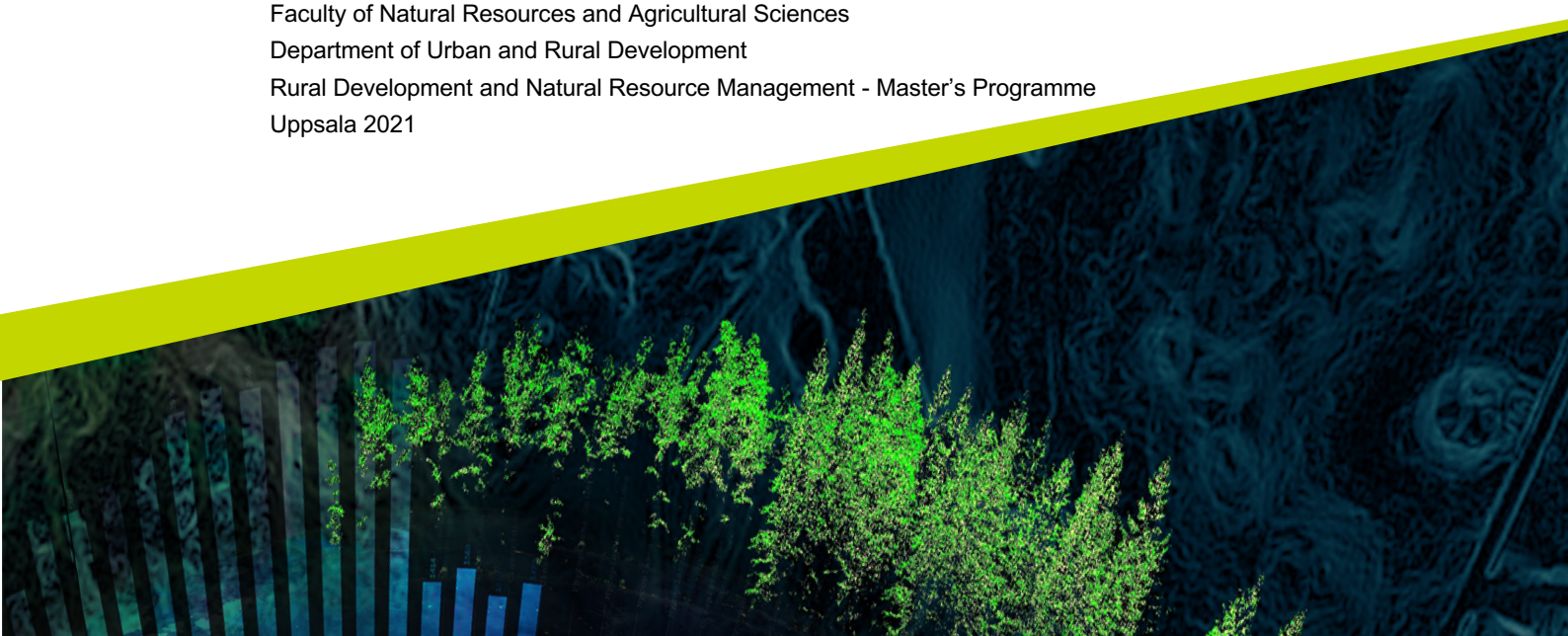
Alternative Food Networks and Values of Quality in ‘Natural’ Wine Production

– The study of ‘natural’ wine producers in Germany

Maximilian Hågård Brown

Master thesis • 30 credits
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Rural Development and Natural Resource Management - Master’s Programme
Uppsala 2021



Values of Quality in ‘Natural’ Wine Production – The study of ‘natural’ wine in Germany

Maximilian Hågård Brown

Supervisor: Harry Fischer, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Departement of Urban and Rural Development

Examiner: Nathan Clay, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development

Assistant examiner: Margarita Cuadra, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development

Credits: 30 credits

Level: Second cycle, A2E

Course title: Master thesis in Rural Development

Course code: EX0889

Program/education: Rural Development and Natural Resource Management – Master’s Program

Course coordinating dept: Department of Urban and Rural Development

Place of publication: Uppsala

Year of publication: 2021

Copyright: All featured images are used with permission from copyright owner.

Online publication: https://stud.epsilon.slu.se

Keywords: ‘Natural’ Wine, Alternative, Conventions, Quality, Food, Agriculture, Sustainability, Organic, Biodynamic

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Division of Rural Development

Publishing and archiving

Approved students' theses at SLU are published electronically. As a student, you have the copyright to your own work and need to approve the electronic publishing. If you check the box for **YES**, the full text (pdf file) and metadata will be visible and searchable online. If you check the box for **NO**, only the metadata and the abstract will be visible and searchable online. Nevertheless, when the document is uploaded it will still be archived as a digital file.

If you are more than one author you all need to agree on a decision. Read about SLU's publishing agreement here: https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/publish-and-analyse/register-and-publish/agreement-for-publishing/.

☒ YES, I/we hereby give permission to publish the present thesis in accordance with the SLU agreement regarding the transfer of the right to publish a work.

☐ NO, I/we do not give permission to publish the present work. The work will still be archived and its metadata and abstract will be visible and searchable.

Abstract

The current food production system based on a globalized network of economic efficiency and productivity relies on resource intensive production methods that are often environmentally destructive and unsustainable. Therefore, a growing body of research seeks to understand how different alternative food networks (AFNs) are potentially shaping new approaches to agriculture and our relationship to food in order to combat the current environmental crisis. The 'Natural' wine movement (NWM) positions itself as an alternative food network with the potential to shape new conventions of quality in contrast to mainstream forms of industrial food production. In this study, I investigate the values of 'natural' wine producers (NWPs) in Germany in order to understand what conventions of quality they associate with food production. In order to interpret the values of the NWPs, I conducted semi-structured interviews along with the application of the conventions theory framework. The findings of the study show that the NWPs in Germany share values associated with environmental sustainability, transparency, and artisanal expression.

Keywords: '*Natural' Wine, Alternative, Conventions, Quality, Food, Agriculture, Sustainability, Organic, Biodynamic*

“We don’t just want to survive; we want to live. And for that we need wine.”

- Michael Völker, 2Naturkinder

Table of contents

List of tables

List of figures

Abbreviations

AFN	Alternative Food Networks
CT	Conventions Theory
EU	European Union
IA	Industrial Agriculture
IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
NWM	‘Natural’ Wine Movement

1. Introduction

Recent literature on Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) and the practices of progressive farmers aim to pave the way for new interpretations of a food system that stands in opposition to the current globalized hegemony of industrial agriculture (IA). Proponents of AFNs define and draw attention to a reassertion of sustainable and localized food production networks that advocates for closer relationships between producers and consumers (Murdoch & Miele 2013; Venn et. all 2006). Furthermore, scholars frame AFNs as a reaction to a globalized corporate food system based on ideals of economic efficiency and high productivity (Wilson 2013).

Scholarly discourses and proponents of AFNs highlight the role that sustainable and local food production values have in potentially shaping new conventions of quality associated with food production. Specifically, they are emphasizing examples of agricultural and consumer-producer relations as an alternative away from a hegemonic industrial agricultural model (Brunori 2007; Forssell & Lankoski 2018; Goodman 2003; Levkoe & Wakefield 2014; Venn et. al 2006; Murdoch & Miele 1999; Wilson 2013). It is argued that the value of local food production is its ability to contribute to the local economy and culture, provide ecological benefits associated with short supply chains and sustainable agriculture, and more transparent connections between the producers and consumers that create relations of trust, respect, and pleasure (Parkins and Craig 2009). It is argued that industrial agriculture and food networks on the other hand distances and detaches food production from food consumption (Venn et. al 2006). In this view, the inability to clearly identify the origins of standardized food production creates a social disconnect away from the natural environment and the producer (Murdoch & Miele 1999).

1.1. A brief description of industrial agriculture

IA is an approach to agriculture based on developments in scientific, technological, and government interventions designed to provide efficient crop productivity. In a broad sense, industrial food systems are "globalized networks of food production, distribution, storage, and retail that are controlled by multinational agribusiness and retail corporations" (Harris 2010). It relies on intensive and environmentally unsustainable production methods which often use: heavy capital inputs, hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, monocropping, large-scale irrigation infrastructures, and sophisticated technological mechanisms for planting and harvesting; all of which help provide higher and more efficient quantities of food production (Clapp 2016).

The consequences of this resource intensive agriculture pose major environmental and public health risks. The development of large scale monocultures are eroding biodiversity amongst plants and animals; synthetic pesticides and fertilizers are polluting the soil, water, and air; soil erosion is occurring much faster than it can be replenished, causing a loss of soil fertility needed to nourish both plants and animals; and unsustainable water consumption is depleting scarce fresh water resources available (Horrigan et. al 2002). Agriculture, forestry, and other land-use already account for a quarter of human greenhouse gas emissions (FAO 2019).

