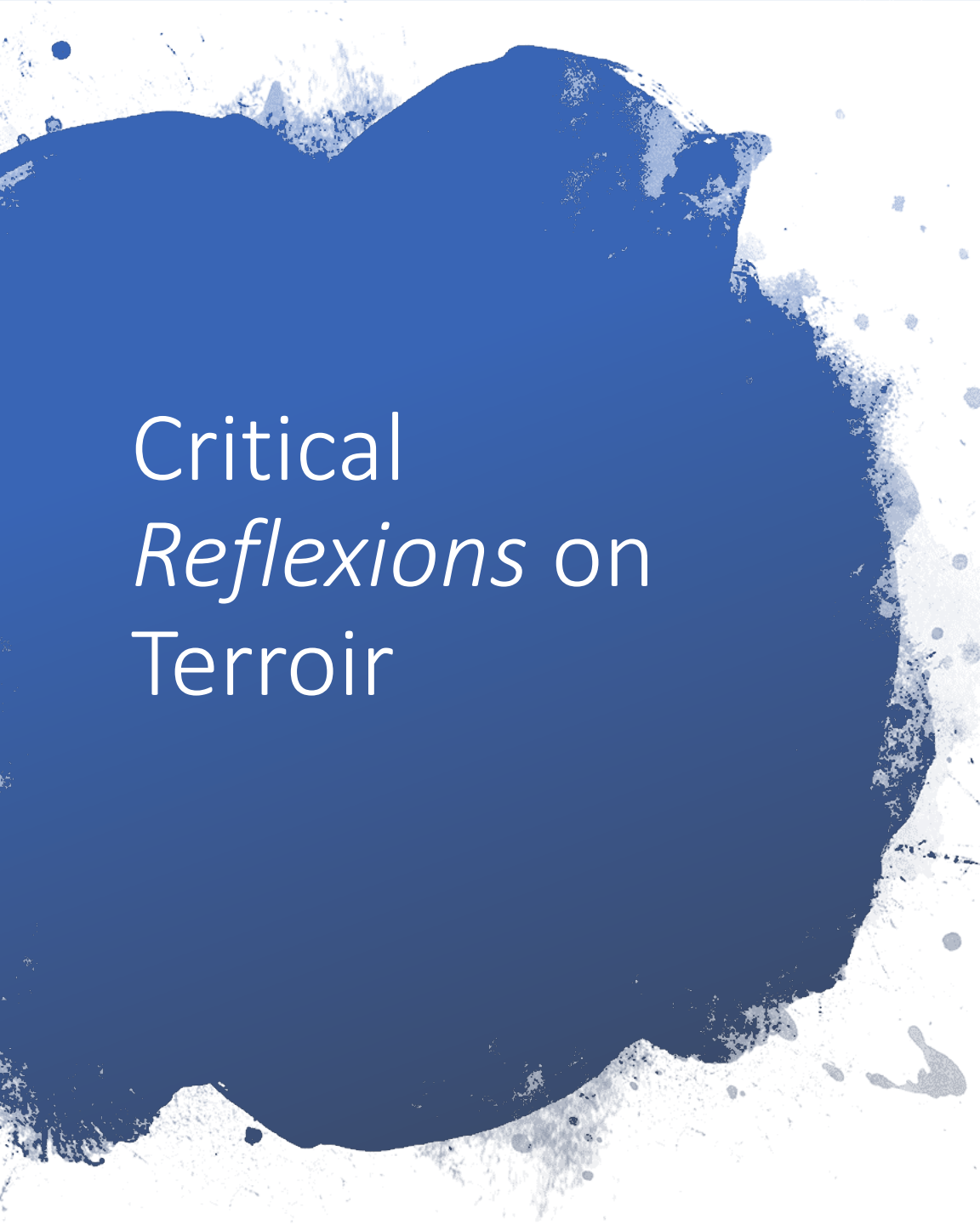


The Sparkling Symposium
Thursday November 28th,
Sheffield Hallam University

Professor Marion Demossier



Critical *Reflexions* on Terroir

Throughout the last decade, the global world of wine has seen a radical transformation, defined by the emergence of the concept of terroir as a space for renegotiation of past, present, and future ways of producing, selling, and consuming wine. But what is terroir? And why is it attracting so much interest from academics, producers, experts, and wine consumers? Moreover, what does it tell us about our society, modernity, and world views? And what does the terroir window reveal about the new wine world order? As wine has served as the model for linking product and place together as part of the Geographical Indication (GI) regime for European food and foodstuffs, the question “what does terroir do to wine?” is of crucial importance. My talk will discuss the long-term implications of the terroir strategy and its limitations in the changing global world of wine.

