microbial flora that has colonised the dairy and the unvarying cheese making practices gave the cheese its specific properties’ (Easter Weens Enterprise, 1997: 3). In this, it is much like the defence of the unique quality of Reblochon cheese made today. But unlike Reblochon, these cheeses did not have a history which extended back into previous generations, nor did

they have the support of a network of producers with the success of the cheese as a shared aim, nor did they continue production into the present day where interest in local and artisanal food has accelerated (Marsden, 2004; Whatmore and Clark, 2008; Goodman *et al*, 2012; Paxson, 2013) and might have offered greater economic returns for the innovations and investments made on the farm. For all the qualities of the land, the cattle, the savoir-faire of the producers and the cheeses themselves, it would seem that their production did not achieve a level of sustainability that would see them represent their provenance in the long term.

In the ‘lien au terroir’ (‘link to terroir’) text of French applications for geographical protection (called ‘link to geographical area’ or simply ‘link’ on British applications), groups of producers collaborate with the INAO and with geographers, historians, epicures and experts of various kinds to propose the environmental, material, symbolic, cultural and historical links that the product has with its territory of origin. As I have tried to argue in this thesis, this is the geographical rhetoric that is required to mobilise terroir and make it vital. In the file for the Armagh Bramley Apple IGP (European Union, 2011: 20), it is noted that apple orchards are present in the ‘culture and customs of the area’; in that of the Newmarket Sausage IGP (European Union, 2012), it is noted that the sausage appears in recipe books and guide books, with a recipe unchanged since the Victorian era, and that evidence of its export is to be found in local archival records; and in that of the Waterford Blaa IGP (European Union, 2013), the generic use of wheat to make bread is rendered geographically and historically specific by virtue of being carried out by the descendants of Huguenots who settled in south-east Ireland and made a loaf year in, year out, which they referred to as ‘Blanc’ (white) and which came to be known as ‘Blaa’. Stories matter in terroir. They matter in combination with the materials of the land, the footprints of the livestock, the sugar in the fruit, and the knowledge of the producers who work with them. This is why I feel the

historical and cultural approach I have taken in this thesis is of some value – so that we can appreciate how terroir is put to work and use it in the production of persuasive geographical cases for the success of our own bounty of food and drink products in the British Isles.

I will shortly return to what I see as the main contributions of this thesis, but first I will recap the narrative that I have developed throughout.

The Story So Far

In the first empirical chapter of the thesis, I presented terroirs as territories forged into wider relation. I used archival sources from Burgundy to examine how quality in wine was a controversial matter for negotiation by producers and merchants, how the classifications which sought to stabilise it required judgments, debates and the spinning of spatial stories, and how these processes brought to the fore various territorial disputes. I examined how the promotion of terroir wrought the division of economic opportunity within rural regions, and how the historical circumstances of things *becoming* economic, and the imaginative evocation which followed, proved to be more consequential than largely commensurable physical geographical facts in the recognition of the value of terroir. I demonstrated how the presence of the name of a wine-producing territory in various historical sources could be used as evidence for tradition and the imputation of quality, and in later chapters I argued that this sense of authenticity in anteriority has become a key part of how terroir is understood. Indeed, in this first chapter I went on to discuss how a succession of cartographic propositions and, later, images, allowed for an idiomatic continuity to be expressed in terms of terroir, even as, and sometimes in strategic response to, grounded discontinuities in the field of production,

such as phylloxera. This rhetoric of continuity, supported by and performed through various forms of evidence, allowed producers in Burgundy to establish a kind of jurisprudence of cultural valuation of their goods, and propound the locality, loyalty and constancy of the region's terroirs and their own wine producing practices. Ending with a focus on maps drawn up in the second half of the 19th century, and their utility in establishing a copular relationship between product and place, I drew out the argument that those texts concretised, and sustained through their later emulations, efforts to use spatial definition to stand in for historical uncertainty, and geographical rhetoric to divert attention from episodes of environmental rupture.