1.2. Natural wine as an AFN

The 'Natural' wine movement (NWM) represents an example of an AFN that is potentially developing new conventions associated with agriculture. The origins of the movement began in the wine growing region of Beaujolais, France in the 1980s after a small group of local wine makers became dissatisfied with a system that compromised the quality of wine in favour of high production in order to match market demands (Buranyi 2018). The small group of wine makers, influenced by the radical ideals of the local wine maker Marcel Lapierre, established an alternative approach to wine making, in opposition to industrialized

modes of production, which emphasized organic grape cultivation along with slow fermentation void of machines or chemical additives (ibid. 2018). The style of wine making then slowly spread throughout France and Europe, whereby winemakers began to embrace sustainability, pursue old-fashioned traditional production techniques, and even re-introduced "out-of-fashion" native grape varietals not found in mainstream wine markets (ibid. 2018). Unfortunately, it is difficult to distinguish a current number of wine makers who abide to 'natural' wine making conventions due to a lack of institutional oversight and legal definitions. However, there has been a steady increase of worldwide organic grape production, growing from 87,655 hectares of organic grapes in 2004 to 403,047 hectares in 2017 (FiBL & IFOAM Organics International 2019). Europe currently accounts for 90 percent of the world's organic grape area (ibid. 2019).

The movement is not void of debates or controversy regarding the institutional definition of 'natural' wine. Yet, the ideology of the movement "expresses both the producers and the consumers desire to not only get closer to agriculture and the land, but also to show and see the hand of the artisan in the production method" (Black 2013). The movement challenges conventional notions of mainstream wine making by opposing industrialized agriculture inputs and chemical manipulatives in the final product that shape the outcome and flavour of the wine (Ascione et. al 2020; Black 2013). Therefore, at the very least, 'natural' wine must be farmed organically (Llegeron 2017) while avoiding any additional chemical manipulatives in the fermentation process in order to express the true quality of the wine.

However, 'natural' wine producers (NWPs) must constantly coordinate and negotiate standards of quality between one another. Functioning as a niche, the overall intentions of NWPs in the movement is to develop and reform wine making conventions in order to create new spaces for more desirable practices (Forssell & Lankoski 2018). Yet, due to a lack of institutional oversight and clear definition of what 'natural' wine truly represents, NWPs must continuously engage and

negotiate with one another in order to develop alternative quality conventions that moves away from mainstream wine making practices.

1.3. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to understand and explore how NWPs in Germany are potentially shaping new conventions of quality in relation to food production. Specifically, I am interested in how their motivations and ideologies shape their approach to agriculture and how it shapes their vinification process. Throughout the research 'natural wine production will be positioned in alignment with AFNs which embodies values of sustainability, locality, and socio-political embeddedness (Wilson 2013) in order to highlight how 'natural' wine practices potentially display alternative ideologies of quality in opposition to conventional industrialized methods of food production.

1.4. Research questions and objectives

The following research questions are designed in order to complement one another in order to understand the NWP's values of quality. By understanding and analyzing their values, I will apply conventions theory as a theoretical tool in order to interpret and analyze which conventions of quality persist in NWP. Conventions theory examines shared rules and norms or notions of what is considered worthy or desirable in economic coordination (Forsell and Lankoski 2018).

- ***Question 1***: What are the motivations and values of NWPs?
- ***Question 2***: What notions of quality do they associate with 'natural' wine production?

- **Objective**: To understand the values of NWP's in the wine making process and how it potentially develops new conventions of quality.

1.5. Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 will provide background information on AFNs and the NWM based on scholarly literature in order to provide context for the thesis and research.

Chapter 3 will discuss and illustrate the theoretical framework of conventions theory and worlds of justification framework.

Chapter 4 will provide background on the methodological framework of the thesis.

Chapter 5 will prevent the empirical findings of the research based on the semi-structured interviews and visits with the participants.

Chapter 6 will discuss and analyse the empirical findings through the CT framework to help understand and explain the values and motivations of the NWPs in Germany.

Chapter 7 will provide a conclusion for the research.

2. Background

The aim of this chapter is to provide further insight on AFNs and the NWM by emphasizing important discourses and background knowledge. In the first section of this chapter I will discuss key definitions and discourses provided by relevant literature on AFNs in order to establish a contextual framework regarding the social and ecological impacts of alternative agricultural networks. This will lay the foundation for discussing the NWM in the following section.

2.1. Defining Alternative Food Networks

AFNs represent diversity of actors working within different networks of food production who seek an alternative approach to our current food system. It has developed into an all-encompassing term that may be applied to a vast array of emerging food schemes and initiatives that are seeking to reconfigure producer-consumer relations (Venn et. al 2006). They may come in the form of farmers markets, community supported agriculture, independent and specialist food retailers, labelling schemes, organic food, or sustainable small-scale farms (Forssell & Lankoski 2018; Wilson 2013). AFNs seek to address a wide range of environmental and social issues such as justice, sustainability, health, and governance (Levkoe & Wakefield 2014). They are often isolated spaces or self-governed models of collective identities and value systems originating from civil society that seek to promote more local, sustainable, traditional, and transparent means of producing food (ibid. 2014). Alternative as a concept may therefore be defined as geographically identifiable spaces whereby diverse production and consumption cultures serve to strengthen varied ecological conditions that give rise to organic and traditional foods (Morgan et al. 2006).

Therefore, AFNs share similar qualities to niches. Niches are defined as spaces in which actors develop new practices with the intention of altering or reforming the current regime and creating new spaces for more desirable practices (Forssell & Lankoski 2018). Significant work is required to keep the niche together and running and actors must articulate the rules involved (ibid. 2018). The current regime embodies the unsustainable and socially distant practices associated with industrial food production. Therefore, AFNs function as regime outsiders (ibid. 2018) whereby new values and qualities are generated in accordance to agriculture practices and consumer-producer relations.

AFNs are potentially generating new conventions of quality in contrast to industrial standards of production. In David Goodman's (2003) review of current AFN research, he articulates an ongoing 'quality turn' within the food sector based on embeddedness, trust, and place. These three concepts represent what he defines as the basic organizing principles of AFNs (Brunori 2007). Furthermore, Amanda DiVito Wilson notes that AFNs espouse values of sustainability, social and political embeddedness, and the relocalization of food (2013). The standards which many other scholars speculate offers a network and production model of food that will be less characterized by its commodified nature, where it can be scientifically and technologically intervened upon in order to adhere to the globalized markets of efficiency and standardization, and instead focus on qualities based on environmental sustainability and transparency (Murdoch & Miele 1999; Wilson 2013). Therefore, quality over quantity represents an overarching strategy in alternative food production. In addition, proponents of AFNs highlight strategies of 're-socializing' and 're-spatializing' food through closer and more authentic relationships between producers, consumers, and their food (Venn et. al 2006). Such strategies are employed through re-localizing food production.

2.1.1. Relocalization Strategies and Establishing Quality

Re-localization strategies employed by AFNs implies a new relation of transparency between producer and consumer. In Gianluca Brunori's analysis of local food and AFNs, he argues that "local food conveys strong meanings with the

potential to detach consumers from conventional networks and attach them to alternative food networks" (2007: 8). Local food producers employ strategies of relocalization based on symbolic, physical, or relational meaning in order to communicate and establish the value of local foods within the food system (ibid. 2007). Value is created through the development of specific meanings and adjectives around foods and food processes (ibid. 2007). *Figure 1* shows examples of meanings attached to local food. It is argued that foods of clear local provenance are assumed to be of higher quality as they are capable of establishing clear traces of 'clean' and 'green' environments from which they came from (Murdoch & Miele 1999). They become more desirable products of consumption based on their emphasis of proximity to nature (ibid. 1999). Furthermore, a sense of place "encompasses the history and culture of the human built environment in its most generous sense, but as it is understood in terms of its complex and dynamic interplay with nature" (Hinrichs 2007: 11). In this sense, creating linkages between food products or food production processes to specific places is a central to the construction of quality (Harris 2010).

Functional	Health
	Taste
Ecological	Food miles
	Biodiversity and landscape
Aesthetic	Diversity vs standardisation
	Distinction
Ethical	Authenticity
	Identity and solidarity
Political	To change the balance of power in the food chain
	To orient production and consumption patterns

Table 1. Meanings and Adjectives Attached to Local Foods

Alternative foods are able to distinguish themselves based on different framing strategies. The three framing strategies are built upon Gianluca Brunori's (2007) analysis of the 'local turn' in relation to David Goodman's (2003) reflection of the 'quality turn' on AFNs. Brunori (2007) emphasizes that quality is established through the creation and exchange of meanings that are communicated to the consumer. *Symbolic relocalization* relies on creating awareness of the origin of the

product and its main ingredients (ibid. 2007). When cultural traditions and natural characteristics of the product are conveyed effectively it communicates particular attached qualities (ibid. 2007). *Physical relocalization* implies a reconfiguration of sourcing patterns and the localization of food production (ibid. 2007). *Relational relocalization* emphasizes 'bottom-up' marketing initiatives such as farmers markets, community co-ops, or specialty stores that avoids mainstream forms of retail (ibid. 2007). This creates closer relations and coordination between consumers and the producers whereby personal exchanges are experienced.