Introduction

- Thirty years of fieldwork on terroir, from Burgundy to New Zealand and the worlds of wine. What can we learn?
- Reflexive and critical positioning.
- Anthropological approach.
- But if the language of 'terroir' and tradition is to be abandoned then what kind of discourse can be put in its place? (Harvey 2002: 100)

Historicising Terroir

- Burgundy inter-war period and the development of the concept of terroir. French ideology and history of ideas (Parker 2015). Economic Folklore. (Laferté 2006).
- Legal concept forms the basis of the discussion on 'quality wines'. Denomination of Origin.(Fourcade 2012). Construction of Place and Taste.
- Expand to food and foodstuff 1990s. European governance.
- Broader context of international economic governance. Old and New World. Intellectual property TRIPS. WTO. 'Champagne'. (Gangjee 2017)
- Heritagisation UNESCO and wine heritage sites. Beyond terroir? GI and PDO

Terroir and Locality, a grounded French concept transnationally deployed

- A very French concept up to the 1990s.
- Legal dimension. The concept, which dates back to the 1930s, emphasises the relationship between a given place, its micro-climatic characteristics and the local culture incarnated by wine growers and their production methods. The AOC system helped to consolidate the mythical image of an ahistorical terroir producing a wine with a taste unchanged since time immemorial. It also provided a strict geographical definition of the “high quality” wine production areas, sometimes down to very small areas (Fourcade 2012: 528).
- According to the terroir logic, strict rules concerning grape varieties, pruning methods, viticultural techniques and oenological practices govern each AOC through a system of self-regulation concerning what is defined as *‘usages, bons, locaux, loyaux et constants’*. Normative framework.

Terroir and the changing global landscape of wine

Since the 1990s, emergence of terroir as a critical, self-reflexive and polarised set of ideas shaped by world views and capitalisms.

Tensions between producing and crafting, between doing and disengaging.

- Beyond terroir ? Burgundy and the *climats de Bourgogne* (Demossier 2018)
- Languedoc (Smith 2016)
- USA terroir American Viticultural Area
- China, Shangri La (Galipeau 2020)
- Former socialist states, Moldova (Daniela 2018)
- Australia, Mc Laren Vale (Skinner 2018; 2019) and New Zealand
- And what about Champagne? GB sparkling wines?

What does terroir do to wine?

- Progressive harmonisation and standardisation. Decline of Diversity in terms of grape varieties, local technical cultures, practical solutions and tastes. More competitive market.
- Imitation and reproduction. Boundaries blurred and legal system under threat. Progressive loss of wine culture and of the connection between city and countryside. Where is authenticity?
- Individualism/collectivism often criticised. 'Corporatist and conservative logic rooted in privilege, experience and tradition' (Fourcade 2012: 539). Sociality?

Wine Futures...

- Economic space of competition has changed in both form and scale over time (Harvey 2002: 98). Erosion of monopoly through disconnection to locality. What next?
- Increasing globalisation. Future of terroir narrative claim ? Language of terroir and tradition is now abandoned for... Heritagisation through UNESCO listing. Bourgogne, Champagne and Prosecco are recent examples. Shift in value?
- In the context of a fluid and post-modern environmental shift, the transition to terroir as text to *climats* as visual and ecological landscape. Oenological tourism and disconnection to place of production.
- How to reconcile these contradictions with the climate change agenda and the environmental preoccupations? Social demand and generational gap.
- Rethinking the worlds of wine 'Sous les pavés la vigne'. Documentary film 'la vigne hybride' by Héloïse Bauchet et Lise Deville won a prize in 2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzYtiUPJzbQ>

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