

NASTS

In this presentation I would like to share some considerations about the nature of value-adding geographical claims made in the US and in Europe and I would like to propose a crude model for differentiating American and European enactments of terroir.

The nature of the presentation will be quite superficial – staying on a rather general level. Time does not permit in depths analysis and theoretical excursions. Thus I will not be able to substantiate all of my claims. You will just have to take my word for it.

I have earlier been accused of concealing and postponing my findings unnecessarily – to prevent this I have chosen to make a slide with my 2 cents.

My 2 cents:

1 When considering value-adding geographical claims – enactments of terroir in the US differ from those in EU.

2 the US versions seem to gain momentum – also in a New Nordic foodscape.

Methodology

In my abstract I have promised to utilize a possible world induced STS attitude - that sounds both intriguing and quite fluffy. What do I mean?

In order to denaturalize organic terms and biases I wish to evoke a 'performative view' on terroir in which the 'naturally included notions' are "unsettled" and investigated as 'doings', 'enactments' and ongoing accomplishments in practice. So in familiar STS-lingo I wish to deploy a modest post-ANT attitude in which

"The natural must be made to look surprising"

In my earlier work I have been looking at the multiple ways in which the props and furniture of fictional worlds might be orchestrated. In this work I have found possible world semantics quite helpful.

Possible world theory is both a quite confusing and mindboggling philosophical discourse that centers around modal logic and a more manageable narrative framework used by literary critics in order to address taxonomies of fictional possibilities, notions of literary truth, the nature of fictionality, and the relationship between fictional worlds and reality.

From this vocabulary I have found inspiration to my partition of terroirs.

As a value-adding marketing label, terroir may enhance a cheese's cultural capital and price per pound through promoting place-based distinction

In Europe the European Commission seeks to promote and protect names of quality agricultural products and foodstuff through – amongst other initiatives – geographical designated labels:

The protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI), and traditional specialty guaranteed (TSG)

These labels are thought to encourage diverse agricultural production, protect product names from misuse or imitation and help consumers by giving them information concerning the specific character of the products. This system is set up to promote terroir as tradition - and geographical claims are focal.

In the US, notions of terroir seem enacted differently.

In general cheese producers in the United States find this sort of collective, regionally circumscribed practices, codified by a governmentlike entity far too bureaucratic and controlling.

U.S. cheesemakers are entrepreneurs seeking recognition for their creativity. They do not want to be “confined,” by place or ecological niches. Placing more faith in the market than in government to ensure quality, they want to be left alone to do their own thing.

Unfettered by tradition or concern for “old-school” authenticity, U.S. cheesemakers enjoy the freedom to “fool around” with milk and novel bacterial cultures.

So... Where can this be observed?

One place is in the catalogue for the American Cheese Society’s annual competition. In 2012 the competition quite was tellingly subtitled:

Owning our future

From the catalogue of this competition we can gather some significant information.

First off the title strikes a humorous pose - a non-distinguished tone: Cheese Rally in Raleigh. Got it?

Furthermore we learn that more than 1600 cheeses are judged. And that they are divided into 23 genres and around 99 subgroups. 2 of these groups are interestingly entitled: American originals and American made / International style.

We also learn that the US cheese community couldn’t care less about European protected names such as Feta, Parmesan, and the like. They proudly compete in these disciplines and make absolutely no effort to mask or hide the use of internationally protected labels.

Skipping the intermediate results we can establish the following crude model for differentiating European and American enactments of terroir.

When terroir is part of the dairy-strategy in the US, the geographical claims are made with reference to:

US:

Creative non-sense names.
Driven by personal competence.
No geographical designated labels.
Trademarked
Includes enactments of innovation and artisanal skills
Independent
No affiliation-initiated control tests
Highlights labor and stewardship
Name owned
Market entrusted quality
Freestyling

US slogan "Behind every great cheese stands a great cheese producer".

When terroir is part of the dairy-strategy in the EU, the geographical claims are made with reference to:

EU:

Geographically recognizable names.
Community driven effort
Geographical designated labels.
No trademarks.
Includes enactments of tradition and history
Highly regulated
Synchronized affiliation-initiated tests
Highlights the nature of pasture, soil and microclimate
Name attributed
Government entrusted quality
Traditional

EU slogan "Underneath every great cheese is a great soil"

I find that if you are to sum up these different geographical claims – possible world theory can come I handy.

As mentioned earlier. Possible world theory deals with the constituents of narrative worlds. One of the fundamental tools in the possible world theory toolbox is modal restrictions. With this tool we can consider what kind of restrictions are dominant in fictional worlds.

So – and this is the key to what I have called a possible world induced STS-attitude - if we think of the geographical claims as narrative world creating enactments we can utilize the modal vocabulary from PWT. I believe that the following 2 modalities are central to geographical claims

- 1. Alethic modalities: possibility, impossibility, and necessity**
- 2. Deontic modalities: permission, prohibition, and obligation**

I find that geographical claims in the US version in general highlight alethic modalities.

In the US a positive deviation from the norm is an alethic enhancement, it is above standard, it is hypernormal.

On the other side of the pond geographical claims in the European versions in general highlight deontic modalities.

The deontic domain centers on accepted conventions, customs of culture, explicit rules, laws and regulations.

In the European versions a positive deviation from the norm is a deontic enhancement, it is within the standard, it is typical.

If we take this information and make a classic 2 by 2 diagram we get something like this: 2 "pure" domains of geographical claims and 2 mixed domains.

And on this scale it is possible to place different dairy products and create correlations. Here are some examples:

With this model or scale we are able differentiate between enactments of terroir in an American and European dairy strategies.

And finally: I find that the US versions of making geographical claims are gaining momentum in Europe. In the south the winemarket is slowly steering towards brand names in favor of geographical names and in the North new dairy strategies are very US-like.

SUM

I believe that geographical claims in the US are 'uprooted' and generally highlight alethic modalities – centerstaging individual stewardship and innovation.

Geographical claims in EU, on the other hand, steers towards communal practices and deontic modalities grounded in soil and tradition.

In Europe the concept of collective regional enterprises or consortiums flourishes. In the US collective patrimony is less propagated, whereas privately owned farms and production facilities secure personal recognition through intellectual property, brands and labels.

And lastly I find that the once "frozen" ground of the cold north is beginning to 'thaw out' and, as an element in the 'New Nordic' trend, northerners has begun to utilize American terroir-based strategies in order to meet global demands.