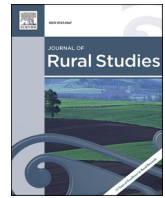




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The will for terroir: A communicative approach

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the concept of *terroir* in the light of the communication practices. It provides a literature review illustrated with a case observation. The author identifies three key stages in the constitution of the *terroir* through communication: organizational norms and interaction; the circulation of public relations, marketing and media messages, and promotion; and a meaningful consumer experience that closes the circle of a *terroir*-based storytelling. Here, communication processes play a leading role, which includes the agency of diverse stakeholders. The author argues that, among these stakeholders, geographical indication (GI) organizations are leading agents that build symbolic *terroir* practices. One of the text's principal theses is that *terroir* is a socio-cultural construction embedded in storytelling practices with a broad scientific, economic, social and cultural exchange. For this *terroir* to exist, there must be a collective will, driven by the interests of a wide range of stakeholders such as policymakers, local communities, vine growers, winemakers, marketers and consumers. The practice of defining, communicating and circulating this storytelling is what finally transfers agency to the narrative itself in what the author refers to as the *will for terroir*. The article illustrates the process with a case study of a wine GI in Catalonia (Spain) and discusses how the *will for terroir* is relevant at each stage.

1. Introduction

Early in 2020 I carried out a research project into wine geographical indications (GIs)¹ and communication. The notion of *terroir* emerged from the outset and I felt a need for a concise definition.² Therefore, I started the fieldwork asking a small but successful wine producer in Catalonia to show me where the *terroir* was. We visited land, villages and crops. We touched the soils and talked about minerality, discussed rains, winds and pollinations. We commented cultivation, processing and bottling techniques. He told me about commercialization and marketing tools for a small winery like his own. I tasted his wines which, in his words, are the final *expression of terroir*. What exactly was *terroir* then? It was not defined by a single element. While inspecting a vineyard, the winemaker stopped and said, "Look, this crop is close to some wild rosemary plants. Bees go and back forth. This is also a part of *terroir*".³ I was even more puzzled. However, it was then that I started to understand.

Covid-19 did not help. I had to cancel a research visit to Quebec so I focused on published materials and fieldwork closer to home. After carefully inspecting the state of the art, I noted that despite the resonance of *terroir*, particularly in the wine sector, there is no single definition. Anyway, my concerns were being addressed. *Terroir* was not just the land or the soil, the climate or the grape qualities, not even the villages and their traditions, the marketing, or the final product and taste. It was the interaction of all these aspects articulated in stories told by humans, by organizations, by stakeholders. But more important than this was the understanding that for these stories to exist these agents need to have a *will for terroir*. This *will* works at a variety of levels from vigneron to restaurateurs and involves all stakeholders formulating discourses about soils, landscape, human relations, and consumption in an agricultural system. I also detected that GIs played a special role; they were actors with strong agency in the construction of *terroirs*. Agents such as producers, marketers and consumers can activate narratives of *terroir* driven by different, even contradictory, motivations. In this

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¹ According to World Intellectual Property Organization (2020), a GI is "a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin".

² For reasons of readability, from this point on in this text, the term *terroir* will appear in roman type.

³ The Catalan word *terrer* refers, among other things, to the land where people have grown up and live and can be used as a translation of *terroir* in the local culture. The term is evolving and expanding among stakeholders and experts, who use it to refer to *terroir*, even though some authors maintain that there are cultural differences with the French concept (Agüera-Donay and Torelló i Sibill, 2012). In Catalonia, the French word *terroir* is not popular but *terrer* is gaining acceptance. For viticulture, Institut Català de la Vinya i el Vi (Catalan Institute of Vine and Wine) used the concept of *vi de finca* for GI wines (INCAVI 2021).

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regard, there are particular wills. But once the narratives of terroir have been settled and are circulating, they converge in a collective force or stream, a public narrative that nowadays can be accessed on-line. Here, the existence of a GI organization contributes to the *will for terroir*. Consistently, the aim of the article is to conduct a literature review and to propose a communicative approach to terroir, illustrating the *will for terroir* through a case observation in Catalonia.

But, why a communicative approach to terroir? Firstly because terroir is a communicative construction; it is constituted by communication practices that go beyond media, marketing and PR strategies. As we will argue, a number of scholars explain terroir by stressing the human relationships and interactions between human and natural elements, but few specifically focus on communication: narration, stories, arguments, discourses and topics. Communication needs actors with agentic power to transform realities; they are agents of terroir. The *will of terroir* is the force of various stakeholders that drives terroir to exist throughout the communicative action. We will see this illustrated in three stages: organizational; media, PR and marketing; and consumer practices. In all three, a variety of agents, ranging from regulators to wine lovers, engage in discourses and narratives in which they argue, discuss, problematize and promote terroir. Secondly, future research requires a communicative approach to terroir because it provides a map of paths that lead to a greater understanding of the constitution of terroir. We need to find and analyse the stories in their context, look for their meanings and motivations, see how are they constructed, what elements and arguments they use, and what topics they are based on. Before starting this journey, we need to start looking at the perspectives adopted by previous explorers of the territory of terroir.

2. Perspectives and imagination

Terroir is a French word loaded with a broad set of meanings. From our perspective, we need to emphasize the historical dimensions of terroir because it is the sum of storytelling practices that, over time, have sedimented layer upon layer of social recognition. Thomas Parker (2015) adopted a cultural approach to review the history of the concept and found that terroir is linked to a sense of French identity. Originated in the Middle Ages, the term progressed from expressing a sense of region, with a focus on soil and land use, to a complex meaning attached to product identification, rural life and even national memory. Mark A. Matthews (2015, 160–62) noted that for a period of almost 300 years—from the 17th to the 19th century—terroir had the pejorative meaning of the “earthy taste” of local wines. Kolleen Guy (2003, 28) explained how industrialization and technologies ended up by detaching products from the places they were produced. Early pioneers in Champagne and syndicalists like René Lamarre started to vindicate soil, tradition and local authenticity to distinguish their product, and as a way to survive under a capitalist rationale. This relevance of heritage and the history of the patrimonialization of wine production was also noted by authors like Daniel W. Gade (2004), who reported narratives revolving around the triad of tradition, territory and terroir. The terroir, as practice, started hand in hand with storytelling and created myths based on wine history.

When discussing terroir, an initial clarification is needed. We have to distinguish generic terroir from the specific oenological conceptions because in scholarship the term is being applied to other products such as cheese, tea, tequila or cured meat (Beckett 2011; Besky 2014; Bowen, 2010; Turbes et al., 2016). For example, researching on tequila production, Bowen (2010) discussed the role of GI supply chains in preserving terroir and the significance of cultural practices and the human interaction. In French food research, it is increasingly applied to agricultural products in general (e.g. Aurier et al. 2005; Aurier and Fort 2005). However, most of the scholarship that defines terroir comes from wine researchers. Among them, it is well established that terroir is much more than just the physical conditions in which a wine is made. Indeed, the concept itself intends to express something that is more than the sum

of place, geography, soil or climate, and a growing literature acknowledges its cultural and anthropic resonance. There is a great consensus that terroir has two main components: nature and humans. The communicative approach to terroir put particular stress on the human, anthropogenic interactions that constitute terroir without underestimating the contributions of physical elements such as soils, climate or agronomy. In this respect, analyzing terroir as a communicative practice recalls the notion of how food production and consumption activates a collective narrative of terroir.