Therefore, quality is established intrinsically and extrinsically based on processes of production and specific meanings attached to food. AFNs seek to reconfigure food from a commodity to an experience of pleasure (Starr 2010). The narrative of 'aestheticization' advocated by AFNs may provide an alternative to the 'economization' of food production and consumption (Murdoch & Miele 2013). Intrinsically, the qualities of foods are derived from material composition, edibility, taste, and appearance, while extrinsic qualities refer to judgements and evaluations brought about by human actors (ibid. 2013). AFNs are developing new social relationships with food that has been lost or distorted due to industrialized means of production. They are alerting and developing new networks whereby consumers may identify the significance of food as a cultural, social, and environmental good (ibid. 2013).

For example, the Slow Food Movement (SFM), a consumer rights association established in Italy in the 1980s, aims to reassert the values of food by emphasizing that cuisines should reflect localized cultural norms and practices (Chrzan 2004; Murdoch & Miele 2013). Food and taste in this instance are positioned as a key symbol of local and sustainable ecological development that de-centres the identification of food as a commodity (Pietrykowski 2004). Instead, the SFM advocates that "knowledge and appreciation of food can be used to engage in consumption practices that promote sustainable craft production within an agricultural region representing a unique cultural heritage (ibid. 2004: 317 see Hendrickson & Heffernan 2002). Thus, the ability of AFNs and producers to

develop new meanings and values associated with sustainability, tradition, and a sense of place may in turn potentially shift alternative conventions associated with quality food production.

2.1.2. Criticisms of Localism

However, there are discourses that discourage simplistic notions of localist agriculture as a solution to global IA. Firstly, Goodman et al. (2012) argues against the 'romanticized' notion of local agricultural values as a means for creating a utopic food system. Furthermore, he argues that localization has been widely canvassed as a solution to the problem in opposition to global IA whereby normative ideas of localism illustrate an image of pure, conflict-free values and local knowledge (ibid. 2011). "The central problematic here is the suggestion that any activity that takes place on a 'local' scale is intrinsically more 'just'…" (Harris 2010: 362). The local vs. global binary of framing food production discounts the fact that AFNs are in fact still dependent on capitalist market relations and state support (Goodman et al. 2012). Therefore, AFNs may often function as hybrid models that draw on "characteristics of both the alternative and conventional food systems" (Forsell & Lankoski 2018: 47).

Secondly, 'alternative' as a terminology is argued to be opaque and unclear. Holloway et. al (2007) argues that although discoursers of alternativeness may empower stimulating challenges against unjust economic relations and unsustainable ecological practices in IA, it still remains a slippery concept without a clear definitive path (Holloway et al. 2007). The ambiguousness of 'alternative' as a concept does not promote any clear sense of intentions "other than to suggest they are in opposition to, or distinct from some element of conventional food systems" (Wilson 2013: 722).

Instead, a more reflexive approach to understanding localism and alternative food networks, whereby a recognition of contradictions and complexity within the system are recognized (Ferguson et al. 2017; Goodman et al. 2012). "Reflexivity is

not a set of values, but a process by which people pursue goals while acknowledging the imperfection of their actions" (ibid. 2012: 30). Therefore, although ANTs may espouse values of sustainability, tradition, or social justice the ambiguity of 'alternative' as a concept still remains unclear in certain instances, thus requiring a reflexive approach to how producers establish quality.

2.2. Defining the 'Natural' Wine Movement

Functioning as a niche, NWPs seek to uphold themselves as an alternative to mechanization and industrialization, whereby transparency and artisanship is celebrated and elaborated through the final product of the wine (Black 2013; Llegeron 2017). Transparency and artisanship are a two-fold process, whereby NWPs practice sustainable, small-scale agriculture in the form of organic or biodynamic agriculture, while avoiding any additional interventions in the vinification process which may conceal the true identity of place, the indigenous grapes, and yeasts (Ascione et. al 2020; Black 2013; Good & Harrop 2011; IFOAM EU Group 2013; Llegeron 2017). Transparency represents a central component of 'natural' wine, whereby the wine reflects the growing season and artisan craft of the wine maker (Black 2013). It is the ability of the wine makers skill to grow high quality grapes, when to pick their grapes, and how to be patient during the fermentation process in order to procure a delicious and unique product (ibid. 2013). It is about observing the natural development of the wine making process and knowing how and when to intervene in the most appropriate way (ibid. 2013).

This is opposed to branded conventional wines, which are produced by blending grapes from a variety of larger unspecified locations that are characterized by oenological processes that create consistent homogenized characteristics with the overall aim of increasing volume in order to meet market demands (Van Leeuwan & Seguin 2006).This may create a wine product that is disconnected from its artisanal reality, whereby the winemaker reproduces and manipulates nature (Black 2013). In this section I will briefly cover three important aspects of 'natural' wine: terroir (locality), organic viniculture, and biodynamic viniculture.

2.2.1. Terroir

Terroir is an all-encompassing concept which illustrates ecological and social aspects in relation to the locality of wine. Both factors are influences that shape the terroir. The ecological aspects rely on geography, soil type, and climate (Van Leeuwen & Seguin 2006). The social aspect may relate to the historical, socio-economical, vinicultural, and oenological practices (ibid. 2006). It is the role of the wine maker to frame the idea of terroir by expressing the qualities of their land with the qualities of their agricultural and wine making practices (Ascione et al. 2004).

NWPs are challenging conventional notions of terroir in wine making by opposing forms of agriculture that are dependent on synthetic chemicals and technological interventions (ibid. 2004). Furthermore, 'natural' wine distinguishes itself based on using little to no chemical manipulatives or additives such as sulphur dioxide in the fermentation process (Goode & Harrop 2011). Sulphur dioxide is used as a preservative; however, the chemical alters the flavour of the wine and proponents of 'natural' wine argue it is used in excess in order to conceal impurities or faults in the wine making process (Asimov 2010). Instead, 'natural' wine attempts to develop an authentic or more original version (Monroe 2019) of a wine product that is distinguishable against a backdrop of homogenized tastes within the wine world (Pickard 2020).

2.2.2. Organic Viniculture

Organic viniculture is the practice of sustainable usage of agricultural inputs that seeks to preserve the longevity of the environment and surrounding ecosystems. As defined by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements EU (IFOAM EU Group 2013):

> Organic viticulture focuses on the use of natural processes wherever possible for nutrient production and cycling as well as pest, disease, and weed management. The organic vineyard is seen as an integrated system, with the end product reflecting the local terroir: the environment conditions like hydrology, soil and micro-climate as well as traditional processing practices (IFOAM EU Group 2013).

Specifically, organic viniculture avoids the usage of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, and synthetic fertilizers (Grainger & Tattersall 2016). The overall aim of omitting harsh agricultural inputs is to protect and maintain the longevity and fertility of the environment, natural resources, and biodiversity that is otherwise eroded by more destructive industrial inputs.

Organic viniculture has only been institutionally recognized by the European Union (EU) since 2012. Wine producers who recognize the EU organic wine regulations and quality control are allowed to print the EU organic logo on their wine bottles (IFOAM EU Group 2013). This helps consumers know they are buying a sustainable wine product and is considered as a way to emphasize a more authentic expression of the terroir (ibid.). However, EU organic regulations are limited and other private initiatives in different countries may impose stricter standards than the legal institutionalized requirements in order to strengthen vinicultural and oenological practices (ibid.). Stricter standards may be imposed on: biodiversity in grape production, pest and disease control, quality of yeasts, limitations on chemical additives and further limitations on sulphites, etc. (ibid.). However, even though a wine maker adheres to EU organic standards it does not necessarily mean that they are producing 'natural' wine products.

2.2.3. Biodynamic Viniculture

Biodynamic viniculture is a sustainable approach to agriculture with its own set of strict agricultural standards. It is an agricultural movement founded by the philosopher Rudolph Steiner who produced a series of eight lectures known as the 'Spiritual Foundations for the Renewal of Agriculture' in 1924 (Grainger & Tattersal 2016). He is considered the "father of biodynamics" based on his development of the anthroposophy theory which argues that man is the middle ground between the earth and cosmos rhythms whereby he bridges the gap between the spiritual and material world (Castellini et al. 2017). It entails a more holistic approach to agriculture which asserts that plants are not only energized "by the soil, but by the air, terrestrial cycles and those of the sun, moon, planets, and stars" (Grainger & Tattersal 2016: 65). The farm is seen as a living organism with its own

special needs and means for self-sustenance (IFOAM EU Group 2013). The farmer helps bridge the gap by using special biodynamic preparation techniques that are used throughout the natural cycles that enhance the quality and resilience of the soil (Grainger & Tattersal 2016).