I developed an ever closer interest in the modes of articulation of terroir in the second chapter, wherein I attempted to build up a geographically-literate though not canonically geographical theory of how terroir becomes distinctive at the national level. I made an original argument for the way I saw terroir entering the economy of abstracted forms which is present in other areas of French life, and mobilised ideas from elsewhere in the social sciences and humanities to do so. I argued for the importance of the intellectual movements of Romanticism and the Enlightenment alongside the agricultural revolutions of France in rendering the frame through which terroir would later be understood in that nation's culture, and showed how terroir developed its own epistemological life beyond the bounds of agriculture, first in step with Chaptal's revolution in vinification, and later at odds with that vision of terroir as a mark of bad taste. Indeed, as regionalism and nostalgia grew in late-19th century France, and became mass produced in the 20th century, vernacular spaces of language and vernacular spaces of terroir came to be considered as 'hinterlands of anteriority' within which the authenticity, suggested in Chapter 3, could be identified through feelings of identity, meaning, attachment and stability. But, as I went on to argue, formal lines are

needed as well as vernacular stories for terroirs to be valued, and such spatial stories must be compiled into a national system, or ‘meta-story’ as de Certeau might put it. I mapped the processes of abstraction and parataxis that are involved in this operation, retaining the parallel vision of language and terroir, but diverging at the point where language became standardised but where for terroirs the conditions of entry into a national system were standardised, not the idiography of terroirs themselves. In this way, I attempted to account for how terroir is mobilised in the present-day system of AOP food and drink in France; a mobilisation that is so familiar in France that it is rarely critically examined. I drew on an original combination of theoretical ideas from Serres, Bourdieu, Olsson and Ricoeur to propose a model of seven operations that anchors terroir within an epistemological framework which permits its official geographical protection, and this operated as the background to the later recounting of interviews carried out on fieldwork to investigate how the notion of terroir was understood by those actors most preoccupied with it in practical terms.

In the third chapter, I tabulated and mashed onto a map the responses to the question I asked producers of ‘Qu’évoque le mot terroir pour vous?’. Paying attention to the words and phrases used allowed me to witness how explanations of what terroir means lay the ground for philosophical, practical and political discussions of how terroir is operationalised and made valuable; and it allowed me to step into France’s gastronomic map to appreciate the idiography of terroir’s meaning and articulation as well as the idiography of the country’s agricultural possibilities. Given that during interviews the producers of Reblochon had been almost unanimous in their identification of ‘soil’, ‘grass’ and ‘quality’, this raised the question of whether this should be attributed to the similarity and specificity of their territories, or the successful convention of their epistemological predicates of terroir. I thus took the opportunity to follow methodological innovations in historical geography and weave

archival documents with outdoor participant observation to create a hybrid retelling of the history and present-day performance of the terroir of the Reblochon cheese. This retelling allowed me to show how the varied field-based and archival epistemologies of terroir can be used to appreciate the value and originality, and to read against the grain of the histories recounted for, products that enjoy the benefits of labels of geographical protection. As I climbed the mountain with the cattle, I explored the imaginative framing of terroir, the implementation of *savoir-faire*, and the construction of sustainable agricultural praxis. And I put the progressive development of these things in the light of a history of discontinuities and substantial changes to the production chain under conditions of modernisation. I argued that terroir is entered into the publicly experienced circulation of images and practices by those who defend it, and in this way terroir is mobilised out of its territory of origin, providing a practical contemporary iteration of the historical story of terroir being opened to wider relations told in the first two chapters. Leaving terroir just ‘be’ is usually not the strategy pursued in the product chains I investigated; rather, it is made to constantly ‘become’ through being promoted, repackaged and experienced in different ways. Drawing out the premise that territorial aptitude can itself change allowed me to make the claim that terroir is neither predisposed to stasis, nor that the same qualities that were evident in a product when it first emerged will necessarily be transmitted in its later iterations. And in the specific case of the Reblochon cheese, I used archival sources to show how today’s two-speed system of production was cloven from a traditional peasant preparation, such that small farm producers and industrial producers of the cheese may today both talk of terroir, though they will articulate it in different ways.