The communicative approach can be regarded as complementary to the French tradition of Systèmes Agroalimentaires Localisés (SYAL) and as expanding the work done by researchers on the triad territory-actors-production (Boucher 2012; Bowen and Mutersbaugh 2014; Bérard et al., 2015; Fourcade 2008; Muchnik et al. 2008). SYAL is “based on the study of relationships between man, products and territory” (Muchnik et al. 2008, 513), and it is precisely its broad focus on human activity and interaction between place and culture that makes it particularly relevant. Under this conception, terroir “becomes a spatial and ecological unit of action and management, which associates the actors, their stories, their social organizations, activities, in particular agricultural practices” (Bérard et al., 2015). However, SYAL do not comfortably handle the specific notion of “communication”; scholars here are used to referring to “interactions”, “human exchange”, “relationships” or “synergies”. One suitable explanation for this is that communication is commonly—and sometimes purely—attached to purposive marketing or media production. Within the constructivist tradition (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), I detach communication from this narrower understanding of it as merely marketing, advertising, branding or public relations, and embrace its broader notion as a social process of sense-making. The perspective put communication at the centre, and with this I specially refer to the narratives and discourse, the messages in context, in practice. Here, this communicative-centred perspective also should take into account the political economy of terroir. The *will of terroir* runs on a machinery fuelled by resources, structures and people. No organization, group or individual can spread and set a narrative with social impact without a minimal infrastructure and legitimization.

Regardless of the approach taken to terroir, the analyst is also obliged to observe a kaleidoscopic reality. Many authors have noted the complex nature of terroir, particularly for wine production. Early works of Warren Moran (1988, 360) argued that terroir is not just about soils and geological characteristics of land, and affirmed that, to explain the quality of wine, we should attend to a “micro scale” of winemaking. He considered that “great wines, like most things great, are never the result of a single influence” (Moran 2001, 50). The author described the “facets of terroir” as having aspects of territory, identity, law, promotion, agriculture and viniculture (2006, 4), a perspective that was useful in the fields of geography and agronomy (eg. Minvielle et al., 2018; Martin 2013). Emmanuelle Vaudour offered a state of the art about the terroir-based-research collecting scientific sensorial analysis linked to specific geographical origins (2002, 123) and mapped research from diverse disciplines, identifying their object of study (2002, 127–28). The author noted the polyhedral nature of a “viticulural terroir” and identified terroir units using a spatial criterion. Recently, this approach to “spatial management of terroir” was further reviewed (Vaudour et al., 2015). More authors contributed to the multifaceted definition to terroir. Patterson and Buechsenstein (2018, 51) pointed out up to ten influences “that shape terroir”: soil, site, climate, weather (seasons, etc.), inputs (irrigation, etc.), the human element, biotics, grapevine (varieties, etc.), yeast and wine (as expressed in flavour). And also from a social perspective Stephen Charters (2006, 108) focused on the physical, mystical and commercial aspects of terroir.

However, the complexities of terroir go beyond the definition given by official organisms like the Institute National de l'Origine et de la Qualité in France (Casabianca et al., 2006). The disciplinary starting point does influence the elements that frame scholarly considerations of terroir. Disciplines perform as boxes of knowledge or, in Foucauldian

Table 1
Approaches to terroir.

Authors	Perspectives	Focus
Facetti (1993) Wilson (1998) Vaudour (2002) Casabianca et al. (2006) Matthews (2015) Meinert (2018) van Leeuwen, Roby, and de Ressaiguier (2018) Patterson and Buechsenstein (2018)	Accent on geological, agronomic, oenological and viticultural aspects.	Authors focus on production factors like climate, soil-climate, and their relationship with the quality of wine (Facetti 1993, 33). They stress physical elements (vine, subsoil, siting, drainage, etc.), although they also include other human factors and even “the spiritual aspect” (Wilson 1998, 55). Terroir here can be physically delimited to a region (Vaudour, 2002, 117), or a limited geographical space (Casabianca et al., 2006, 3). Some stress the ecosystems and the argument that climate, soil, and cultivars are the factors “involved in terroir expression” (van Leeuwen, Roby and de Ressaiguier 2018, 173–74) or that “environmental causes and sensory consequences of terroir expression are tangible, material and often measurable” (Patterson and Buechsenstein 2018, 6). However, some critical viewpoints problematize this influence of soils, and even deny clear links between minerality and terroir (Matthews 2015, 201–2; Meinert 2018, 153).
Barham (2003) Trubek (2008) Demossier (2011) Teil (2012) Ulin (2013) Prévost et al. (2014) Besky (2014) Bérard et al. (2015) Cappeliez (2017)	Accent on sociological, cultural, anthropological, socio-economic, food and ecosystem aspects	A wide range of approaches that focus on the influence terroir has on inhabitants (Barham 2003, 131). They focus on terroir as “categories for framing and explaining people’s relationship to the land” (Trubek 2008, 18). The understanding of terroir goes beyond the physical and is a socio-cultural concept. These aspects are not detached from “asserting and justifying differences at local and even micro levels and ultimately about acquiring social, economic, and political benefits from such claims” (Demossier 2011, 689). The production process of terroir “is a collective one” (Teil 2012, 497), is “characterized by the life of a community” (Prévost et al., 2014, 14), is a symbolic facet and is sometimes presented as a reaction to modern times: “There is much likewise in the notion of terroir that speaks to the special case of commodities in late capitalism and their antihegemonic symbolic potential of distinction” (Ulin 2013, 70). Terroir is also defined as “the taste of place that GI protects”, and as a cultural phenomenon (Besky 2014, 85). These “normative principles related to an idea like terroir are likely to be shared across different cultural settings, while parts related to (and dependent on) local place are apt to make a cultural notion like terroir change” (Cappeliez 2017, 34–35).
Guy (2003) Moran (2006) Unwin (2012) Parker (2015)	Accent on history and geography	Here terroir is linked to identity and have become protected “national brands” (Guy 2003, 195). Terroir is a “social construction”, and it has an intense association with place and the people (Moran 2006, 1–2). Land here is much more than soil, and it is related to “particular groups of people, be they grape growers or wine makers in different parts of the world, all have particular interests around which debates over terroir can be constructed” (Unwin 2012, 47). Terroir functions “as a unique measuring stick by which to judge questions of taste and identity in relation to the influence exercised by origin” (Parker 2015, 3).
Aurier et al. (2005) Charters (2010) Capitello et al. (2016) Charters et al. (2017)	Accent on management and marketing	Terroir can be understood as a combination of physical and socio-cultural aspects, but is approached as a product distinction. The focus shifts to consumers’ orientations. Aurier, Fort and Sirieix (2005) add “time and culture” to the existing physical aspects and point out that terroir has “a heavy symbolic and emotional content, and appears, in this exploratory research, to be the most influential” (Aurier et al. 2005). Terroir is a source of “symbolic meaning around authenticity, and a sense of ‘genuine’ rather than industrial wine” (Charters 2010, 6). Terroir can be a result of the environment but reinforces the idea that the products are “distinctive and irreproducible” (Capitello et al., 2016, 518). Place is considered as “distinctiveness” and terroir becomes a “marketing value” grounded on physical and human capital, but also on a “philosophical” sense attached to “hedonic, sensory and semiotic qualities” (Charters et al., 2017, 752 and following).
Tavilla (2009) Zheng (2019)	Accent on communication and narratives	Communicative approaches put communication at the centre of the process and production of terroir. Terroir is an “object of communication” with strong symbolism, it can be integrated into an “actor-mediated discourse” (Tavilla 2009, 4). Terroir is related to economy, place, culture, environment and people, but the focus is on the storytelling articulated by different groups (Zheng 2019, 283). Communication processes and outputs (including storytelling, narratives and discourse) are at the center.

terms (Foucault, 2010), systems for controlling discourse that are not detached from power relations. For example, an expert in marketing or communication will not focus on soil minerality, while for the agronomist the narratives of terroir in a marketplace or on a label are a secondary issue. I join authors considering that terroir requires broad and open perspectives and the issue to be approached from interdisciplinary views, avoiding pretensions of unique truths and embracing dialogic and collective processes of sense-making. Despite the growing transversal coverage, terroir is in need of transdisciplinary approaches.

