***Ethnologie française***

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***Call for papers***

**Anthropology of Wine:**

**A unique object, between subjectification and circulation**

***Coordination***

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Wine production and consumption still remain strongly associated with Western, and, especially, French heritage and culture. Yet, in the last three decades, wine culture has experienced radical change. New consumers have emerged in non-producing countries while new areas of production from China to Tahiti challenge the foundations of the world wine industry. Such a complex global phenomenon is characterised by integration and homogenisation in some aspects, but also differentiation and localisation in others. Geographers Banks and Overton (2010: 58) argue for an approach which foregrounds the multiple ‘worlds of wine’ as crosscutting, contingent and contextual going beyond the binary opposition between the Old World and the New.

According to the OIV (International Organisation of Vine and Wine), wine consumption reached a new peak in 2018 with no less than 32.78 billion bottles consumed. This consumption is characterised by a major paradox. Traditional wine producing countries such as France and Italy have seen a significant decline in consumption whereas wine consumption has increased by 3 per cent globally since 2009 with a real boom in Asia. National wine consumption has grown elsewhere in Europe, and between 1970 and 2010, it increased by notably 960%) in Ireland, Finland (+ 573%), the United-Kingdom (+ 566%) and Denmark (+ 323%) (Smith and al., 2013). Some Scandinavian countries see this rise as a possible solution to the problems of alcoholism as wine replaces spirits in terms of popularity (Inglis & Almira, 2019). During the same period, the most striking declines in consumption were recorded in Italy (-61%), France (-53%), Spain (-54%) and Portugal (-30%) (Smith et coll., 2013). The result is a major transformation of global wine culture and a challenge to its traditional features.

In order to quench this global thirst, wine production has gone through a radical metamorphosis. Some areas of production have shrunk in Europe, including the South of France, which has lost 25 per cent of its surface of production of red wines since 2000, while new vineyards have been established in unexpected places such as Thailand, China, Canada and Ethiopia. According to the OIV[[1]](#endnote-1), between 2013 and 2017, countries such as Russia, Peru, Hungary and Uzbekistan have all expanded their vineyards (between 18.7 and 42.1 per cent). These national wine industries seek new segments of the market in a rapidly changing and competitive global economy

In this context, wine producers are becoming increasingly transnational owning and managing wineries in different parts of the world. Corporations such as the Diego or the Constellation Brands have become partners in the wine making operations of companies such as Mondavi in California or Mouton Cadet in Bordeaux. The French conglomerate LVMH, owner of a range of luxury brands, also own vineyards over five continents. Their wines and spirits brands are like no other in the world with Cognac and Champagne being sold across the planet, in shops and airports (Colman, 2008). Traditional Burgundian wine merchants such as the Drouhin family have acquired vineyards in Oregon, while the French champagne house Taittinger recently planted its first vines in Kent and East-Sussex. These big industrial players dominate the world of production using marketing strategies based upon authenticity, time-honoured tradition and honouring their roots.

Wine cannot, however, be reduced to a simple industrial commodity. A new relationship with nature and a growing concern for ecology define a growing minority of consumers. The global demand for ‘natural’, ‘biodynamic’ or ‘biological’ wines is driven by these new consumers in Europe and Asia, who are progressively influencing viticultural and oenological practices. Italian and French ‘natural’ wines are, for example, highly fashionable in Japan and South Korea, following changes in the global food landscape. Meanwhile, major financial investments have gone into the wine industry (Overton & Banks 2015) with a specific quest for status or reputation enhancement even if there are economic costs. Celebrities such as Gérard Depardieu and Francis Ford Coppola have themselves endorsed these strategies by buying and running wine estates.

In the wake of this rapid, differentiated and multi-scalar globalisation, wine has become a unique contemporary anthropological object of study. Most of the anthropological research remains, however, largely focused on the mythical local, regional and national heritage dimensions of wine culture. In the Anglo-Saxon world anthropologists have started to look at wine as a window onto a variety of cultural, social, political and economic issues attesting to its emergence as a new field of study (Black & Ulin 2013). Influenced by cultural studies and the debates surrounding the definition of ethnography as the core method of social anthropology, the anthropology of wine is now characterised by its dynamism and the broad range of its debates.