Beginning the fourth empirical chapter with an exploration of the ways in which academic, legal and popular accounts have proposed the importance of relatively static physiographic

things and esoteric *savoir-faire* as the originality of *terroir*, I began to ask how attending to livelier, smaller-scale and harder to appreciate elements and practices could put such accounts at risk, and elucidate the processes through which *terroir* is put to work on a day-to-day basis in concert with a range of more-than-human actors. I then moved on to consider the growing use of scientific approaches to assessing what *terroir* is and what it is worth. I considered how soil has become a site of epistemological and ontological controversy, which I waded into through my conversations in the field; and how curated encounters with, and maps of, lively microbiogeographies within spaces of production allow existing cases for geographical protection in food and drink to be made more strongly – within, that is, a culture that already accepts the relevance of linking quality to territorial provenance. Finally, I began to address the question of whether environmentally sustainable methods such as organics and biodynamics can facilitate the expression of *terroir*, and I provided evidence of the practices and reasoned positions of those farmers who have entered those modes of production. It became clear in this chapter, however, that the proposition of organic facilitation of *terroir* made sense within a particular, hard to objectively evaluate epistemological framework, and within a vision of what constitutes *terroir* shared amongst those who had converted to organics and biodynamics. I began to see the outline of a proposition of *terroir* in organic and biodynamic production wherein promotion of biotic life in the field is an inextricable part of the territorial inheritance, authenticity, and quality of the final product.

I pursued these points into the fifth and final chapter, in which I drew out the contours of the relationship between individual and collective action in the ongoing promotion of *terroir*. I argued that the way *terroir* is governed may be understood in terms of the concept being held as a convention, and disputed as a bone of contention, within the group of producers which France, and the EU, insist must stand for it. I relayed the idea that belonging to such a group

poses problems for individual expression and paradoxical opportunities for autonomy amongst farmers. And I argued that, on a larger scale, if the cultural predicates of terroir need to be exported to permit the economic viability and sustainability of products sold on its basis, the nature of the places and markets they are exported to, and the changes that terroir undergoes in such environments, are worthy of more in-depth study. I examined how the Cahier des Charges, or production manual, which is in use in every geographically protected production chain in France, contains and communicates the shared predicates of practice and promotes collegiality, even as it allows individuals the opportunity to go beyond its requirements; and how it can pose problems for producers who have to abide also by the philosophical and practical exigencies of environmentally sustainable modes of production. I examined how the growth of geographical protection in Europe has begun to squeeze the INAO out from its position as sole adjudicator on claimed links to terroir, and in this way endanger the continuity of its application of expertise in this area. And I examined how terroir itself is being used by actors outwith the jurisdiction of INAO, both within the geographical culture of France, and in new spaces where terroir is one strategy amongst many to differentiate products in a crowded and globally connected marketplace. I developed the idea that multiple competing visions of terroir can be used in the pursuit of multiple notions of sustainability, and draw upon different sets of cultural predicates according to the arena they are deployed in; and I called for more attention to be paid to the idiography of modes of governance of terroir, not just to its physiographic differences.

The Contributions of the Thesis

As I argued in the Theoretical Dispositions and Methodology chapters, this thesis could have been carried out in very different ways by researchers with any number of different approaches. From the cultural and historical philosophical position I retained, and the oral, participatory, discursive and archival methods I adopted, I have elaborated a thesis in which terroir is understood as a matter of epistemological controversy, aspired sustainability, material continuity and change, and profound economic and cultural import. I have used the things I read, the materials I generated and the ideas I put at risk in the field and the academy to map out a vision of terroir which forms a vital and storied connection between the land of France and the identity of France; and I would venture that it is no coincidence that I have drawn inspiration from the books with those very titles (Clout, 1983; Braudel, 1990) that can be found on the library shelves between geography and history. To summarise briefly, the four main contributions of my thesis are that:

1) Terroir is built through geographic delimitation and historical density in explanation

The existence of terroir, drawing upon whatever material, living or symbolic elements may be adduced and assembled, must be defined within a certain area so that its representation of originality and uniqueness can be logically tied to a certain part of the world. This is the fundamental link between terroir and the European system of geographical protection in food. To be acceptable within compendious systems of commensurable forms, terroirs must be mobilised as geometrically shaped geographical propositions. But the sense of authenticity that is imputed to products of

terroir draws upon a sense of anteriority, just as demonstrable continuity is expected in their production by the bodies that oversee their certification. In the dossiers that propose, and the Cahiers des Charges that protect their originality, products of terroir must point to practices that are constant and the circulation of the product within narratives and stories about their region of origin. Maps, as authoritative and formal geographical propositions, can powerfully relay idiomatic continuity even where quite grounded discontinuities in production have taken place. In standing for, and being seen as typical of, certain places in France, products of terroir are celebrated, consumed and demanded by a society more and more in search of its roots and keen to anchor identity within storied spaces. With similar trends being noted in British and American society, there is significant potential for products from those countries to use terroir as a commercially successful strategy.