To observe the difference between perspectives I identified salient definitions and grouped them into families (Table 1). The table does not gather the mass of definitions and affirmations about terroir and is selective rather than exhaustive. The criteria for ordering the quotes were driven by the sources of the articles, the academic background of the authors, and the issues and the methods discussed. The groups proposed are not homogeneous and surely lead to the loss of particularities and nuances in each perspective. These are intertwined in such a way that we find similarities between authors taking different perspectives and discrepancies between authors in the same group. Despite these

shortcomings, the table is like a map. Maps are not a perfect replica of reality and they are also narratives. The reader should understand this limited scheme as an interpretation of the field and consider that it only aims to be useful to understand terroir and finding a variety of definitions and sources. Last but not least, there are no good or bad perspectives for approaching terroir; they all enrich a vast and complex issue. I would say that they need each other and they are part of the —scientific—narratives of terroir also.

The scholarly discussion on terroir has been underway for a long time now but there was a turning point in the 1990s. A first group of authors emerged from a focus on geology, agronomics and oenology. For this sort of research, Vaudour (2002, 121) ordered the high number of “terroir-related-studies” in two families focusing in different particularities, (1) those geographical or raw materials and (2) the environmental potentialities. The oenologist and agronomist Mario Facetti (1993) offered one of the earliest multifaceted discussions, which reviewed some of the salient definitions of the moment, and debated its bioclimatic, geo-pedological, and agronomic aspects. Even at this early stage, the elements defining terroir were hierarchized with factors of

production in first position (climate, pedo-climate, soil, etc.). These aspects should have an effect on the *goût de terroir*, the sensorial qualities of wine (Facetti 1993, 33–34). But one of the most influential contributions was by the geologist James E. Wilson (1998), whose book provided a much-needed technical guide to French terroir. The geological, pedological, oenological and agricultural studies made the effort to objectivize parameters that would delimitate specific terroirs in terms of chemical components, minerality or biochemistry. However, Wilson (1998, 55) also considered the human factor and worked on definitions by experts such as Matt Kramer, Hugh Johnson and Gérard Seguin, which mentioned the habitat, maturation conditions or even a “mental aspect”.

What is particularly relevant about a technical understanding of terroir is its focus on physical features. Overall, the authors focused on soil, climate and plant or berry conditions, among other aspects, without denying human and cultural factors (Deloire et al., 2005; van Leeuwen, Roby, and de Rességuier 2018; van Leeuwen 2009; van Leeuwen and Seguin 2006). They considered terroir to be detectable in wines through sensitive methods and they used a variety of instruments to define the characteristics and *expressions of terroir* on the basis of its technical-scientific elements, while giving cultural aspects a mention. Vaudour (2002) particularly focused on the geo-spatiality of a viticulture terroir, using geographical information systems in order to better identify terroir-units, and combining agronomical, viticultural and geographical perspectives. Among the first group of authors, some offer different perspectives. Lawrence Meinert, for example, argued against the relevance of the soil in the taste of wines and noted that we find very different wines at even the same locations. Therefore, under his perspective it would be “incorrect” to point out to a single factor to explain the difference, and he included the factor of time: “Terroir is the integration of individual factors that contribute to the wine quality” (Meinert 2018, 154). Mark Matthews (2015, 201–5) also technically discussed the links with physical elements and contended that terroir is better understood as a socio-cultural and economic construct rather than scientifically grounded evidence. He arrived at the conclusion that there is a lack of clarity in a term with cultural resonances and links to concepts such as myth or even metaphor. His view indeed problematized the focus on soils and brings us to the second group of definitions.

This second, broad view on terroir focuses on sociological and anthropological aspects, some within the SYAL tradition. Specifically in research on wine, it is sometimes referred to as an oenocultural approach because it acknowledges technical aspects but is based on a mixture of oenological and anthropic factors. Sarah Cappeliez pointed out that it involves a strong idea of terroir as a cultural category. Her qualitative research comparing French and Canadian understandings of terroir, however, found similar conceptions in both contexts based on three principles: “Its foundations in the natural world, the significance of human technique, and the importance of historical tradition” (Cappeliez 2017, 34). Overall, this group of authors provided views ranging from the social sciences and anthropology to food sciences and socio-ecosystems (Barham 2003; Besky 2014; Demossier 2011; Maby 2002; Prévost et al., 2014; Singer 2018; Rouvellac 2013; Trubek 2008; Ulin 2013). The socio-cultural understandings have acquired a pre-eminent position in scholarship, and they identify, analyse and integrate those human elements that interact with the physical properties of a wine. Here Demossier (2011) put emphasis on the historical construction of Burgundian terroir throughout social, political and economic development in France, noting the importance of an hegemonic discourse used by empowered wealthy landowners. Finally, Teil (2012, 480) accurately defined how terroir can adapt to this complexity and took an ontological approach to terroir as a socially constructed “product-object” that “cannot be observed objectively”. Her argument is that this “object” cannot be reduced to data or scientific evidence. This connects with the critical views in the previous group and fits with a communicative approach, which does not deny the relevance of physical elements such as soils, but states that we cannot explain terroir as we do

stones because the former does not exist like the latter: “The production process of terroir is a collective one”, Teil states (2012, 497).

I decided to differentiate the authors described above from those who focus specifically on geographical and historical matters, the third group in the table. Warren Moran's (2006; 2001) contributions from geography, informed by viticulture and agronomics, are a highlight. His research on Burgundy and New Zealand's cases attached terroirs to a “human factor”, the regions where they emerge and their typicity (*typicité*), to the precise particularity of each emplacement. His constructivist approach could be summarized with the first tense of his paper in the 6th International Cool Climate Symposium in 2006: “People are responsible for the idea of terroir” (Moran, 2006, 1). As we see, this field is well connected with a communicative approach to terroir and the notion of the *will for terroir*, because it deals with the political economy of terroir, as well as aspects of cultural and historical processes. Tim Unwin (2012) also adopted a geographical approach that focuses on the environment, history, people, economy and territorial debates on wine production and consumption. Some of these authors deal largely with oenoterroir in France and put special emphasis on the historical resonances, and on concepts like heritage or even national and regional identity. These studies mentioned the importance of physical conditions, but emphasized on human activity, history and politics, identity and heritage in the configuration of a specific terroir. Guy (2003) focused on the links between French identity and history and wine production and commercialization while Parker (2015) took a cultural approach to terroir and French and cultural constructions. Parker's book also contains a genuine cultural studies approach because he critically commented on advertising and other cultural assets. This was an innovative view, with connections to the communicative approach, that hopefully will produce more followers researching how terroir was historically constructed in media, fiction or advertising.