Unlike organic viniculture, which is regulated by an official set of EU rules and regulation, biodynamics is practiced on a voluntary basis and without any public interventions (Castellini et al. 2017). The main regulatory body representing biodynamics is Demeter-International which provides certification for wine producers. It is the most important association responsible for regulating biodynamic standards, however it is not a governmentally recognized institution (ibid. 2017). Therefore, wine producers practicing biodynamics establish themselves as a niche within a niche (ibid. 2017), emphasizing a more alternative evolution of organic agriculture as a means to establish their product and the terroir.

3. Theoretical Framework

The aim of this chapter is to describe and discuss conventions theory, as it will be used to analyse and illustrate the empirical findings gathered from case studies. Specifically, this theory helps articulate what values and conventions of quality that the selected NWPs establish through their work. Furthermore, I will discuss the "worlds of justification framework" which illustrates different convention standards.

3.1. Conventions Theory

Conventions theory (CT) has been utilized by a number of AFN scholars as a basis for understanding how values and quality are established and negotiated amongst different food networks and actors. Conventions are defined as the "practices, routines, agreements, and their associated informal and institutional forms which binds acts together through mutual expectations" (Murdoch & Miele, see Salais & Storper: 471). They are shared templets for interpreting situations and developing new courses of actions that provide a basis for evaluating the actions of the self and other actors (Ponte & Gibbon 2005 see Biggart & Beamish 2003). Accountability, in the form of mutual expectations represent the establishment of a common system of evaluation or 'qualification' which is embodied in the product (Murdoch & Miele 1999). Thus, I use CT to help analyse whether the participant NWPs in Germany have a shared value and accountability criteria regarding quality standards related to 'natural' wine production.

Therefore, CT works as an "economic and sociological theory examining the deployment and shaping of shared rules and norms, or notions of what is worthy, desirable and right, in economic coordination" (Forsell and Lankoski 2018: 47).

Specifically, CT invites the opportunity to evaluate further outside the parameters of costs and profit maximization and instead recognize more dynamic evaluation systems outside the classic economic standards (De Luca et al. 2016). The evaluation parameters are more dynamic and varied and are based on values, visions, and norms (i.e. conventions) (ibid. 2016). Thus, I take inspiration from CT as a means to examine the value systems of NWPs and how they may determine what is quality wine.

Quality standards communicate information about the attributes of a product, however as a concept, it is difficult to define because there is no universal standard and the capacity to evaluate it depends dramatically upon individuals, time, and cultures (Ponte & Gibbon 2005). As John Wilkinson articulates, "CT focuses primarily on the coherence between management, production techniques, and the quality of the products" (1997: 316). Thus, I use CT to help recognize aspects of coordination and negotiation regarding specific understandings of worth that actors strategically and actively promote (Forsell & Lankoski 2018). Actors may promote their values through their day to day activities, production techniques, and their final products.

Conventions are established and re-evaluated based on positive claims and criticisms between actors. Positive claims help promote and reinforce ways of thinking about and evaluating norms and practices in a deeper way (Forsell & Lankoski 2018). Criticisms are powerful discursive devices that help challenge predominant practices, beliefs, and understandings of worth (ibid. 2018). They help offer new ways of renegotiating established conventions, either externally or internally between and within different networks (ibid. 2018). Thus, actors within a network can constantly shape and develop their environment through the enforcement of positive claims and criticisms in the negotiation process.

3.2. Worlds of Justification

The "worlds of justification" is an analytical tool developed by Boltanski & Thévanot in 1991 based on six 'orders of worth', including the recently added 'green' worth. The orders of worth are divided into: civic, market, industrial, domestic, opinion, inspiration, and green (Thévanot et. al 2000: 236). *Table 2* displays a summary of each order of worth and the characteristics that define each convention. Each order of worth "offers a different basis for justification and involves a different mode of evaluation of what is good for a common humanity" (ibid. 2000). The orders of worth help understand how conventions are negotiated by actors in varying contexts and how they are used to evaluate differing notions of quality (Murdoch et. al 2000; see Wilkinson 1997). Specifically, the framework of analysis helps to understand how actors frame their experience and specific aspects within the networks in which they operate in (ibid. et al. 2000, see Callon 1998). Thus, I use "worlds of justification" framework as a complementary analysis in unison with conventions theory in order to help identify what conventions and quality standards are established amongst the actors in the 'natural' wine industry.

Within this theoretical analysis, justifications move beyond stating a personal viewpoint toward proving that the statement is legitimate and relevant for the common good (ibid. 2000). The different worlds represent a "combination of various fundamental ideals, and present particular views of what is important and in line with the greater good" (Forsell & Lankoski 2018). Furthermore, not all justifications fit easily into one specific order of worth, but rather dynamism and compromises can be made when evaluating different actors and networks (Thévanot et al. 2000). Therefore, actors and networks may identify or be associated with various different conventions based on how they justify or perceive their actions. This helps provide flexibility and diversity when interpreting the perspectives, management approach, and production techniques of the NWPs, as not all actors may attain complementary values or evaluation criteria for themselves and the network in which they function in.

Conventions	**Market**	**Industrial**	**Domestic**	**Civic**	**Opinion**	**Inspired**	**Green**
Worth	Price, Cost	Technical efficiency	Esteem, reputation	Collective welfare	Renown, fame	Grace, singularity, creativeness	Environmental friendliness
Test	Market competitiveness	Competence, reliability, planning	Trustworthiness	Equality & solidarity	Popularity, audience, recognition	Passion, enthusiasm,	Sustainability, renewability
Qualified Objects	Freely circulating market good and service	Infrastructure, project, technical object, method, plan	Patrimony, local, heritage	Rules & regulations, fundamental rights, welfare policies	Sign, media	Emotional involvement & expression	Pristine wilderness, healthy environment, natural habitat
Time Formation	Short-term flexibility	Long-term planned future	Customary past	Perennial	Vogue, trend	Eschatological, revolutionary, vision moment	Future generations
Space Formation	globalization	Cartesian space	Local, proximal anchoring	Detachment	Communication network	Presence	Planet ecosystem

Table 2. Orders of Worth

Source. Thévanot et al. 2000

4. Methodology

In this section I will discuss the methodological framework used to analyse and display the data generated from the research project. The first section outlines my philosophical world view. The second part discusses how semi-constructed interviews were used to collect data. The last section then discusses how the data was analysed.

4.1. Philosophical world view

The philosophical worldview represents the guiding principles and beliefs that help structure the approach taken by the researcher (Creswell 2014). Thus, I adopt a constructivist worldview to my research which holds the assumption that individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and work in by developing subjective meanings of their experiences (ibid. 2014). “The meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for a complexity of views rather than narrowing meaning into a few categories or ideas” (ibid. 2014: 37). As Mills and Birks point out, “it is a research paradigm that recognizes that reality is constructed by those who experience it and thus research is a process of reconstructing that reality” (2014: 6). The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the meaning and values expressed by the participants in the study. Therefore, the constructivist worldview will facilitate my research by interacting and engaging with the perspectives of the NWPs in Germany, which in turn allows me to develop my own interpretations of their lived experiences.

4.2. Semi-structured interviews

I collected qualitative data for my research in the form of semi-structed interviews with each individual wine maker. This method of data collection is "crucial as it refers to the capacity of interviews to elicit data on perspectives of salience to respondents, rather than the researcher almost entirely dictating the direction of the encounter, as would be the case with more structured approaches" (Barbour 2014: 10). This refers to an approach that gives room for participants in the study to provide in-depth insights and reflections without the researcher eliciting a specific agenda or dominance over the conversation (ibid. 2014).

Instead, interviews are acknowledged as a co-production between the researcher and respondent (ibid. 2014). "Interviews are performances, involving a two-way encounter" (ibid. 2014: 11). Although it is important to give space for the participant to reflect and express their viewpoints, it is essential that the researcher takes ownership of the question, which enables the interview to work in a way similar to a regular conversation (ibid. 2014). The semi-structured interviews therefore allocate broad questions which gives space for the participant to provide their own interpretations and values associated with the phenomenon without the researcher instigating or advocating for particular answers that may fulfil their potential biases in the research process. This means that each individual interview conducted during my research each had their own variances in the way questions were asked, the pace of the conversations, and the order of certain follow-up questions. This gave the participant the opportunity to reflect and elaborate their experiences, values and motivations regarding their relationship with 'natural' wine making in their own way.