2) The sustainability of terroir is an ongoing cultural and historical achievement

Products of terroir need to reach consumers outside of their territory of origin if they are to make their specialised production worthwhile within the interconnected economy of a modern nation state, and if they are to be recognised within the national system of geographically protected foods. France's popular culture is one that has for several centuries developed in tandem with the concept of terroir, and products of terroir succeed today within a renewed atmosphere of rural valorisation. The idiography of success and failure of regional food and drink in France today speaks to varied histories of export and expansion on the one hand, and competition from other products and other profitable land uses on the other. As a comparative advantage, terroir is retained as a concept where it is profitable for the farmers that use it; but it can be a source of contention as well as convention when different actors within a production chain wish to produce it in ways that differ from their confrères. Producers

can profitably leverage the ability to speak for, demonstrate and perform terroir through spaces accessible to consumers, whether individually on farms, or in concert with other actors and organisations at larger-scale events. And not only do French products of terroir succeed in export markets by virtue of the work that has been done to propagate predicates of the culture that places value in products from specific places, as opposed to other means of attributing value; but the different cultures within the governance of terroir production chains do much to affect the continued viability and value of the products themselves.

3) In organic and biodynamic farming, the parameters of terroir have subtly, but significantly, changed

Whilst the sustainability of terroir consists in large part in its ability to last through time, and specifically in its conflation in the past hundred and fifty years with morally good, aesthetically pleasing and ever more accessible rural spaces – it has most recently intersected with modes of agriculture which describe themselves as sustainable in an environmental and specifically ecological way. Claims made for terroir on the basis of dynamic and living ecological predicates are troubling for claims that rest on more static inherited physiographic predicates. Organic and biodynamic claims to originality and quality measurable at the microbial level open new avenues in the identification of what constitutes terroir, even though the scientific case on their superiority, ecological or otherwise, over conventional modes of production is hard to close. They certainly invite closer attention being paid to agricultural practices, and would repay more-than-human geographical investigation. Livelier and more natural explanations and demonstrations of terroir are complementary to the propositions made for terroir on the basis of rural traditions which exclude highly technological and industrial images. But drawing sources of

value from lively ecological constituents of agricultural spaces calls into question the lines drawn around terroirs in the past, and those who ultimately market their products on the basis of their ecological integrity and personality may draw away from the established AOP system. This creates the potential for apparently disloyal competition within the collective governance of a product of terroir.

4) Terroir invites critical epistemological investigation

To assess the claims and counter-claims made for terroir, to explore the geographical rhetoric used in its articulation, and to examine its varied apprehension in different food chains and different parts of France, attending to how knowledge is made about terroir and the ways in which such knowledge circulates is a critical academic intervention. Asking ‘Qu’évoque le mot terroir pour vous?’ opens a door into how terroir is understood by those who work most closely with it, and it is a first step into arguments and reasoned positions concerning the role of terroir in agriculture, geographical culture, and culture in its broadest sense. It is a question that can begin a conversation that leads to epistemologically incommensurable propositions, but their very incommensurability is an incisive window on the politics and controversies that are part of the ongoing operationalisation of the concept. Despite material changes, the message of locality, loyalty and constancy in products of terroir has been consistently communicated over the past hundred years, and has become a recognised predicate of terroir through accumulated rhetorical association and through the adoption of it as part of the modes of evaluating terroir in the INAO government agency. Indeed, in France, objective analyses of terroir, popular in the new world and amongst natural scientists, occupy an epistemological position inferior to that of the subjective imputation of geographical and historical consistency in terroir. With a deeper epistemological knowledge, and a greater epistemological sensitivity, we can

use the concept of terroir, and the logic and rhetoric it has entailed in France, to more effectively make claims for geographical foods in the United Kingdom. Indeed, in some places this is already happening, with Paxson (2013: 208-9) recounting how such ‘reverse engineering’ of the concept of terroir is currently being attempted by producers in the USA so as to create compelling ‘visions of quality’ in food that may be tried, tested, shared and remembered. Throughout this thesis, I have deployed much more of my intellectual resources in an epistemological exploration of terroir than an ontological one, though there is still much more that needs to be done, on both counts.