The importance of terroir among academics working on marketing and management has grown in the last decade. The fourth group of scholars focus on how terroir gives wine its particularity and how it influences consumers' decisions. One major approach was by Aurier et al. (2005) who offered a qualitative perspective on management and business. They concluded that “time and culture” are the most influential factors that identify terroir among consumers and contribute to the existing, sometimes limited, literature on marketing terroir products. Here, Stephen Charters (2010) focused on how marketers see the concept when selling. From the perspective of management and wine marketing, terroir is used to distinguish the product and confer added value. Consequently, products tend to be highly priced and studies focus on consumer choices and terroir effects (Capitello et al., 2016). Finally, Charters et al. (2017) made a detailed analysis of how terroir can become a valuable resource attached to products and how consumers are aware of this in relation to GI labels and can contribute to the constitution of this value for marketing purposes. Terroir would have some “hedonic and semiotic qualities” (Charters et al. 2017, 753), not detached from a collective past. In this light, terroir is a tool for distinguishing a specific food or wine product and a body of scholarly work evaluates how appellations attached to terroir influence consumer choices. Some other authors also pointed out that terroir can produce elitism when used as a mere marketing tool in a competitive global market and criticized the scarce if any return of its value to the farmers and the locals (eg. Nowak 2012; Laudan 2004).

Although the communicative approach has an idiosyncrasy all of its own, a number of the authors quoted—and specially those dealing with sociocultural aspects—would agree that communication is important to defining the slippery notion of terroir. Communication could be seen as implicitly embedded in a number of authors when they refer to concepts like sensorial, expression, myth, history, recognition, imagination, perceptions, identity, symbolism or tradition. Paradoxically, discourse or narrative analyses of terroir have scarcely been developed and communicative processes are taken for granted. Those authors with a focus on communication make processes of interaction and sense-

making their object of study and put these process and outputs, being narration or discourse, usually at the center. Here, [Tavilla \(2009\)](#) regards terroir as a communicative object that is not just a marketing tool but a place of symbolic negotiations; hers is an approach from information and communication sciences and the processes of mediation. Likewise [Zheng's \(2019\)](#) narrative approach focuses on the storytelling surrounding terroir, looks at how the stories are organized and identifies the role of GI organizations. The fact is that communication plays a central role whether we strive to explore and measure factual evidence of the impact of nature on a product, stress social interactions among groups, stakeholders and organizations, use a critical perspective to emphasize the wide range of interests, aim to enhance the marketing of products, or dissect representations of cultural assets.

This view also connects with the contributions of authors who discuss “sense of place”, “tradition”, “identities” or “memories”. Specially relevant are the links of terroir to the notion of *invented tradition* ([Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983](#)), already noted by other authors ([Trubek et al. 2010, 140](#); [Harding 2020](#)). For example, [Harding \(2020, 105, our emphasis\)](#) highlighted the role of the Syndicat du Commerce des Vins de Champagne in the “*invention* and communication of a cultural terroir”. Always rooted in “the beginnings”, terroir is the translation of years of history into a story which may have emerged in early modern times or modernity. This narrative was reactivated in the 19th century with the transition from traditional society to industrialization, when the “old ways” of doing things were substituted by massive, intensive production. Terroir belongs to the pre-industrial social imaginary and was adapted to a postmodern capitalist dynamic. Some of the elements or myths of these narratives about old times are manual work, the traditional production of food and the non-chemical treatment of plants. This story of tradition attached to terroir is seen critically by some authors. “Tradition” is commodified and used for what the cultural anthropologist David [Harvey \(2009\)](#) names as new forms of “monopoly rents” claiming authenticity, specialty and uniqueness.

Terroir narratives include natural and historical facts and/or myths, stories about overcoming tough times, even passages of great dramatism describing poverty or plagues. Here, terroir becomes the happy resolution of a troubled story. These narrations are part of scientific, corporate and institutional discourse, but also of informal communication. Therefore, any attempt to investigate terroir should take into account not only CEOs, marketing and labelling stories, but also a broader range of stakeholders, from the grassroots to corporate stories that are both top down and bottom up. Terroir is often said to be just a top-down strategy by producers and marketers. Some agents obviously have more resources with which to produce and establish stories about terroir. However, people visiting places, taking pictures and sharing on social media also do a job. Their stories reach the collective account of terroir. Bottom-up accounts of terroir are provided by networked individuals or associations that produce micronarratives and share their experiences—tasting wine, hiking among vineyards, etc.—to promote an event or an informal meeting around terroir. It is not a top-down, neither a linear process. The relationships between stakeholders are not equal: for example, government institutions or large producers have better resources to establish specific narratives than small vine growers or a group of wine lovers. The narratives of terroir, like others, are also exposed to counter narratives, critical approaches and threats from diverse understandings of the territory and its uses. This is why I affirm that there must be a shared *will for terroir* if the terroir is to be socially established, though it is not the only requirement. As said, wills can converge but they can also diverge and even contradict one another. How they interact collectively is crucial. The narrative streams fork into innumerable ramifications, speeches leak or remain stagnant, perhaps join again or other sources emerge with new stories; but with no water, no will, no terroir.

3. Method and case study

The aim of this article is to contribute to understanding terroir by using a communicative approach, notably influenced by socio-cultural perspectives. But this goal cannot be achieved only by abstraction; it must be illustrated throughout with specific qualitative analysis. As far as the method is concerned, I focused on a case study and collected online texts and experiences from a reputed GI in Catalonia, Spain. The Catalan county of Priorat has two important wine geographical denominations, Priorat Qualified Protected Denomination of Origin (DOQ Priorat) and Montsant Denomination of Origin (DO Montsant). When approaching to the zone I visited the vineyards of a DO Montsant winemaker but for the study, I finally selected DOQ Priorat for a number of reasons.

The DOQ Priorat produces one of the most reputed wines in Europe and is supervised by a Regulatory Board that coordinates one-hundred and nine cellars and wineries, and around 600 vineyards. It is in south Catalonia and its landscape is characterized by terraced terrain and a *llicorella* (slate) soil that dates back to the carboniferous period ([Fig. 1](#)). A total of 1930 ha is cultivated ([Consell Regulador DOQ Priorat 2019a](#)). As well as this, Priorat was selected because of its trajectory as a DOQ and its pioneering story about social and cultural aspects of terroir. Since the 1990s the region has experienced a revival after a tough history of economic crisis and depression and it is the second region to have been awarded a Denominación de Origen Cualificada (DOQ) in Spain, after La Rioja ([Steevenson 2004](#)). Some of its most reputed wines have gained international recognition and attention by top wine writers replicating the story of its terroir in major media (eg. [Brook 2007](#); [Asimov 2020](#)).

There is not a single narrative, but a myriad of stories about terroir. The constructivist approach understands terroir as being organized around narratives about natural elements such as soil or landscape, but also culture and society. It sees terroirs as genuinely anthropic artifacts. In all these accounts the experience of a “sense of place” and identity is central. These are aspects that cannot be easily measured and authors assess the issue by focusing on the experience of people and their narratives and storytelling about products and origins ([Ger et al. 1999](#); [Castelló 2020](#)). When the cultural and storytelling resonances of terroir enter the scene and we realize the importance of GI organizations, vignerons or farmers, local villagers, producers, partners, distributors, restaurateurs and other stakeholders in constructing a product. In the specific case of GIs, these practices are embedded in stories at all sorts of levels, ranging from micronarratives ([Boje, 2008, 2014](#)) that are circulated from above and include harvesters, small and family producers and employee visions of terroir to the macronarratives of corporations, rules or governmental documentation.