This special issue has the aim of opening the field further, to other national and transnational contexts, by proposing a state-of-the-art review of the anthropology of wine and setting up a new research agenda around wine as a unique object. Three broad themes around subjectification and circulation aim to bring a new perspective on the anthropological study of wine.

1. **Methodological debates or an ethnography of wine modernity**

Firstly, the special issue seeks to focus debates about the anthropology of transnationalism and the spaces of commodity culture using the example of wine as a global commodity. Its main aim is to provide a *tour d’horizon* of the anthropology of wine, to identify its strengths and weaknesses analytically and methodologically. These debates focus more specifically on the imbrication of the various scales of analysis, the use of concepts such as ‘culture’, ‘nation’ and ‘globalisation’ beyond the anthropological national traditions as well as the methodological challenges it poses around multisitedness or virtual ethnography.

As such it involves a shift away from closed disciplinary boundaries, both ideologically and epistemologically. Far from being swallowed up by globalisation, wine can be defined as a ‘total social fact’, in the Maussien sense of the term, requiring a holistic framework of analysis combining geography, history, politics, economy, society and culture. The nation is now too restrictive a framework when it comes to understanding wider cultural flux, relating to the circulation, translation, mediation and commodification of wine. There is nothing new about these processes, and for that reason comparisons with other periods and contexts is essential. History plays a major role in the recasting of wine regions in the global hierarchy of values. The UNESCO heritage stamp has offered a platform for the global politics of place, taste and heritage. It has enabled, through the recognition of new heritage categories such as landscape, intangible heritage and know-how, the increasing recognition, protection and normalisation of traditional Western winescapes. Wine is part of a long history of global exchange characterised by conquests, hybridisation and power structures. New forms of struggle and socio-political configurations have seen the light requiring further historical and anthropological scrutiny. Historical comparison will help to shed light on to the uniqueness of the social relations surrounding around wine production and consumption as well contemporary issues such as the relationship between migration and the global wine economy.

1. **Worlds of Wine in fragments: multi-scalar perspectives, imaginaries and cultural flows**

Historically, wine has been the object of commercialisation and exchange and its circulation has often been associated with power, social status, prestige and diplomacy (Dion 1950). France and other European states have long played a leading role in facilitating the commodification of wine, but their position has been increasingly challenged. What is their status today? What are the main viticultural systems inspiring the New World wine players? Which ideas, methods and models come to the fore in this circulation? What is the role of transnational elites in global wine culture? What is at stake at territorial level in this new politics of scale? These and other questions are the focus of this special issue.

Wine stories are controlled by local elites and technicians of globalisation, taking a variety of forms and multiple expressions and are often invested with symbolic, political and economic value. Wine is mobilised by different actors, traders, consumers, craftsmen, heritage officials and institutions to foster a sense of ‘imagined community’. These imaginaries are deployed through a wide range of media, including literature, cinema, television series, manga, comics depicting wines and wine regions and landscapes. They might also be found through the heritage activities deployed by the candidates for UNESCO recognition as well as the happy winners of the heritage battle. As Theodore Bestor (2014) has argued, it is the very idea of historical continuity and heritage that is pitted against globalisation and Westernisation as part of the defence of its traditional cultural heritage and cuisine. A growing number of prestigious wineries now call upon the expertise of famous architects to take the touristic experience up another level, proposing a new reading of place in a competitive world order. A monumental wine architecture has developed fostering a new form of oenotourism and creating fluid experiences. For an anthropologist, the impact of these new cultural forms raises questions about the relationship to the collective.

We seek in this special issue to focus on the worlds of wine through the circulation of these cultural stories and the politics of scaling that underlie them transforming wine in its social, cultural, political and economic forms. A contemporary anthropology of wine will enable us to start a dialogue with the more classical anthropological literature which has focused on concepts of ‘contact’, ‘friction’, ‘fracture’, imbrication’ and ‘assemblage’. Wine in its different guises offers the platform to interrogate the connections between globalisation, ‘tradition’, ‘terroir’ and ‘heritage’. It opens the prospect of comparison with other commodities, notably foodstuffs, rooted in places while disconnected to the site of production through the process of circulation, mediation and translation (Demossier 2018). How are local, professional and sectoral identities shaped by these complex processes? What are the issues at stake? How do the new wine actors or the technicians of globalisation create and shape places which were traditionally presented as ‘authentic terroirs’ anchored in local, regional and national configurations? How do they transform work?