What Next?

I feel there are four directions in which research into terroir could most profitably be pursued, given the findings of this thesis. The first would be to delve deeper into the ontology of terroir from a more-than-human perspective. I became progressively more interested in epistemology as this project unfolded, and, as I have argued above, it is in that domain of knowledge that so many of the controversies and successes of terroir may be charted. But part of the reason must also be my limitations in the application of more explicitly ontologically interested approaches such as Actor-Network Theory. Høyrup and Munk (2007) and Brice (2014a) have already made compelling first steps into terroir through lively material perspectives, and I feel much more could be done in this direction, not least through attending to the microbial geographies presented in Chapter 6. As I found organic and biodynamic farmers already identifying networks of lively biotic actors as part of what makes their terroir valuable, there is a potentially rich seam of work to be undertaken to better understand not

only how such actors interact within the field, but how farmers and others further down the food chain interact with them and develop their own sense of self in relation to terroir.

The second would be to chart the conceptual life of terroir amongst producers in countries other than France. The first targets could well be Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and the Aoste Valley region of Italy, given that they all have the distinct advantage of terroir as a native part of one of their official languages. Having carried out two interviews in Switzerland, I have made a tiny dint of progress into learning about how the sharing of language might yet contain differences in meaning and rhetoric and, moreover, differences in traditions, territories and savoir-faire; but much more needs to be done. The second target would be the rest of Europe, to see how the concept of terroir in itself is being mobilised within the rhetoric that it has prefigured in the continent-wide system of geographical protection. And the third target, following what two of my respondents, and Trubek (2008) and Paxson (2013) have pointed to, would be the USA. Though a longstanding opponent of Europe in WTO trade negotiations, that country is becoming more and more interested in terroir. It would be fascinating to find out more about how American producers and consumers have begun to domesticate that concept.

The third would be to examine in more detail how terroir is being communicated in spaces of professional economic discernment and investment. A recent initiative has sought to connect mainly city-based investors with young or struggling wine producers (Humbert, 2015) and thereby fund emerging ‘artistes du vin, de vignerons qui ont une véritable sensibilité’ (‘artists of wine, wine producers with a real sensitivity’). It would be fascinating to see what visions of terroir are created in this new funding landscape. And, following conversations with professors and students in Paris, there appears to be burgeoning interest in how terroir is

understood by importers, governments and other actors outside of France, and how French products of the land might continue to figure within aspirational and globalised representations of food and drink culture. Qualitative research would be well applied in responding to that interest.

And the fourth direction further research could take would be to drill further into the question of the interaction of organic modes of production and terroir. I did not manage to provide a definitive answer to the question I set myself at the start of this project of whether organic methods can facilitate the expression of terroir. What I found was different, to some degree incommensurable perceptions and valuations of terroir which rendered the question very difficult for me to answer, but provided materials of compelling epistemological and cultural interest. But I feel a larger project which drew upon more case studies and was clear about how it wanted to define terroir from the beginning might find trends that are easier to discern. A first possible step would be to combine my findings with those from interviews that have been carried out with farmers in different parts of France, and given the two colleagues in France that I mentioned in the Introduction who have indeed done this, I feel this would be eminently feasible. When the ink on dry on this thesis, that may have to be what I do next.

* * *

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(N.B. References to archival materials are provided in footnotes throughout the text)

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Appendix 1

Participant Information Form given to interview respondents

(Translation follows)



Février 2013

Information aux participant(e)s

Le projet et votre participation

Notre rencontre (ou nos rencontres) figure(nt) dans un projet de recherche doctoral sur le terroir et l'agriculture durable à l'Ecole de Géographie et de l'Environnement de l'Université d'Oxford.