Case studies analyses on terroir have been applied in qualitative research in several national contexts (e.g. [Cappeliez 2017](#); [Riviezzo et al., 2017](#)) and narrative analysis on the GIs has been previously conducted ([Ferrari 2014](#); [Zheng 2019](#)). I focused on a narrative analysis of materials ([Czarniawska 2004](#); [Boje 2001](#)) collecting documents online available for the case and conducting a close reading of them. [Czarniawska \(2004, 7\)](#) considers that the technique can combine several procedures such as gathering stories from the field, using interviews or inspecting documentation. Without being a wine expert, it was a challenge to get into a subject as complex as wine storytelling. It should be noted, however, that it was not an objective of the analysis to assess the scientific quality of the stories. The narrative analysis interpreted the presence of certain stories about the terroir (e.g., about soils), but did not evaluate their scientific value (e.g., the influence of soils on wine quality). In this case, the materials were purposively selected. These materials included regulatory documents and public websites from the DOQ Priorat and the Priorat Tourism Office and its project *Priorat terroir*; creative initiatives by wine experts such as the series *Retrats de vi* (Wine

portraits) or the Wine Festival Terror; a documentary on Priorat wines and a short film from Festival Terror; media accounts about the DOQ Priorat including news and different pieces public social media messages by wine lovers and some wine bottle labels. The materials were collected between 2019 and 2020 and are all referenced when appropriate. The method was designed to identify the different stages and types of agent who articulated stories on the idea of terroir. The design permitted to the corpus and initiatives to translate into specific and identifiable actions the three stages that the communicative model is expressing. Each of the levels are reinforced with up-to-date research from other case studies and illustrated with the observations.

4. Communicating terroir: three stages

I identified three stages in the process of producing stories about terroir: namely, organizational; PR, marketing and media; and consumer practices.

4.1. Organization: land, production and GIs

Organizational procedures are constantly constructing the notion of terroir. It is not just a collection of conditions for producers, rules and norms, but also internal communication with associated producers, more informal encounters and professional exchanges, the minutes of meetings and decision-making organizations and bureaus. Terroir is implicitly embedded in all these procedures and messages. As Moran (2006, 3) stated, “terroir is first and foremost a political space”, and this space needs of rules and norms, namely, policies. But organization of land, production or labelling do not just imply a top-down rationale. This communication activity spans the whole supply chain relationship and is not only circumscribed to the sphere of production, processing and distribution within the supply chain organization of GIs (Fernández-Barcala, González-Díaz, and Raynaud 2017, 310). The organizational construction of terroir has been defined in research on French and Italian winemakers who understand terroir as a powerful means to differentiate their wines on the market. The results showed the importance of the social context in which institutional efforts are made to promote a particular idea of terroir (Riviezzo et al., 2017, 147), which in this case we would associate with marketing purposes. But the use of the narratives of terroir by vigneronas are also experienced as new forms of wine activism challenging the industrial, massive production culture like it has noted for the cases of Spain (Alonso González and Parga Dans, 2018) or Italy (Ascione et al., 2020).

Most of the communication addressed to GI associated members is currently on-line and publicly accessible, which gives a level of transparency. But one of every organization most valuable exchange is word-

of-mouth and informal interaction in wine fairs, encounters between vigneronas and wine makers. It is in these communications that information circulates, sometimes unofficial data, and aspects that do not belong to the official norms that govern a specific terroir. However, despite the links between terroir and GIs, terroir is not the same as GIs or GI labels. GI organizations are main agents for the constitution of terroirs, but not the only ones. Some GI labels have no clear articulations of terroir, although it is popularly believed that behind every GI there is a sort of terroir. And terroirs can be articulated in stories above and beyond the GI label and with reference to notions of landscape, natural heritage or agricultural ecosystems, which do not necessarily produce a specific GI product.

The first official regulations of Priorat wine go back to 1954 and went through several stages until the Catalan Government granted it the status of DOQ in 2000. The DOQ Priorat label is protected under national and EU law (Consell Regulador DOQ Priorat, 2020a). The organizational level in charge of establishing and controlling the rules for producing wines, which is itself is a task of communication. The norms and requirements are communicated and publicly published on the website, therefore they are open access to vineyard growers and wineries. The concept of terroir, or *terrer*, does not appear in these norms or in the official regulations governing the GI. However, the reason the regulation exists is at the core of the concept: there is a terroir to be defined here in terms of space (the land where the vines can be grown), varieties (type of grapes to use), or systems to control the GI. The DOQ Priorat commitment to territory has been even stronger since 2019, when the Board presented a new classification labelled “Els noms de la terra” (The names of the land). According to the experts, this approach was closer to that of a Burgundian model rooted in territory than a Rioja-type model based on ageing wines (Cervera, 2019). In the presentation, the winemaker Álvaro Palacios stated that it was time “to respect a more specific origin”, and that the new scheme aimed to name wine “after the place it is from” (Consell Regulador DOQ Priorat, 2019d). The system is structured as a pyramid ordered from the bottom to the top: DOQ Priorat wine, *vins de la vila* (village wines), *vi de paratge* (landscape wine),⁴ *vinya classificada* (classified vineyard) and *gran vinya classificada* (grand classified vineyard). The labelling classifies plots of the terroir and maps up to 459 locations in the region. Terroir here is sublimated into notions like landscape, villages and quality vineyards.

The physical delimitation of the zone is defined in the conditions for producers and winemakers, officially published in the official gazettes of Catalonia (Departament d'Agricultura Ramaderia i Pesca, 2006) and Spain (Boletín Oficial del Estado, 2009). The norms state that DOQ Priorat is a “public domain asset and cannot be the object of individual use, trade, alienation or taxation” (Departament d'Agricultura Ramaderia i Pesca 2006). The authorities, including the Consell Comarcal (County Board), have done a considerable amount of work to increase the value of their terroir. In 2019, they initiated a project to apply for UNESCO recognition of the territory as world heritage. The project ground to a halt because of technical issues, but it was restarted in 2021 and the intention is to apply in 2022. It is called the Priorat-Montsant-Siurana project and it is in competition with plans to use these lands to set up massive renewable energy plants (Món Rural, 2021). It is no coincidence that the name of the project coincides with the name of the three GIs in the region: wine (Priorat and Montsant) and olive oil (Siurana). The products, brands and terroir would get world-wide recognition, and the region would get the status of world heritage. These are examples of how the *will for terroir* underlies many institutional and organizational practices.

Defending the idea of terroir is central to the success of the wines. Even though the specific concept of terroir is hardly mentioned in the



Fig. 1. Typical hilly Priorat landscape overlooked by crops on the slate terraces in autumn (Picture: author).

⁴ Although we translated this as landscape, ‘*paratge*’ is closer to a beautiful natural place, a positively qualified landscape. The standard translation for landscape is ‘*paisatge*’.

regulations, it is embedded in the definition of the “territory”. Organizational structures do engage in continuous and complex exchanges with associated wineries and professional services. Terroir is not just directly related to a particular number of hectares of a specific GI, or even to their singular characteristics. For example, even for the specific case of Priorat, which is produced in a relatively small area and has very specific norms and rules, we could appreciate differences among plantations, producers or crop’s orientations. So, what finally fixes the idea of the terroir is not just these particular conditions but also the story and the will to explain and circulate from the roots of the GIs as organizations: what they mean, what values they have, how they are governed, what their common goals are, and how they improve quality and reputation. This is also part of “the essence”. For example, when presenting the new estate wine labels the news described one wine as “made using black Grenache and Carignan grape varieties, which evoke *the essence* of the DOQ Priorat territory” (Consell Regulador DOQ Priorat, 2018, our emphasis). This narration highlights the concepts of “uniqueness”, “uniformity”, and “authenticity”. The GI website talks about the “unique landscape”: “all of the enclosures, hillsides, streams, farms, gardens, paths, stone outhouses or farmhouses have a characteristic and authentic touch that define *the essence* of Priorat” (Consell Regulador DOQ Priorat, 2019c, our emphasis). The story of terroir is attached not just to these physical and cultural elements, but also to the values of different stakeholders at an organizational stage.