Although questions were constructed prior to the interviews, each interview followed its own informal structure. Throughout the research I conducted five face-to-face, semi-structured conversational interviews with the individual NWPs. Contact with some of the participants were established through email and setting up scheduled appointments. Other times, the NWP participants connected me with

fellow NWP colleagues for spontaneous interviews on the same day. The participants agreed to give me tours of their wineries and/or vineyards in order to help provide qualitative observations of their operations. All the participants were made aware of what my research was focused on prior to meeting and they did not know what my questions would entail prior to the interview. This would allow for more spontaneous and honest answers during our conversations and avoided the possibility for the participants to provide prepared or edited responses. All of the interviews were recorded, with the permission of the participants, in order to be able to fully engage in the conversation and avoid any possibility of missed or misconstrued information.

The interviews were either conducted in the wineries or in the vineyards owned and operated by the winemakers. Often times, the interviews were conducted while receiving tours of the vineyards and/or wine cellars. Furthermore, the participants often shared and drank a bottle of their own 'natural' wine produced in the winery with me. This provided the opportunity to not only gain insight on their perspectives and values, but also to experience how their vinification operations and agricultural practices encompass and reflect their viewpoints in the final product (i.e. the wine). In addition, I believe the participants felt more at ease and comfortable when conducting the interviews at their own wineries or vineyards as they could elicit more control over what they felt comfortable telling or showing me. However, I felt that all of the participants were enthusiastic and transparent regarding their perspectives, values, and production techniques. The interviews ranged between one to three hours of conversation, depending on how much time the participant had or how busy he was that day. Although all of the participants were native German speakers, they accommodated me in the interviews by speaking English.

4.3. Sampling

An important aspect of a qualitative research project is to purposefully identify selected sites and individuals who will provide appropriate and satisfactory information (Creswell 2014). This helps provide greater understanding and insight to the research problem and questions (ibid. 2014). I conducted three semi-structured interviews in the Mosel region of the Rhineland-Palatinate State of South West Germany and two semi-structured interviews in the Franconian region of the Bavarian State of South East Germany. Therefore, a total of five semi-structured interviews were conducted. The two different sites of study were picked due to their recognition as quality wine producing regions in Germany, as well as to provide contrasting natural environments and grape varieties. Furthermore, the participants were picked and identified because they are recognized as wine makers practicing high-quality 'natural' wine production methods. The overall goal to this approach of qualitative sampling is to reflect diversity in order to provide and recognize the possibility for as many comparisons as possible (Barbour 2014).

The process of identifying NWPs in Germany was assisted through online research and conversations with local wine sellers in Berlin who had direct contact with the wine makers. 'Natural' wine specialists and retailers provided me with advice on quality NWPs in Germany, pointing out who I should look up on the internet and also gave me emails for direct contact. I also conducted my own research online by looking up and reviewing forums and articles that identify and discuss quality NWPs in Germany. After this process, I searched for the websites and contact details of different NWPs I was interested in interviewing for the research. I sent out numerous emails to different NWPs in the hopes of generating a large enough study pool. The main challenge of this process was due to my lack of direct connections in the industry. I also had difficulty maintaining consistent forms of contact with some participants through email, where it would take long periods of time to receive responses. This made it challenging to schedule interview dates and travelling accommodations.

I relied mainly on ‘snowball sampling’ method in order to establish more contacts. This method, utilizes the networks of a few key participants in the study in order to help recruit others who share similar characteristics and may add further to the study (Barbour 2014). After making initial contact and setting up interview dates with the NWPs who agreed to meet with me, they assisted me by contacting their network of NWP colleagues in the nearby area who would agree to meet with me on the same day. As I am currently based in Berlin along with the travel difficulties induced by the Corona virus pandemic, I had both geographical and financial limitations regarding the amount of time I could spend in the different wine regions. This meant I had only one day to meet with and interview all the NWP participants.

All five of the selected participants were German men ranging in different ages yet somewhat similar backgrounds regarding their exposure to wine making. All of them are inheritors of their family wine business coming from a long history of generational wine making often traditionally operated by their forefathers. For example, wineries such as Staffelter Hof, operated by Jan Klein, is one of the oldest wineries in the world, existing since year 862. Another winery, such as 2Naturkinder, operated by the couple Melanie Drese and Michael Völker, has existed since 1843. Thorsten Melsheimer, of Weingut Melsheimer, is a fifth generational wine maker, where the winery has existed since around 1670.

The focus of my sampling was strictly to identify wine makers who practiced ‘natural’ wine production. The participants ended up only being men, yet with different ranges of age and years operating a wine business. However, all of the men have participated in wine making all of their life, where they worked in the vineyards and wineries with their family from a young age. Many of the wine makers participated in traditional viticulture and oenological schools and apprenticeships before their transition to more radical approaches to sustainable agriculture and ‘natural’ wine production, which is not taught in such settings. Others, such as Michael Völkner, holds a master’s degree in philosophy and worked in publishing in in big cities before going back to work in his father’s winery.

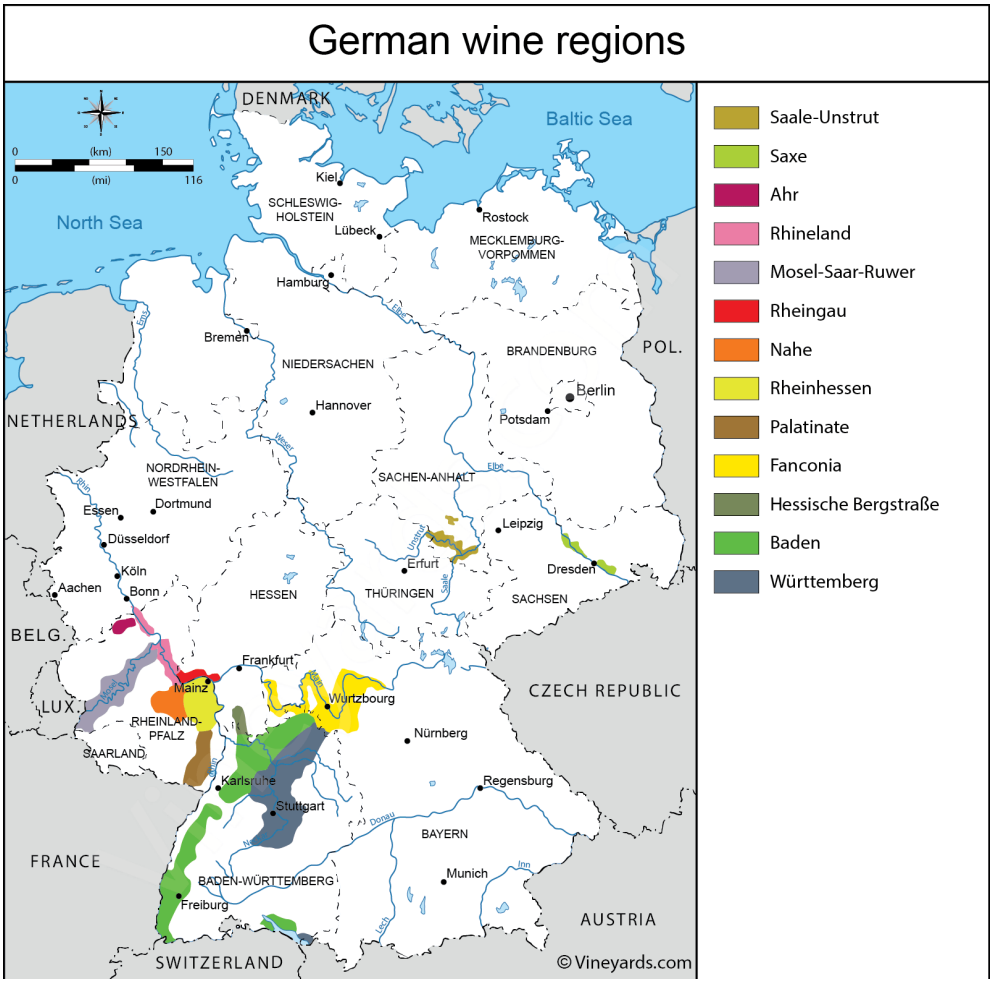


Figure 1. German Wine Regions

Source: https://vineyards.com/wine-map/germany

NWP	Town	Region	State	Agriculture Certification	Hectares of Land	Grapes Varietals
2Naturkinder	Kitzingen	Franconia	Bavaria	Organic	7 ha	Silvaner, Regent, Schwarzriesling, Pinot Meunier, Pinot Noir, Müller-Thurgau, Dornfelder, Bacchus, Spätburgunder, Domina, Grauburgunder
Weinguit Andi Weigand	Iphofen	Franconia	Bavaria	Organic	10 ha	Bacchus, Müller-Thurgau, Scheurebe, Riesling, Silvaner, Pinot Noir
Weingut Thorsten Melsheimer	Reil	Mosel	Rhineland-Paletine	Organic, Biodynamic	12 ha	Riesling, Pinot Noir
Weingut Rita and Rudolf Trossen	Kinheim	Mosel	Rhineland-Paletine	Organic, Biodynamic	2.5 ha	Riesling
Staffelter Hof	Kröv	Mosel	Rhineland-Paletine	Organic	11 ha	Riesling, Müller Thurgau, Sav. Blanc, Gellber Muskateller, Pinot noir, Regent, Frühburgunder

Table 3. Research Participant Information

4.4. Data Analysis

As suggested by Creswell (2014) I conducted my analysis and reflection of the data during the data collection processes. After the interviews were conducted for the day, I proceeded to listen to the audio recordings of our conversations and transcribe the data onto Microsoft Word. This gave me the opportunity to reflect on possible themes that may have been shared or contrasted between the different NWPs. “Themes captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke 2006: 10).