En tant que chercheur, je m'intéresse aux dynamiques des terroirs; au rapport entre la tradition et l'innovation dans l'élaboration des produits du terroir; aux exigences et aux pratiques des agricultures raisonnées, biologiques et biodynamiques; au lien entre un produit alimentaire et son territoire d'origine; et aux modes de communication entre producteurs, consommateurs, transformateurs, et d'autres acteurs de la filière agro-alimentaire.

En traitant ces sujets, j'utiliserai des méthodes qualitatives, dont des interviews, des analyses de discours et de textes, de l'observation des activités sur le terrain (soit aussi de la participation à ces activités – par exemple, vendanges), de la cartographie et des recherches d'archives.

Je voudrais donc vous poser des questions sur lesdits sujets, et observer vos travaux et la vie de votre exploitation, afin de mieux comprendre les enjeux qui sont évoqués, et afin d'écrire ma thèse et les autres communications qui peuvent provenir de ce projet.

Votre participation est volontaire et vous pouvez quitter le projet à n'importe quel moment si vous le voulez.

Le projet a été revu et autorisé par le *University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee* (Comité centrale sur la déontologie des recherches de l'Université d'Oxford).

L'utilisation et la communication des informations

Les informations que je collectionne lors de notre rencontre/nos rencontres figureront



dans ce projet de recherche et sa réalisation en thèse, et pourront figurer dans les autres communications qui en proviennent. Toutefois, vous avez la choix de rester dans l'anonymat – dans ce cas, vous serez appelé par un pseudonyme, ou par allusion à votre métier et votre région (par ex. *Viticulteur A*; *Nuciculteur B*, *de l'Isère*, etc).

Je garderai les notes que je prends lors de notre rencontre/nos rencontres sur papier et sur ordinateur. Elles resteront privées, et ne seront ouvertes à la consultation que par ceux qui m'aident à ce projet de recherche. Vous avez le droit de les lire si vous le voulez.

La thèse, imprimée, sera soumise à la bibliothèque universitaire. Il est possible qu'elle soit également soumise à la bibliothèque numérique de l'université – dans ce cas, la thèse sera disponible à tous sur le site web de l'université. Je vous informerai prochainement de la nature exacte de la soumission de la thèse.

Les autres communications issues du projet peuvent comprendre des communications orales ou illustrées aux colloques ou aux conférences; des articles dans les revues, des magazines ou des sites web; et des discours de manières plus informelles.

Je vous prie de m'informer si vous avez la moindre objection à ces utilisations et à ces communications des informations que je collectionne.

Questions et réclamations

Je reste à votre disposition pour toute question que vous ayez sur ce projet. Mon adresse en Angleterre est: Rory HILL, Hertford College, Catte Street, Oxford OX1 3BW, Royaume-Uni. Je vous ai transmis aussi mon adresse eMail et mon numéro de téléphone en France.

Si vous voulez porter plainte d'une manière officielle, veuillez contacter le Research Ethics Committee (Comité sur la déontologie des recherches) à l'Université à cette adresse: Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee, Oxford University, Hayes House, 75 George Street, Oxford OX1 2BQ, Royaume-Uni.

Indication de consentement

Conformément aux règlements de l'université, je vous demanderai à signer un formulaire pour indiquer votre accord à notre engagement.

Je vous remercie de votre intérêt et de votre éventuelle participation.

Rory HILL.

Translation of Participant Information Form

Participant Information

The project and your participation

Our meeting (or meetings) form part of a doctoral research project on terroir and sustainable agriculture being undertaken at the School of Geography and the Environment in the University of Oxford.

As the researcher, I am interested in the dynamics of terroirs; in the relationship between tradition and innovation in the production of products of terroir; in the demands and practices of reasoned, organic and biodynamic agriculture; in the link between a food product and its territory of origin; and in the modes of communication between producers, consumers, manufacturers, and other actors in the production chain.

To investigate these subjects, I will use qualitative methods, including interviews, discourse and textual analysis, observation of activities in the field (which may include participation in these activities; in grape harvesting, for example), cartography and archival research.

I would therefore like to ask you some questions on these subjects, and to observe your work and the life of your farm, so as to better understand the issues that are raised, and so as to write my thesis and the other materials which might come out of this project.

Your participation would be voluntary and you may stop your involvement in the project at any time should you so wish.

This project has been reviewed and authorised by the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee.