4.2. PR, marketing and media: from events to labels

This is the broadest and the most visible field for defining terroir. It consists of many actions designed to communicate GIs to various stakeholders and society at large. The public communication of terroir includes aspects of labelling, marketing, event organization, advertising, website corporate messages and social media, media and public relations. Notable effort is made to publicly construct an imaginary that embraces land and environmental values, cultural heritage and know-how, tourist appeal, history and social memory, and economic impact on the communities.

The public sphere is the realm in which GIs also act as a brand. A research project that assessed two major Spanish GIs concluded by emphasizing the importance of encouraging positive emotions and image mostly through communicative actions such as events, open days, tourism and cultural activities (Aranda, Gómez, and Molina 2015, 2072). Other authors have noted some of the key techniques for “transforming a terroir into a tourist destination”, which include promoting a “true and consistent image of the terroir” (Croce and Perri 2010, 74, our emphasis). Although places need to have special characteristics or values if they are to be able to adapt to tourism, it is clear that the tools exist to “create” a story around terroir. These stories can, for example, be attached to organic wines and contribute to local economies (Marlowe and Bauman 2019). However, Josling (2006, 360) criticized that although small GIs can promote agri-tourism under the umbrella of the “mystique of the terroir”, their discourse can also activate a mirage of false hopes for small producers to have a more global impact, while Ben Hassen and Tremblay (2016b) noticed that small vigneron who sell wine from home in Quebec also had concerns about the benefits, and requirements, of the certification. The public communication of terroir connects with the many initiatives that GIs are promoting in the spheres of eco-tourism, wine-tourism or tourism gourmand. For example, in the case of Quebec, wine routes helped to promote not only the product but also the communities behind the production, and some authors have even stated that new wine-growing areas may even be created (Hassen and Tremblay, 2016a). Terroir may become one of the “intangible resources” that combine with other aspects to promote a specific wine destination as has been reported for some Italian DOP (Presenza et al. 2010).

There is an undeniable presence of a *will for terroir* in PR, marketing and media practice today. Most of this will is business driven, which is

the source of much scholarly criticism of terroir. Some research suggests that winegrowers should attach the concept of terroir to their wines to create a media frame, given that products under this discourse are more expensive and that they should not only commercialize their product but also engage in parallel, terroir-related activities such as events, fairs and networking (Spielmann et al., 2014). It is clear that we are witnessing a commodification of terroir in the sense that it adds value to specific products. But the will for terroir expressed in this second stage goes beyond chrematistic motivations, some of which are obviously morally acceptable: a small tourist agent renting a house who describes the value of the place by stressing the landscape, the good wines and wine culture, and the opportunity to enjoy the terroir; a winemaker in the area promoting an ecological brand and concerned about biodiversity, who tells the story of the terroir to better sell their produce; a local newspaper, a regional website, announcing a cultural festival promoting the terroir to encourage engagement, etc. Are not these motivations legitimate *wills for terroir*? As said, it can be an individual will, but the will for terroir is collective because the eco-friendly winemaker, the owner of a small tourist facility and the local newspaper should merge in a confluence. They need the whole system to work. Although expressed individually, the will of terroir is always a collective force.

Public storytelling constructs terroir in innumerable forms, but as said one of the most evident are stories rooted in history and tradition. Wine GI organizations often mention historical facts to link their products to tradition. They do this by using all sorts of support and not just claiming that their stories are very old. Brand reputation is usually rooted in long life and a story over time (“Since, 1878 ...”). These stories root the idea of terroir to old practices and to the culture of the place where the product is made. Illustrating this, in the case study of DOQ Priorat, the brand storytelling goes back to the first monasteries in the area, specifically the one built in Scala Dei by Carthusian monks in the 12th century. All the activity in the Priorat area at that time was organized around the monastery and here DOQ Priorat takes the opportunity to explain how Scala Dei “introduced the cultivation of vineyards in this area, and the Priorat of Scala Dei [Priory of the Stairs of God] began to prosper and so it gave its name to the current Priorat, one of the areas with most personality in Catalonia” (Consell Regulador DOQ Priorat, 2020b). But this terroir narratives also has connections with the epic story of the region’s farmers and growers, given the difficulties of the terrain and the crises they overcame over the ages, including phylloxera epidemics (Consell Regulador DOQ Priorat 2019b). Overall, the story emphasizes the concept of “heroic wines”, which frames the entire GI. This message of the “heroicity” of the terrain is contained in the promotional video by the official Spanish agency for Food and wines from Spain (2018b), which emphasizes the “hilly terrain, black slate and quartz soils”, and presents a video (Food and wines from Spain, 2018a) that describes the harvest as “a challenge that is compounded by the looseness of its rocky soil”. The heroic wines transfer “heroicity” to the people that grew the vineyards along generations. Many of the stories that a wine GI articulates are rooted in historical or social memory. And, as seen in the cases discussed, it is not unusual to find a story about overcoming difficulties of orography or weather.

The historical and heritage narrations of the terroir are connected to its touristy appeal. In the analysed case the agent to drive the will to terroir is the Priorat Tourist Board, attached to the County Council. Because they had GIs for wine (Priorat and Montsant) and oil (Siurana), the Priorat Tourist Board launched Priorat Enoturisme (Patronat de Turisme del Priorat, 2019a) which provides visitors with access to a variety of tourism offers including tastings, wellness activities, history, etc. The project implements an initiative named *Priorat terroir*, which promotes a tour to wineries in an exclusive package (Patronat de Turisme del Priorat, 2019c). The construction of an imaginary about terroir is linked to the idea that the quality and uniqueness of a product is an asset for all the people living in the area. The website narrative provides agency to the territory, the landscape and the terroir: “The Priorat is not an easy land, it gives nothing for free, but nevertheless it

has managed to seduce a good number of enthusiasts who have fallen in love with the grapes yielded by its slate soils" (Patronat de Turisme del Priorat, 2019b). Therefore, terroir is directly attached to benefits for winemakers, local farmers, and the consumers who enjoy the product and the territory.

One masterful illustration of the media's will for terroir is the documentary film *Priorat* (Fernández de Castro 2016), which was promoted by the Regulatory Board and funded by several public bodies in the region. The film, a prize-winner at the Memorimage Festival in 2016,⁵ poetically explains how the wine industry increased the region's self-esteem and made a way of life possible. The documentary reports the story of the "magnificent five"; the pioneers—René Barbier, Daphne Glorian-Solomon, Álvaro Palacios, Josep Lluís Pérez and Carles Pas-trana—who arrived in this impoverished region in the early 1980s and transformed the territory with a new wine production culture. The documentary also develops the myth of Priorat in terms of heroic wines and successful wineries. One of the main pioneers, René Barbier, expresses an idea that is perhaps the essence of the communicative approach to terroir. He transfers agency to the wine so that it can tell its own story: "The history of Priorat is one of the most ancient and the best wine is the one who has a story to tell" (Fernández de Castro 2016 trailer, min 1:29). Other initiatives in this region also bring together journalism, literature and photography, like the series on oenologists *Retrats de vi* (Troyano and Eliakim 2019b). One of the *retrats* (portraits) is about the Priorat oenologist Maria Sangenis, a fine work that describes how "her eyes shines when she talks about the Mosel and the Rieslings that mesmerized her, as well as the terraced landscape and the typicity of the soil of an iconic region" (Troyano and Eliakim 2019a). The value of terroir for the producers and inhabitants of a particular region is a common story in GI public communication practices. They are a bridge between "our past", which is sometimes heroic and defines the collective identity of a community, and "our future", which must be grounded in economic growth and prosperity, employment and socio-environmental sustainability.