I employ thematic analysis as a method to evaluate the data. This approach identifies, analysis, and reports patterns (themes) in the data (Braun & Clark 2006). Specifically, I utilize a ‘theoretical’ thematic analysis (ibid. 2006) of my research based on my interest in understanding of how conventions theory and the worlds of justification analysis help translate ways in which NWPs in Germany are potentially developing new conventions of quality.

All of the research and transcripts were hand coded. This process was done by reviewing each individual transcript and then identifying statements that could be categorized into different thematic sections.

5. Empirical Findings

This chapter aims to present the findings of my research based on the objective of understanding the values of NWPs in Germany and what notions of quality they associate with wine making. I categorize and display the perspectives of the five different NWPs based on different conventions from the worlds of justification framework. Green, domestic, inspiration, and market conventions were most emphasized in the perspectives of the NWPs. Furthermore, perspectives on institutional oversight of quality control regarding 'natural' wine will be presented as well.

5.1. Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable agriculture in the form of organic or biodynamic farming represents one of the most important aspects of quality associated with 'natural' wine making for the participants. All of the NWPs are small scale, with land holdings that range between 2.5 hectares to 11 hectares. There was a shared sentiment between the NWPs that they have a responsibility to improve the quality of their land and the environment. All of the NWPs are descendants of a lineage of winemaking in their families. They have all taken control over the wine business, which was previously operated by their fathers. Yet, what has set themselves apart from their fathers and previous generations is a conscientious approach to agriculture that is focused on sustainability in the form of organic or biodynamic farming methods.

In many conversations, they were highly conscientious of the current environmental crisis and its effect on the future sustainability of the planet. They

acknowledged that they, as farmers, have a responsibility to practice and integrate sustainable farming techniques in order to not only protect the environment, but improve their lands for future generations by improving soil health and increasing biodiversity.

> "Agriculture must take out this profit thinking system. A farm is not a factory for making bottles. We are working on the land we did not build, it is there, and we have to work with this land for a while and we have to give it away again to somebody else. And also will work and feed the next generation" (Rudolf Trossen, Weingut Rita & Rudolf Trossen).

Therefore, there is concerted focus on improving the quality of the environment and grapes on their small holdings of land rather than focusing solely on high yield production.

Furthermore, the NWPs are actively promoting 'greening' initiatives in the vineyards. This means allowing a diverse array of plants, flowers, and even weeds to grow in their vineyards even if this means compromising high grape yields. But there is also a more balanced relationship between the farmer and the land, whereby resources are used sustainably and taking only what is needed.

> "So, I think I sided with the ecosystem, with the greening a little more over the last years. Now I'm siding with the vines a little more. Otherwise I will struggle to survive. And I'm part of that system too so, it's about finding a good balance. Not taking more than you need from a piece of land and a plant. I think it's important in general if you want to be a decent person, but it's also important for the balance. If you have a ecosystem that has a player that doesn't just takes what it needs, but as much as it can, no animal would ever do that" (Michael Völkner, 2Naturkinder)

Compared to industrial agriculture, whereby farmers often battle the natural elements of the environment through the usage of chemicals and fertilizers in order to achieve high yields, the NWPs advocated for a more harmonious and ecologically ethical relationship with the land. They are not ignorant of the challenges typically seen in farming, such as the destruction or loss of their grapes due to pests, animals, or crop disease (most commonly downy mildew). It is acknowledged that their crops will always suffer losses to some degree due to these

factors. However, they are not willing to compromise the environment by using synthetical pesticides or herbicides. Instead, some of the NWPs acknowledged their usage of scheduled copper and Sulphur sprays as a natural fungicide against crop disease throughout the growing season.

> "[conventional winemakers] can also make good quality [wine]. It's always difficult how you value the quality because I think it's also quality in how the wine was made; it doesn't have to taste better, but if you know it's been made more consciously in harmony with nature and producing less CO_2 output, not destroying the soil, then I think the wine is by far better than the same good quality wine that has been farmed conventionally with fertilizers and pesticides" (Jan Klein, Staffelter Hof).

Many of the NWPs saw this as an opportunity to improve the resilience and health of the environment and even improve the flavor profiles and quality of the wine. Additionally, the activities and efforts to improve the quality of the land are seen by many of the NWPs as an added quality instilled in their wines. All of this, in their eyes, translates into the potential to create unique tasting wines that express the locality and artisanship of the producers.

> "I'm really proud of my whole system because when you put the process inside the quality, I'm very arrogant and I would say this is one of the best wines you can buy in the world. Because of the value that I have changed in these vineyards." (Thorsten Melsheimer, Weingut Melsheimer)

> "I think it's very important to make 'natural' wine to save the environment and help the environment, but on the other side you get a lot back from the nature… So, it's both sides, I need to help the environment and nature, but I also want to have good wine" (Andi Weigand, Weingut Weigand).

Furthermore, all of the NWPs emphasized the values that they held towards developing intimate relationships between themselves and the land. There is not only a joy in improving the quality and health of the land, but also the personal stimulation and pleasure in working in the vineyards. Many of them expressed the joy in getting their hands dirty and handling and personally observing the vines and grapes daily. To them, this creates a deeper connection between themselves and the vineyards, but also helps promotes an environment that provides happiness for

themselves and the others that work with them. All of this, they argue, helps foster a better agricultural product that translates their values and emotions into the wine.

5.2. Winemaking artisanship and transparency

Based on the perspectives of the NWPs, winemaking is more than just a job, it is a committed lifestyle that requires consistent emotional and physical commitment to the work in the vineyards and the vinification process in the wine cellars. Often in the conversations, the NWPs viewed their work in the same light as artists.

> "When you make wine it's very important to make things you like because good wine makers are like artists… So, it's all about painting, I don't want to copy something, I want to make my own style..." (Andi Weigand, Weingut Weigand).

> "But I feel like the aromas are a big orchestra. They all come in from the vineyard in different compositions. And then I will try to guide that orchestra in a way that brings the nicest interpretation of that composition that came in that is possible" (Michael Völkner, 2Naturkinder).

When asked what motivates the wine makers to practice 'natural' wine making instead of producing traditional types of wine, all of them referred back to the agricultural work being done in the vineyards to produce the grapes. To them, there is a deep connection between themselves, the terroir, and the juice made from the grapes. They hold strong sentiments towards producing bottles of wine that hold the most honest expression of the land and the harvest of that particular season. That is why many of the interviewees avoid or almost completely limit any usage of chemicals, preservatives, or filters in their wine in order to provide a product that is as transparent and pure as possible. For the NWPs, it seemed inconceivable to change or manipulate the purity or energy of the wine with additives or chemicals when so much work had been done in order to produce the highest quality grapes in the vineyards.

There is also a greater sense of respect and trust in the fermentation process of the grape juice. All of them practice a hands-off approach in the wine cellars and

wait until the wine has fermented to its highest potential. Each season, depending on the quality of the weather conditions and harvest, along with new experimentations and approaches to the vinification process, a new wine with its own unique characteristics is produced.

However, some of the participants were not as dogmatic regarding whether 'natural' wine tasted better or worse to traditionally vinified wines. Some of them even enjoyed the taste that sulphites, an antioxidant and antibacterial chemical most often used in wine, provided to the flavor profile. But for all, as long as sustainable agriculture was incorporated in their wine making process, that was seen as a major advantage in the quality of the wine.

Furthermore, when asked whether the participants viewed 'natural' wine as a movement within the industry, a majority of them identified with political motivations. Their political motivations emphasized the power 'natural' wine had to advocate and translate the value that sustainable agriculture has in the food industry.

> "the thing that makes wine stand out is that it is pretty much the only product that sometimes was really created from one person planting the plants over waiting a couple of years and then that same person puts the wine in the bottle and creates something that can have such an incredible flavour profile that you cannot compare to eating a potato or wearing a shirt out of organic cotton. That is also why wine is probably the best medium to communicate the whole global movement of sustainable living. It's a luxury good that has such a long tradition" (Michael Völkner, 2Naturkinder).