This special issue will enable us to explore these questions as well as the connections and circulation of ideas, products, know-how and people between symbolism and market practices, hierarchy and cultural values, politics and economy. The call for papers aims at questioning and revisiting these transformations which have affected the worlds of wine as well as opening new avenues in the understanding of globalisation. Wine is an ideal anthropological object to open the discussion. Proposals for articles might focus the circulation of capital, techniques, practices and imaginaries attached to wine across national contexts. Articles focusing on wine and socio-economic exchange in their local/global imbrication are also encouraged, but we welcome other contributions on the relationship to labour.

1. **Between subjectification and new social relations**

The digital revolution has shaken the traditional dominance of Anglo-Saxon wine critics. Websites devoted to wine culture have flourished all over the world giving rise to new forms of knowledge and relationships to wine, even if they are still linguistically defined. How can we seek to map the digital world of wine? To what extent does this digital world of wine shape consumers and their tastes? How does it affect the relationship established between wine producers, consumers and writers? How does wine contribute to self-identification processes and subjectification? Does wine participate in individual well-being and emancipation?

Going beyond self, the anthropological problem of the subject's relationship to the collective offers a fertile direction to analyse how a drink is mobilized in social relationships to build hierarchies, solidarity and logics of distinction. In addition, investigations into the division of wine labour (from pruning to winemaking) lead increasingly to global questions concerning the social, the economic and political conditions of the production of wines and the place of the subject in these processes.

The issue of gender also appears as a major object with the increased visibility of women in the worlds of wine (Lem 2013; 1999). How do they integrate into the profession of wine and why do they play a leading role in the development of bio-dynamic or natural wines or in the prescription of taste? In France, many female winemakers have raised their voices, even if the most well-known wine critics remain male. Famous female critics such as Jancis Robinson, Jeannie Cho Lee, Debra Meiburg have, however, upset a world long defined by masculinity. Women sommeliers have also entered the competitive world of tasting. The question of taste opens a new research direction still rarely discussed critically in the traditionally producing countries apart from in the work of the sociologist Geneviève Teil (2004).

Finally, articles focusing on the multi-scalar dimension of wine politics and regulation are welcome. Who are the main policy and political actors of the world of wine today? Where are the political spaces where the main interests are negotiated and managed? What are the values at stake as far as wine production and consumption are concerned? To what extent do environmental and health interests coalesce?

***Timeline***

This special issue will be coordinated by Chantal Crenn (MCF, Université de Bordeaux Montaigne), Marion Demossier (Professeur, université de Southampton) and Boris Pétric (DR au CNRS, Centre Norbert Elias). Proposals for articles (title and abstract of 4000 to 6000 characters with bibliographic references) should be received by **30 January 2020**. Proposals should include a title, a 700-1,000 words abstract, and a reference list. They should describe the principal arguments and the methods and/or materials that will be used (fieldwork, archives, etc.) to support them. An author bio/bibliographical note should also accompany each proposal. Methodological debate are also welcome to the special issue. Articles could be submitted in French or English.

Articles need to be send to: [Chantal.Crenn@iut.u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr](mailto:Chantal.Crenn@iut.u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr),

[M.Demossier@soton.ac.uk](mailto:M.Demossier@soton.ac.uk) ; [boris.petric@ehess.fr](mailto:boris.petric@ehess.fr). Authors will be contacted following the process of selection before the end of February 2020.

The final texts (between 35.000 à 70.000 characters max., including footnotes and bibliography) will need to be received by **31 July 2020**. The publication of this special issue of *Ethnologie Française* is scheduled for the summer of **2021**.

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1. <http://www.oiv.int/public/medias/6371/oiv-statistical-report-on-world-vitiviniculture-2018.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)