Social media and media accounts are channels for increasing the public's awareness of a terroir story. For instance, at the time of our research, DOQ-P twitter account had 5920 followers, 8757 tweets, 2227 videos and photos, and 22,6 K likes.⁶ It actively socialized terroir by providing links to specialized media in wine and tourism, photos uploaded by winemakers, the wine-making process from harvesting to bottling, tips and recommendations from restaurateurs, and comments by winelovers on the product. This type of social media and media relations can potentially create an efficient network for promoting events such as *Festival Terrer in Priorat* (2020), an Autumn-long cultural program that brings together artists, musicians and winemakers, under the label "music, wine, architecture and landscape". The promotional video for the special edition of 2020 is a courageous plea for the territory and its people, a claim for resilience after a dramatic campaign because of the pandemic and the mildew. It defends ecosystems, biodiversity and rural life under the motto "terrer is territory" (Olivé 2020).⁷

4.3. Consumers: taste and experience

In terms of the consumers' experience of terroir, research efforts are still too focused on how quality labels or the "perceived terroir" have an impact on purchase decisions, economic outputs or the will to pay. Assessing the consumer experience requires more than just sales and marketing outputs. When we refer to the consumer experience of terroir, we broaden the notion to include the idea of "tasting terroir". In this respect, we must bear in mind that consumerism is a form of

identification and differentiation (Lury 1996), or in Bourdieu's words (1984), a mechanism for cultural distinction. Qualitative research has noted the existence of a "perceived terroir" among consumers which is based on three elements: (i) trade-skill, know-how, recipes and tradition; (ii) time and culture, history and rituals, and (iii) origin, territory, region and land (Aurier et al. 2005). From a consumer viewpoint, it is difficult to reduce terroir to a "test of taste" (Barrey and Teil 2011). Hennion (2015, 37) relates the act of tasting to a whole pragmatics of attention and value. This research with amateur wine lovers finds that it is the situation of the taste that finally defines the communicative act (Hennion and Teil 2018, 34). Tasting wine as a symbolic practice is not only "tasting terroir"; it is also a socio-cultural practice related to expressions of social class (Overton and Murray 2013), environmental engagement (Parga Dans, Alonso González, and Macías Vázquez 2019), or self-image and life-style (Castellini and Samoggia 2018, 137). Terroir is embedded in informal exchanges, art and media accounts, villagers narratives or consumers happenings.

Here, the *will for terroir* can be highly diverse; people articulate stories by different social and cultural motivations to highlight a feeling of identity or just for fun. As noted by Charters et al. (2017: 759), terroir can provide sources that engage consumers and link them to where they grew up or just "allow identification with a place of adoption or abiding interest". They claim that the way in which customers get involved in constructing terroir value attached to specific GI-labelled products is a field of research that is ready to explore. Overall, the story of terroir fulfils all its signification when you are literally tasting, drinking it; in the words of the president of DOQ-P, Salustià Álvarez: "The challenge is to put the region in context inside the bottle" (Pardo 2019). "Wines are stories in a bottle", states a large banner in the museum Castell del Vi (Wine Castle) in Falset, capital of Priorat, a tense that was posted in a picture by villagers owning a rural guesthouse in the area (*Apartaments la Font Vella de Falset* 2016). These are the local people, whether they are small owners and farmers, or just villagers working on their self-esteem by posting about Priorat landscapes, wines and culture.

When opening the bottle, we witness an explosion of stories: stories told by the people sitting around a table, about the wine itself, and also about the region and its history. The bottle is physically on the table, so the label provides key elements for framing these stories: types of grape, year, DOQ or PGI stamp, name of the wine, typographies, logotypes and visual elements, etc. In this regard, label design is undergoing a revolution in terms of art creativity, storytelling practice, and consumer appeal through attractiveness. The aim of this communicative revolution is to enter into a better dialogue with the personal experience of consumers. Labels are the physical presence of storytelling during consumption, and they are also communicating. Stories are present in the labels on such bottles as GR-174,⁸ one of the wines of the GI: "Hiking along the GR-174 footpath that crosses our vineyards you can feel the *beauty* of the Priorat *landscape* among vines that are *rooted* in the black 'llicorella' (slate) *soil*" (Casa Gran del Siurana, 2020; our emphasis). Or the label on the bottle of Onix wine: "The Priorat of 'llicorella' is a *small* region with a *personality* influenced by *history*, *landscape* and *people*" (Vinícola del Priorat, 2019, our emphasis). Also the story of La Garnatxa Fosca a wine that is part of the Garnacha Project (Vintae, 2020; our emphasis) that wants to "*unearth from oblivion* a variety of great *potential* but despised for *decades*", so they select "*ancient and unique vines*". Other bottle labels of the DOQ Priorat transmit this idea of terroir based on vines, tradition, history, landscape, the people and, particularly, the *llicorella* soil.

As said, the moment in which people enjoy terroir through consuming wine is extremely meaningful, and the same wine can give a "different terroir" experience depending on whether it is tasted alone, in a tense family meeting or in a pleasant social situation. When wine is drunk in company, terroir can become a socializing experience. The

⁵ Memorimage is a film festival about documentary and memory.

⁶ <https://twitter.com/doqpriorat>, accessed 13 May 2021.

⁷ In original, "terrer és territori". In Catalan, *territori* has a meaning close to land and place.

⁸ The name GR-174 refers to a hiking path that crosses the Priorat region.

place where we consume is relevant, as are the social meanings of drinking wine. For example, in Spain, eating out is part of a cultural and social way of life, and meals are moments for social interaction (Díaz-Méndez and García-Espejo, 2017). In places like in Catalonia a decent bottle of wine from a good GI that expresses a form of terroir can be enjoyed for a price between eight and twelve euros. In these contexts, the terroir experience is accessible to an average consumer. In this regard, terroir is crossing a process of democratization noted by other authors (Smith Maguire 2018, 10–11; Howland 2013), so broader publics can experience the taste of wine. Terroir is more likely to be experienced on Friday evenings with colleagues, during an after-work tapas meal, on a romantic date with our partner, or at a Sunday lunch at home with friends or family. And, of course, we can also have the terroir experience alone at home, with a good meal or listening to music. So, terroir is perceived as a pleasant exchange between the wine and the consumer, and all the situations just listed are examples of terroir appearing among consumers. In this respect, terroir is a happening.

Wine-lovers and fans of the Priorat terroir share their experiences online. Every year, people from the villages in the region organize the Marató del Priorat (the Priorat Marathon), in which dozens of people run around the vineyards. After a good shower the runners can enjoy a meal and taste the wines. Some share their pictures and promote a particular vision of the Priorat terroir. One of the participants posted beautiful photos during the trail, showing one of the best vineyard fields and inviting people to know more about the region (Santacana 2019). Nearby visitors tasting the wines in Priorat become proximity tourists and post pictures and messages on social media platforms like *Wine-lovers vins* (2018) highlighting landscapes in Porrera, meanwhile others enjoy “the calm, the landscape, good gastronomy and good wine” (Flor 2020). Consumers use different hashtags, though they are commonly #Priorat and others related to the villages in the zone such as #Porrera. Another example can be illustrated with the initiative by the Clos Figueras winery to “Bottle your experience”.⁹ The idea is that tickets to wine-related events such as tastings can be bought and presented as gifts inside a wine bottle.