> "The 'natural' wine movement is part of a worldwide movement. More sustainability, more independence and more small units" (Rudolf Trossen, Weingut Rita & Rudolf Trossen).

There was also a strong acknowledgement of what type of consumers their wine was attracting. Their view was that there is a growing and developing generation of young people who are demanding ecologically ethical and transparent food products. Many of them often referred to the environmentally conscientious young generation as 'hipsters', treading the line between the apparent trendiness in

‘natural’ wine, but also a growing number of people who are more curious and engaged with developing deeper connections between the themselves and food products.

> “it’s a development of the young generation. They want it as transparent as possible, it’s a political decision that farming and food industry is more and more powered by the chemical industry. When it’s a clear wine and it’s not influenced by chemicals, they have to believe. And here it’s easier to believe when the wine is cloudy. It’s not a quality in taste, but a quality in understanding in philosophy” (Thorsten Melsheimer, Weingut Melsheimer).

Thorsten’s description of the wine appearing as ‘cloudy’ refers to a common appearance of ‘natural’ wines that are free from chemical manipulatives and filters. The cloudy appearance of the wine is an alternative portrayal and interpretation of what wine should look like in comparison to traditional style wines that often have a clear, refined look due to the chemical manipulatives, preservatives, and filters applied. However, at a deeper level they find that the unfiltered cloudy characteristics often found in ‘natural’ wine emphasises a transparent quality of the sustainability and low-interventionism in the vineyards and wine making process.

5.3. Marketability of ‘natural’ wine

Although the NWPs take on an alternative approach to agriculture, placing emphasis on improving the environment and producing low-yield, but high-quality grapes for their wine, there was still an acknowledgement of their need to make a living and engage in the economic market. Firstly, some of the NWPs initially started practicing and experimenting with low-intervention vinification techniques in the wine cellars even before ‘natural’ wine started to become a popular trend in the wine world.

> “Yea, well the [‘natural’ wine] movement started in 2011, but not really. So, it was just a development of mine that I wanted to do wine with less, and less, and less input. So, the last step was doing it without sulphites. And then I recognized, “wow, this is a ‘hip’ product” and

a few years later in 2013/14 the market for this was growing" (Thorsten Melsheimer, Weingut Melsheimer)

It wasn't till around 2013/14 that many of the NWMs began acknowledging that 'natural' wine had what many described as "big potential" in the wine market. So, for some who had already been practicing organic or biodynamic agriculture prior to the popularity of 'natural' wine as a particular style of wine they then sought to capitalize on the movement in the market. Many saw the local and ecological aspects of their wine as being highly desirable in a globalized market whereby more people, especially young people, are interested in consuming such products.

Furthermore, for some NWPs in order for their wineries to be relevant in the future there is a growing need to practice sustainable agriculture and produce 'natural' wine. There was an acknowledgement that 'natural' wine market is becoming increasingly competitive and that wine importers are looking for the best tasting wines that are also environmentally sustainable.

"The market is very new, but it's a hard market and you need the good importers. The good importers or retailers, they don't look to wines that are really crazy. They look to wines that are natural and very balanced and good. So, you have a lot of failures that you can do in the wine…" (Andi Weigand, Weingut Weigand).

The rewards for producing high quality 'natural' wine would see their wines on the retail shelves of specialty wine shops or in some of the best restaurants around the world. However, all of them emphasized that their work is not motivated by amounting large profits.

5.4. Defining 'natural' wine and institutional oversight

Regarding what qualities define a 'natural' wine, all of the wine makers agreed that it is only 'natural' when nothing is added or taken away from the final wine product and organic agriculture is practiced in the vineyards. However, because

there is no legitimate institutional oversight that provides official conventions and regulations for ‘natural’ wine production, the NWPs often noted that there are often grey zones and cheaters within the industry. Often, they took offense to some wine makers who claimed to be ‘natural’ wine makers, yet participate in unsustainable agricultural practices or use certain vinification techniques that to them was far removed from the ideology of the movement. The issue is a lack of official rules and regulations to provide proper oversight of such grievances. There was an implication that this was potentially tarnishing the potential impact of the ‘natural’ wine movement.

The only institutional recognition certified in their wine making process is the agricultural work being done in the vineyards. For the certified organic farmers, they are recognized by either the major EU organic certification system or smaller independent certification bodies such as Naturland or the German organic certification body Ecovin. Despite many of the participants claims that they practice biodynamic farming methods in their vineyards, only Weingut Melsheimer is official recognized by the biodynamic certification body Demeter. However, a few of the participants argued that attaining certified recognition from Demeter is not important and customers have trust in their wine.

6. Discussion

In this chapter I will discuss the findings of my research and interpret how the NWPs in Germany perceive quality in relation to their work. Specifically, I will apply the conventions theory in order to help analyse and understand what type of values and norms that the NWPs wish to establish in their work and how that translates through their wine. I also make conclusions and identify what conventions are of value to the NWPs based Boltanski and Thévanot's (1991) "worlds of justification framework".

6.1. Interpreting agricultural values

The findings of my research reveal that the selected 'natural' wine making participants hold shared values regarding their approach to agriculture. I use CT as a tool to help understand how values and quality are established and negotiated amongst different food networks and actors. The evaluation parameters are dynamic and varied and are based on values, visions, and norms (i.e. conventions) expressed by the actors (De Luca et al. 2016). Furthermore, conventions within the 'natural' wine industry are established and re-evaluated based on positive claims and criticisms between different actors (Forsell & Lankoski 2018). Positive claims promote and reinforce ways of thinking about and evaluating norms and practices, while criticisms help challenge predominant practices, beliefs, and understandings (ibid. 2018). Furthermore, the "worlds of justification" framework, developed by Boltanski & Thévanot in 1991 contributes to CT by providing seven different conventions (market, industrial, domestic, civic, opinion, inspiration, and green) that outline varied ideals and justifications based on the actor's values. Therefore, this analytical framework helps discern the views and practices of the selected NWPs who practice niche forms of alternative wine making.

As noted, all of the participants hold substantially smaller land holdings compared to industrial farms and participate in sustainable and regenerative forms of agriculture in the form of organic or biodynamic farming. The ideologies and agricultural work of the participants align with the green convention whereby the participants share values associated with: environmental friendliness, sustainability and a healthy environment (Thévanot et al. 2000). Among the farmers there was a mutual expectation that in order for wine to align with the values and conventions of the NWM, the vineyards must at the very least be organic. However, it must be noted that there are no institutional regulations that determine the legitimacy of a 'natural' wine product. There are only EU or private certification organizations who can recognize that a wine maker adheres to either organic or biodynamic farming regulations. NWPs must rely on and emphasize a variety of informal conventions such as opinion or domestic conventions by developing reputations with wide audiences as being transparent and locally based companies.

The NWPs are presenting alternative forms of viticulture as an AFN by practicing sustainable agriculture and improving their lands through regenerative 'greening' methods. They are actively promoting new conventions that highlight the production of high-quality grapes rather than high yields, which is often the norm in industrial mainstream agriculture. Furthermore, the NWPs challenge mainstream conventions of farming and wine making by openly criticizing the usage of industrial chemicals and fertilizers that are used by large scale industrial farms.

Furthermore, their values regarding sustainable agriculture reveals a conscientious understanding of the current environmental crisis and the need to protect and improve the land for future generations. The green convention emphasizes justifications that value future generations and the overall health of the planet's ecosystem (Thévenot et al. 2000). Additionally, the agricultural work of the NWPs emphasizes an aspect of the domestic convention, whereby value is emphasized through local development (ibid. 2000). The NWPs emphasized a need

to develop their vineyards in order to pass on lands to future generations that are even better than the way that they found them. Moreover, they sought to develop natural environments that improv the quality of life and happiness of their workers and inhabitants of the town. They recognized that they as farmers have a responsibility to protect and improve the conditions of their environment by upholding organic or biodynamic agricultural values.

Overall, the NWPs offer an alternative perspective regarding ideals and norms related to agriculture. Within their network, the data suggests that the NWPs have negotiated common ground regarding agriculture quality conventions. They offer alternative outlooks regarding the relationship farmers may develop between themselves and their land by emphasizing the role in which sustainable agriculture may have in improving the environment and producing high quality grapes. Still functioning as a niche, the NWM proposes ideas and discourse regarding the potential value that small scale, sustainable farms may have in the future as an alternative away from industrial scale agriculture.

6.2. Interpreting wine making values

The findings of my research also show that the participants establish a multitude of conventions based on informal mutual agreements within the 'natural' wine making industry. Inspiration, as a convention, represents one of the core values of the NWPs whereby the final wine products are characterized by its artisanal quality. The inspiration convention involves judgements based on inspiration, passion, and emotion and often emphasizes the creativity of a person, object, or action (Thévenot et al. 2000). Specifically, the wine makers expressed strong emotional involvement and enthusiasm for their work, starting from the hard work in the vineyards in order to foster quality grapes that may produce complex and unique flavor profiles during the spontaneous fermentation process in the wine cellars. This represented a common value and motivation of the wine makers, whereby the wine product not only embodied values associated with sustainable agriculture, but also their emotional and personal involvement in all aspects of the wine development.