Use and communication of information

The information that I collect during our meeting(s) will be used in this research project and in its written thesis form, and may be used in the other materials that might be produced from it. You have the choice to remain anonymous, however – in this case, you would be given a pseudonym, or alluded to by reference to your profession and your region (e.g. *Wine producer A*; *Walnut producer B*, *from the Isère*, etc).

I will keep the notes that I take during our meeting(s) on paper and on computer. They will remain private, and will only be consultable by those who help me with this research project. You have the right to read those notes if you wish.

The printed thesis will be submitted to the university library. It is also possible that it will be submitted to the digital archive of the university library – in this case, the thesis will be available to all on the university website. I will let you know soon about the exact nature of the thesis submission.

The other materials generated by the project may include oral presentations – which may be illustrated – at colloquia and at conferences; articles in journals, magazines or websites; and more informal discussions.

Please let me know if you have any objection to these uses and forms of communication of the information I collect.

Questions and complaints

I remain at your disposal for any question you might have on this project. My address in England is: Rory Hill, Hertford College, Catte Street, Oxford OX1 3BW, United Kingdom. I have also given you my eMail address and my telephone number in France.

If you would like to make an official complaint, please contact the Research Ethics Committee of the university at this address: Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee, Oxford University, Hayes House, 75 George Street, Oxford OX1 2BQ, United Kingdom.

Indication of consent

In accordance with university regulations, I will ask you to sign a consent form to indicate your agreement with the engagement outlined above.

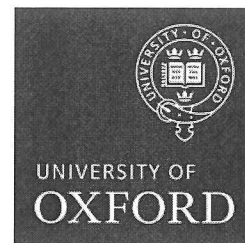
With thanks for your interest and for your possible participation,

Rory Hill.

Appendix 2

Consent Form given to interview respondents

(Translation follows)



Novembre 2012

Formulaire de Consentement

Notre rencontre (ou nos rencontres) figure(nt) dans un projet de recherche doctoral sur le terroir et l'agriculture durable qui se déroule à l'Université d'Oxford.

En tant que participant(e) à ce projet de recherche, je confirme que:

- Je participe volontairement, je ne suis sous aucune contrainte.
- J'ai lu le document 'Information aux participant(e)s' qu'on m'a donné.
- Je comprends que je peux quitter ce projet à n'importe quel moment et de n'en faire plus part.
- Je comprends que le projet serait réalisé en thèse et en d'autres communications ou publications.
- Je suis d'accord avec l'engagement qu'on m'a proposé.

Signé, ce 5 Novembre 2012

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the participant.

Participant(e)

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop and a horizontal stroke.

Rory HILL

Chercheur

A large black rectangular box redacting a significant portion of the bottom of the page.

Translation of Consent Form

Consent Form

Our meeting (or our meetings) form part of a doctoral research project on terroir and sustainable agriculture at the University of Oxford.

As a participant in this research project, I confirm that:

- I am participating voluntarily; I am not under any constraint.
- I have read the 'Participant Information' document that I was given.
- I understand that I can stop my involvement in the project at any time and have nothing more to do with it.
- I understand that the project will be made into a thesis and into other presentations or publications.
- I am in agreement with the undertaking proposed.

Signed, this [DATE] 2015

[NAME]

Participant

Rory Hill

Researcher

Appendix 3

Methodology for creation of map mash-up
(Figure 5.9 in Chapter 5)

Methodology of Map Mash-Up

The map in [Figure 5.9](#) in Chapter 5 was made following the example described in Cidell (2010). The website WordItOut (<http://worditout.com>) provided the online software with which to generate the word clouds. The exact steps I took were as follows:

- 1) A list of the words and short phrases (no longer than seven words each) from each participant's response to the interview question 'Qu'évoque le mot terroir pour vous?' ('What does the word terroir mean to you?') was drawn up. The number of words and phrases from each respondent varied from three to twenty-four.
- 2) These responses were compiled and grouped into three lists; one for each production chain. In phrases of multiple words, underscores were placed between the words to keep them together as a phrase in the word cloud. Plurals of words were manually converted to singular words, and certain very similar phrases rendered synonymous, as follows:

For the Burgundy wine production word cloud, *philosophie* and *philosophies* were made synonymous; *appellation* and *appellations* were made synonymous.