Every spring, the DOQ Priorat and DO Montsant hold a fair for wine lovers in Falset. In 2018, a total of 30,000 tastings were served (ACN 2018). GI organizations and wine growers understand that the way to bring life to the terroir is through customers enjoying wines, and this enjoyment requires a moment, a place, and peer exchange. The definitive, rounded work of terroir storytellers is found at the level of the consumer. All the stakeholder efforts and detail on terroir are put into the bottle, a message, a story again, to be told and retold. Ultimately, it is at the moment the wine is enjoyed that this socially constructed object we have identified as terroir is fully realized, not only because of the act of consumption itself, but because the wine is the materialization of the effort being returned to humans and activating physical reactions within the body.

5. Concluding: the will for terroir

In this article, I conducted a literature review and conceptualized a communicative approach to terroir. It has a number of limitations. To begin with, the literature review was broad but surely did not manage to gather all academic definitions and scholarly approaches to terroir. This would require a vast amount of research that I was not able to conduct due to the limited resources. Secondly, a complete study of the stories about the terroir of Priorat wines would need a great deal of fieldwork and even more texts and accounts. This is especially true for the part about consumers, which would require more in-depth examination and perhaps added ethnographic tools. However, the case study accomplished the aim of illustrating the theoretical proposal.

The approach is complementary to the principles of SYAL and considers agricultural systems to be part of the relationship between human organizations, products and territorial specificities. It generates a new field of research that focuses specifically on communication as a way to understand terroir dynamics. Here, other perspectives can also integrate narrative inquiry into the study of how organizations explain and discuss terroir, how the media represent it or how consumers express their relationship to it. The approach is similar to perspectives that consider the role of human interaction and socio-cultural elements in constituting terroir (e.g. Trubek 2008; Bowen, 2010 or Demossier 2011) and the role of geography and history (e.g. Moran 2001; Unwin 2012 or Parker 2015). It also has connections with those managerial and marketing approaches that regard narratives and communication as sense-making processes (e.g. Aurier and Fort 2005; Charters 2006; Charters et al. 2017).

Within this scheme, this approach to terroir emphasizes storytelling, media and stakeholder interaction. It claims that the terroir is produced in three stages: organizational communication; public relations, marketing and media discourse; and the consumers' experience. Alongside physical realities the communicative practice creates a myriad of stories about nature, landscape, tradition, territory and know-how. In order to constitute a terroir, there must be a sort of confabulation not only among stakeholders such as landowners, grape growers and wine makers, but also among partners such as distributors, communication agencies, public bodies promoting tourism, villagers and restaurateurs, and consumers must participate in these stories as a living experience. The stakeholders believe in the existence of the conditions to talk about and share the terroir. It is obvious that stakeholders elaborate on discourses and narratives within specific schemes and interests, which can be of a scientific, economic, political or ideological nature. Not all, however, follow a top-down rationale and we have noted some constructions from the grassroots. The sum of all these accounts and stories converges in a collective narrative and the social construction of terroir. This is when *the will for terroir*—*la volonté de terroir* or, in the Catalan case, *la voluntat de terroir*—is activated.

The existence of the *will for terroir* in a particular context such as a GI, can align a wide range of actors who generate and share the core idea of a specific wine—or other agricultural and food products—in many different stages. This brings the terroir closer to the concept of project under construction, even utopia or ideal (Howland and Jacqueline, 2020). Here, the *will for terroir* is the desire to start and maintain a collective project. It is this sociocultural practice that displays the “narratives of terroir”. The *will for terroir* is expressed in the three stages of the process:

- Organization: in its inception, terroir is structured by a set of organizational communication practices grounded at the heart of the production process, including rules that protect a GI and also contribute to articulating narratives of terroir.
- PR, marketing and media: terroir is promoted and circulated through public relations and activities such as events and tourism, and all sorts of mediatization practices ranging from videomaking to social media.
- Consumers' experience: terroir is a socialized practice fully realized in pragmatics, in the action of tasting a wine and interweaving the story produced by the organization and PR, marketing and media with our own story as human beings.

From this perspective, GI organizations play a crucial role by generating a process that brings together the conditions for terroir, though they are not the only players. It is a feedback loop because the *will for terroir* is manifested as a pretext for a GI appellation. The communicative action undertaken to promote and circulate terroir is diverse and innumerable. It can embrace organizational efforts and norms; discourses to promote coherence and a sense of belonging among producers, distributors and restaurateurs; social media messaging and

⁹ <http://www.prioratenoturisme.com/en/serveis/messages-in-bottle-with-clos-figueras/>, last access 18 January 2020.

on-line community management of terroir; media events and promotional PR action; consumer organizations and happenings with wine lovers; encounters and tastings with wine growers and tourists; or many others, each at one of the levels described. Focusing on a GI in Catalonia we observed some illustrative examples of communication practices in the three stages. For the specific case of the DOQ Priorat we noted that many different agents, with a variety of motivations, feed the narratives of a specific terroir. They act as a sort of curators. These narratives have their own motives, actors, and places—slate soils, landscape, traditions, history—, but they flow from the idea that Priorat has a unique and valuable terroir. Considering terroir to be a communicative object can help communities to better organize and construct a consensus on its meanings and benefits.

* * *

My father spent his entire life growing orange trees in a small field. He never read a book about agronomy, but he knew that good soil, water and biodiversity—bees pollinating, birds chasing flies, worms producing humus, etc.—were essential if the oranges were to be juicy and sweet; all farmers know this. As a child, I spent a lot of time by his side working on the crops. If someone had mentioned terroir to my father then, he would not have known what to answer. Perhaps: “Ok. Shut up and take this watermelon”. Growing oranges was our way of life and we did not have any interest in terroir. We had a nice orchard, the landscape was calm and beautiful, but we did not have the resources—knowledge and skills if you wish—or the will to articulate a story of terroir. At that time, the notion of terroir did not exist there and the word *terrer* meant just land or a cleared field. After reading dozens of articles on terroir, the idea I have is still blurred. It is not a concept that can be scientifically defined, as Teil (2012, 489) warned with an insightful personification about its “resistance to become a thing” —in which terroir has the agency to resist—. And why is there a need to encapsulate terroir just under the scientific definition? The poetry of terroir lies in its own vagueness and its volatile social and cultural nature.

It was when I visited the DO Montsant vineyards in the Priorat of the wine producer who I mentioned at the beginning of this text that I most clearly understood what terroir is. When I first raised the issue with him, he immediately began to tell stories about the quality of the soil and its minerality, the small crop he has bought, the old vineyards there, how he manually cared for his crops, the perfect orientation of his terraces and the rainfall, even the bees that come and go, the history of the place and how farmers in ancient times used to store the grapes in a shack made of stones. DO Montsant is another GI in Priorat that is developing a *will for terroir*, collecting and projecting stories, and the winemaker speaks with passion and with evidence. Who can deny the existence of *terrer* there? It exists, it is crystal clear and you can see it with your eyes, hear the story with your ears, read about it on the social networks and share it with others. To put it simply, I was willing to search for terroir and the wine producer was willing to explain it to me. He had a will and an agency, grounded on resources and knowledge, and with this we activated *the will for terroir*. Terroir is in the story, which is now our story, your story.

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