

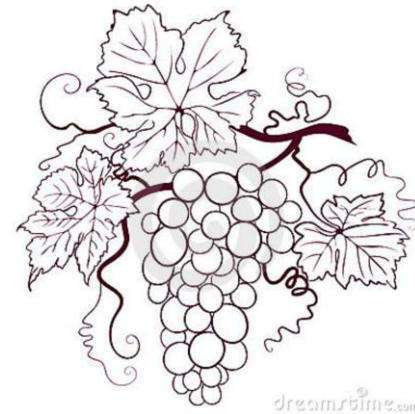
# Modern resilience of Georgian wine

## Geographical indications and international exposure

***Anastasiya Shtaltovna***

Montreal Center for International Studies  
University of Montréal

October 5, 2019



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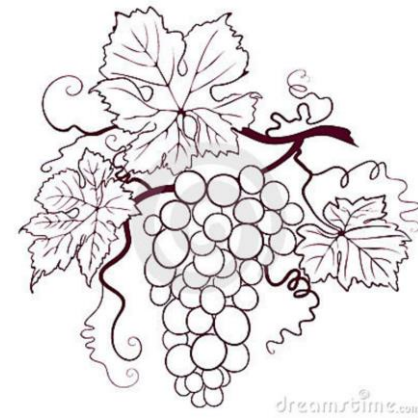
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# Geographical indications (GI)



- GI or *terroir* is used to indicate the combination of environmental, cultural and socioeconomic factors that shape the production of a specific agri-food product (Patterson and Buechsenstein 2018).
- A tool that attaches **additional** market **value** to a product by linking it to a specific place, its culture and traditional forms of production (Artini et al. 2016; Parasecoli 2017) .
  - augmentation of economic well-being of producers and their communities
  - better quality of food for consumers
  - the protection of heritage products
  - safeguarding the environment
  - protection of Indigenous knowledge
- GI initiatives centers on efforts **to differentiate traditional and culture-rich local foods from the poverty of food from nowhere/ superiority of the local over the global** (Bonanno et al. 2019).

# Georgia



# A history of resilience in Georgia's wine diversity and quality.

## Why Georgian wine is different?

- Georgia is an origin of advanced and differentiated viticulture (Kharbedia 2015)
- Wine making dates back to 6000 BC (McGovern et al. 2017; Kharaishvili et al. 2014);
- Produced mostly from local endemic grape varieties (525 documented)
- Winemaking technology is based on the use of *qvevri*
- 19<sup>th</sup> century: modernization of wine production (i.e. use of oak barrels)
- Soviet period: Viticulture became the leading industry in Georgia; Georgian wines gain rapidly popularity in USSR







# Post-Soviet development of Georgian resilience and wine

- ✓ 1991 end of Soviet Union
- ✓ More than half of the population is involved in agriculture (9% to the GDPs)
- ✓ Counterfeits of Georgian wines appeared on the markets of former Soviet countries
- ✓ 1998 a law on Vines and Wine was signed; As part of the Law, **18 GI wines were registered.**
- ✓ 2006 – 2013: Russian embargo on Georgian wines: closing of Georgian biggest market

# From post-Soviet to international: accommodating external wine standards in Georgia



- GI helped in fighting against
    - growing demand from the Russian (and now Chinese) markets for inexpensive but fabled wines
    - the counterfeiting of Georgian wine abroad.
  - In Europe, GI emphasizes agroecological considerations and know-how. But in Georgia, in the assessment of wine quality the following play a role:
    - Wine grape variety is the first point of reference
    - Dense social network of wine
    - The stature of the qvevri style of fermentation
  - Although Georgia shares the European principles of *terroir*, it situates geographical origin lower on the hierarchy.
- Can GI fairly capture the unique agroecological diversity and quaintly of Georgian wine?

# Wine in contemporary Georgia: resilience through trade diversification



- Georgia works on creating awareness, achieving standards and negotiating trade relations with different countries
- 2013 UNESCO approved the Georgian qvevri method as a world Intangible Cultural Heritage

*“the tradition plays a vital role in everyday life and celebrations, and forms an inseparable part of the cultural identity of Georgian communities, with wine and vines frequently evoked in Georgian oral traditions and songs... Knowledge of this heritage is passed down by families, neighbors and friends, all of whom join in the communal harvesting and wine-making activities”.*
- 2015: EU integration processes, that included a major free trade agreement, directly affected the wine sector
- 2017 on: Increase in sales: Georgia exported 86.2 million bottles of wine to 53 countries (Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Poland, China, EU and North America).

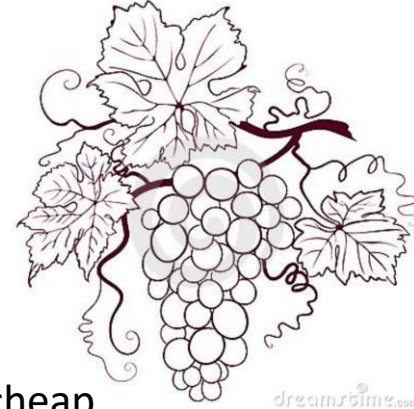


# Benevolent authoritarianism in Georgian wine institutions

- Gov. encourages farmers and other producers to take over initiatives, such as GI producer groups, by suggesting that they “re-register the GIs to the farmers’ associations and production cooperatives; but
- “[the stakeholders] have not been very active in this process” (Interview with Kasradze 2018).
- The state sees no other choice but to push on undemocratically by institutionalizing the future structures of the wine, i.e. such as joining the WTO, establishing sui generis GI regulations, creating a trade promotion abroad and promoting wine heritage at UNESCO, the government’s actions appear to be benevolent and proactive.



# Conclusion



1. Georgian wine can be characterized by its resilience, elite patronage and persistent peasant support for wine in everyday life.
2. **GI helps to face challenges brought by capitalism**, such as
  - (a) the growing demand from the Russian and Chinese markets for cheap wines;
  - (b) the establishment of a positive Georgian wine reputation outside of Eastern Europe; and
  - (c) the fight against counterfeits of Georgian wine.
3. The way **GI was created in Western Europe**, diverges in slight but important ways **from some of the basic modes of organizing and recognizing quality in Georgia**
  - a) Wines categorized according to the **unique grape varieties** (more than 500)
  - b) the constant **consumption and social networking** around wine in Georgia creates **a dynamic and multimodal space for assigning quality**
  - c) **Qvevri-fermented wines** vs. wine fermented in wood barrels or stainless steel
4. The **question now is** whether the dynamism and uniqueness of Georgian wine culture can be fairly captured by relatively statist, standards-focused policy mechanisms like GI or whether GI can be deployed, in a sustainable fashion, in parallel to preexisting wine recognition systems.

# Thank you for your attention!



--> Just published: [Bonanno](#), A., [Sekine](#), K., [Feuer](#), H. (2019) **Geographical Indication and Global Agri-Food: Development and Democratization**. Routledge