For the Isère walnut production word cloud, *lien a son territoire* was shortened to *lien au territoire* ; *faire de mieux avec ce qu'on a* was shortened to *faire de mieux* ; *analyse* and *analyses* were made synonymous.

For the Savoy Reblochon production word cloud, *production approprié au territoire* was made synonymous with *lien au territoire*.

For the Lake Geneva region wine production word cloud, *main de l'homme* was made synonymous with *rôle de l'homme*.

- 3) These three lists were used as the word lists with which to make three separate word clouds on the website <http://worditout.com> on the 26th of July 2015.
- 4) The word cloud creation settings used were as shown on the following screenshot extract:

Enter text

Settings: Text Word list Word cloud

Word cloud

Customise how the word cloud will be drawn and decorated

Colours

Background colour:

Blend colours of the words: >

Vary word colour with: Randomly

Number of colours: 5 +1 -1

Colour blending method: Rainbow

Text

Font: sans-serif

Size

Vary the word size: 60 > 15

Vary word size with: Count

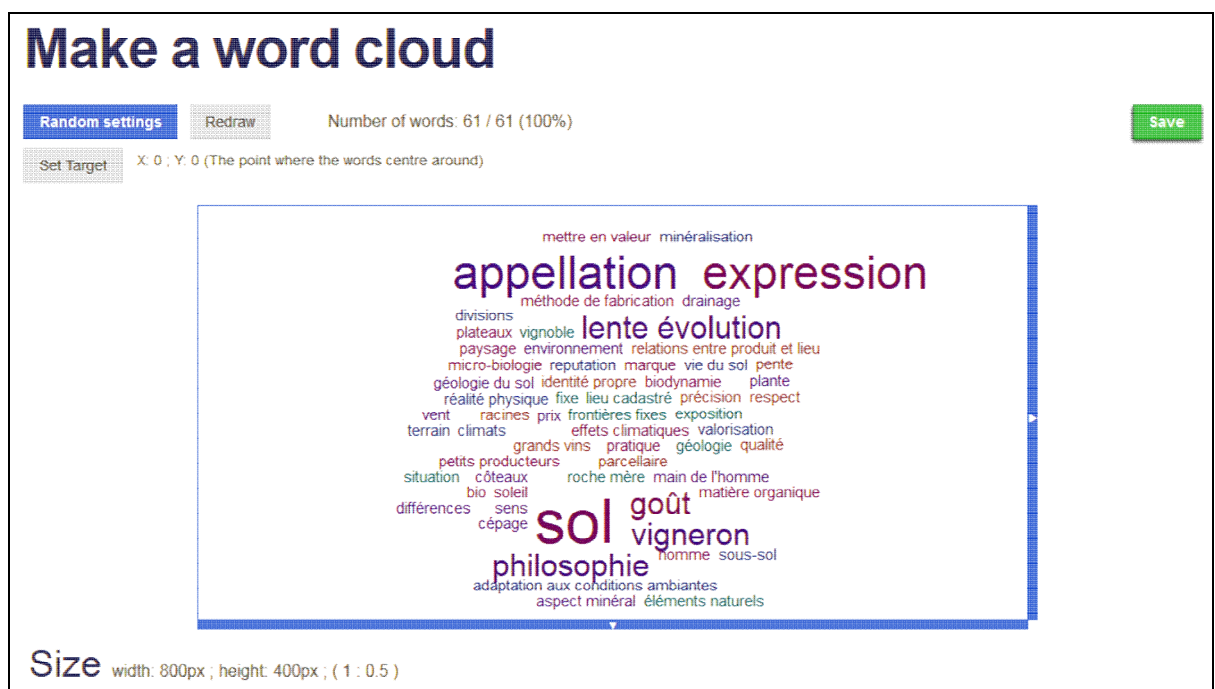
Layout

Word cloud margin: 10

Negative values will allow words to extend beyond the edge of the word cloud

Apply

- 5) The word cloud was generated; the following screenshot extract is how the Burgundy word list was generated:



- 6) These word cloud images were then copied and pasted onto a map of eastern France sourced from OpenStreetMap basemaps in ESRI ArcGIS.

Final editing was done using the Inkscape vector graphics software.