

**(Re)constructing the ‘taste of place’:
Terroir, science, and food politics in international development**

My dissertation explores knowledge and authority in the process of implementing geographical indications (GIs) in marginal rural areas of the Global South. GIs identify a good as originating in a particular territory where a given quality, reputation, or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin. Based largely on successful European examples such as Champagne, non-governmental organizations, international institutions, and state actors have promoted GIs to producers and states of the Global South, arguing that it represents a multi-faceted rural development strategy. My research draws on theoretical contributions from agro-foods studies, critical development studies, and science and technology studies to analyze how the legitimacy of GIs as a development strategy is reproduced through the practical and discursive intervention of European institutions in the Global South.

Specifically, using qualitative data collection methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and archival research, I analyze a case study of the technical assistance offered by the French National Institute of Origin and Quality (INAO) to state actors and producers in Ecuador, through which these actors have sought to develop a legal and regulatory framework for GI protection and implement specific GIs for traditional and non-traditional agro-food products. With the support of an IRIS Summer Fieldwork Award, I was able to conduct 12 weeks of dissertation fieldwork in France during the summer of 2022, during which I collected data for the first findings chapter of my dissertation, which focuses on the production and dissemination of France’s GI technical assistance.

In June 2022, I began fieldwork in Paris. I started by visiting France's National Library, where I read secondary literature on GI and the French notion of *terroir* ('the taste of place') on which GI protection is based. I have used this literature to develop a background dissertation chapter exploring the history of GI protection in France and how the notion of *terroir* has evolved as it has been codified and institutionalized. I also searched the bibliographies of these works for references which could serve as primary sources. Finally, in the library, I was able to find and digitize primary sources, including scientific articles, working papers, and conferences presentations concerning GI; and a series of bulletins published by the INAO from the 1930s to the 1990s, which illustrate its evolving mandate and structure and the work of committees charged with adapting *terroir* (which is based on wine production) to other agro-food products, including cheeses, oils, meats, nuts, and fruits and vegetables.

Later in June, I began fieldwork at France's National Archives. Here, I found a treasure trove of materials concerning the INAO's technical work from the 1980s to the early 2000s. These primary sources included meeting minutes and reports from INAO's different national committees (concerning wines and spirits, dairy products, and agro-foods); reports and documents from personnel visits to disciplinary and scientific conferences; scientific papers and theses produced by or under the supervision of INAO personnel; and reports concerning specific products to be protected as GIs in France. Using these materials, I have developed an analysis of how the INAO came to develop standard procedures for GI regulation and implementation, which later would become the basis for the technical assistance offered to countries such as Ecuador. Unfortunately, I came down with COVID-19 before I was able to finish gathering these materials at the National Archives.

In July 2022, I traveled to Montpellier. I began my time there by attending a worldwide conference on GIs hosted by France's Agricultural Research Center for International Development (CIRAD). I used this conference as an opportunity for participant observation, using the presentations and discussions of the researchers and administrators to analyze how GI are discursively and practically produced as a mechanism of rural development. At the conference, I was able to connect with several researchers and administrators, who I later followed up with to schedule interviews or request documents. While in Montpellier, I also accessed the CIRAD's Lavalette Library, which included numerous reports from technical missions undertaken by the CIRAD's investigators to explore and implement GIs in countries in the Global South, including Indonesia, Vietnam, Costa Rica, Honduras, and much of Francophone Africa. These mission reports and accompanying technical documents allowed me to broadly conceptualize how French institutions prepare for, undertake, and assess their work promoting and supporting GI implementation outside of France.

During this time, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with two former and current personnel from the INAO. In the first interview, I talked with the agent who had visited Ecuador on several occasions to advise state actors and producer groups on the implementation of GIs for products such as coffee, cacao, and dragon fruit. In the second, I talked with a lawyer charged with oversight of the INAO's cooperative missions abroad. These interviews allowed me to conceptualize how the INAO conducts its international technical work and understands these missions as part of its mandate to protect France's GIs. Finally, in August 2022, I returned to Paris to complete the work at the National Archives that I had been unable to finish in June due to illness.

The support of the IRIS's Summer Fieldwork Award was key to allowing me to carry out this work in France. I will use the primary and secondary sources I gathered at libraries and archives in France – as well as the data from semi-structured interviews – to write two chapters of my dissertation, as well as substantial portions of the remainder of that project. Using data gathered with the support of IRIS, I hope to contribute to social theories exploring the dimensions and sources of power in international development projects and how power operates through such projects to reshape producer identities and local material relations.