This followed up with the work done in the wine cellars, whereby the NWPs influence and overlook the fermentation process of the grapes. Some of the NWPs viewed their role in the development of flavors and aromas of the wine in the same light as artists who may paint a canvas or a conductor who leads a musical orchestra. Others expressed a more modest tone, giving the greatest sense of agency to the grapes to ferment and express themselves in their own time.

Furthermore, their political values regarding environmental sustainability acted as motivation to produce 'natural' wine as a political message or movement against mainstream industrial agriculture. Such values are unique to industries acting as AFNs, whereby the NWPs foster new relationships to food by signifying the cultural, social, and environmental qualities of the product that are otherwise lost or distorted by industrialized means of production (Murdoch & Miele 2013).

Opinion and domestic conventions also help to understand the values and motivations of the NWPs. Producing transparent, small-scale, and locally based wine products represented a shared value among all of the wine makers, which emphasizes the domestic convention within the work that the NWPs do. A formalized form of transparency is highlighted through their participation with organic and biodynamic certification institutions to justify their farming practices. However, the participants have to rely on developing informal forms of trust with their audiences by establishing popularity and recognition (opinion convention) amongst 'natural' wine enthusiasts. The NWPs pointed out that the niche quality of their wine is particularly popular with young audiences who are keen to invest in environmentally sustainable and local food products.

However, in order to engage with wider audiences, the market convention represents a shared value with the NWPs. Specifically, in order for their businesses to survive all of the NWPs sell their wine to international markets where 'natural' wine is popular. There is an inherent quality in 'natural' wine as a product based on what Gianluca Brunori (2007) describes as "symbolic relocalization" whereby

consumers have the opportunity gain knowledge on the place of origin, its main ingredients, production methods, and the narratives that may contribute to the reputation and trustworthiness of the producer. When such narratives of the product are communicated effectively, it conveys particular qualities onto the product and wine producer (ibid. 2007). Furthermore, the NWPs also participate in relocalization strategies in what Brunori (2007) describes as "locality food". The marketability of 'natural' wine is based on separation between the world of production and the world of consumption (ibid. 2007). Consumers choose locality products due to their perception as coming from a place of origin and possessing defined and differentiated characteristics (ibid. 2007). The shared quality of the wine made by the NWPs is based on their ability to convey distinct characteristics such as its localized, sustainable, and unique flavor profiles that catches the attention of importers, specialty wine shops and restaurants who then go on to sell their wine to wider audiences.

6.3. Limitations of the study

The focus of the study was limited to the views of only a small number of NWPs. Due to travel limitations onset by the corona virus, free movement within Germany often came with financial and housing challenges that gave me a small window of time to interview and engage with the selected participants. I think the study would have improved if I were able to spend more time with the individual wine makers and perhaps have even more participants to interview. Although the study was focused on understanding the values and motivations of NWPs in Germany and how they are potentially creating new conventions of quality, perhaps the research would also benefit with added perspectives of industrial scale wineries or other small-scale wine producers who do not practice organic agriculture and continue to use chemical additives in their wine products.

7. Conclusion

The overall objective of the research was to understand what values the NWPs in Germany held and how it may potentially develop new conventions of quality. Based on the semi-structured interviews with the participants, conventions theory was utilized in order to help interpret their perceptions and actions. The aim was to better understand how 'natural' wine production and the NWM functions as an AFN by advocating and negotiating alternative quality standards in contrast to industrialized means of production.

The findings of the study show that the selected NWPs in Germany share similar values and establish common conventions based on their viewpoints and actions. Specifically, environmental sustainability (green convention) in the form of organic or biodynamic agriculture, along with small local land holdings is a core value shared amongst the participants. Additionally, 'natural' wine is perceived by the actors as an artisanal product (inspiration convention). The actors often expressed a deep sense of emotional connection and passion associated with their work and the desire to be creative and develop new connotations of terroir between the wine and consumer. They offer potential alternatives regarding land based on conventions valuing sustainable agriculture and its role in highlighting the unique qualities of the land and their artisanal approach.

Furthermore, developing a greater level of transparency and connection (domestic convention) between themselves and the consumer represented another shared value amongst the participants. However, this process requires continued negotiation and development within the NWM due to a lack of rigid guidelines or oversight the regulates what production methods are acceptable or not. There are

clearly gray zones within the movement which makes it difficult to create an official definition of what ‘natural’ wine is. This represents a potential weakness in the NWM to establish definitive conventions of quality in the wine making proess.

Nonetheless, the actions and perceptions of ‘natural’ wine amongst the participants reveals that the NWM presents an alternative approach to food production. Conventions associated with sustainability, transparency, artisanship, and a sense of place are key aspects associated with ‘natural’ wine that are otherwise altogether lost to industrialized means of food production.

References

Ascione, E., Belsky, J., Nelsen, M. & Barbato, M. (2020). Cultivating activism through terroir: an anthropology of sustainable winemakers in Umbria, Italy. *Food, culture, & society*, vol. 23 (3), pp. 277–295. Routledge.

Asimov, E. (2010). Marcel Lapierre, Beaujolais Producer, is Dead at 60. *The New York Times*, November 25.

Barbour, R. (2014). 'Interviews'. In *Introducing qualitative research: a student's guide*, 2nd Edition edn, pp. 111-132. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Biggart, N.W. & Beamish, T.D. (2003). The Economic Sociology of Conventions: Habit, Custom, Practice, and Routine in Market Order. *Annual review of sociology*, vol. 29 (1), pp. 443–464 Annual Reviews.

Black, Rachel. (2013). Vino Naturale: Tensions between Nature and Technology in the Glass. *In Wine and Culture: Vineyard to Glass*. Rachel Black and Robert Ulin, eds. pp. 279– 294. London: Bloomsbury.

Boltanski L., & Thévenot L. (1991). *De la Justification: Les Èconomies de la Grandeur*. Paris: Gallimard.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology, vol. 3 (2), pp. 77-101. London: Informa UK Limited.

Brunori, G. (2007). Local food and alternative food networks: a communication perspective. *Anthropology of food*, Anthropology of Food.

Buranyi, S. (2018). Has wine gone bad?. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/may/15/has-wine-gone-bad-organic-biodynamic-natural-wine , November 2nd.

Callon, M. (1998). The embeddedness of economic markets in economics. In: *The laws of the market*, ed. M. Callon, pp. 1-57. Oxford: Blackwell.

Castellini, A., Mauracher, C. & Troiano, S. (2017). An overview of the biodynamic wine sector. *International Journal of Wine Research*, vol. 9 (1), pp. 1–11 Macclesfield: Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Chrzan, J. (2004). Slow Food: What, Why, and to Where? *Food, culture, & society*, vol. 7 (2), pp. 117–132 Routledge.

Clapp, Jennifer. (2016). Chapter. 2: The Rise of a Global Industrial Food Market. *Food*. Polity Books (2nd edition).

Creswell, J.W., (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 4th ed., Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

De Luca, A.I., Stillitano, T, Franco, F.A., Gulisano G. (2016). Conventions Theory and the Assessment of Socio-Economic Sustainability of Alternative Food Networks in Calabria (South Italy). *MDPI*, vol. 17, pp. 85-91. Basel: MDPI.

FAO (2019). *FAO's Work on Climate Change* (United Nations Climate Change Conference, 2019). Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. http://www.fao.org/3/ca7126en/ca7126en.pdf

Ferguson, H., Kijas, J. & Wessell, A. (2017). Towards reflexive localism: exploring the diverse co-creators of alternative food across time in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, Australia. *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 56, pp. 14–21 Elsevier Ltd.

Forssell, S. & Lankoski, L. (2018). Shaping norms. A convention theoretical examination of alternative food retailers as food sustainability transition actors. *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol. 63, pp. 46–56. Elsevier Ltd.

Goode, J., & Harrop, S. (2011). *Authentic Wine: Toward Natural and Sustainable Wine Making.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Goodman, D. (2003). The quality "turn" and alternative food practices: reflections and agenda. *Journal of Rural Studies*, vol. 19 (1), pp. 1–7 Elsevier Ltd.

Goodman, D., DuPuis, E.M. & Goodman, M.K. (2012). Coming home to eat? Reflexive localism and just food. *Alternative Food Networks*, pp. 23–44. UK: Routledge.

Grainger, K. & Tattersall, H. (2016). *Wine production and quality*. Second edition. West Sussex, England: Wiley Blackwell

Harris, E.M. (2010). Eat Local? Constructions of Place in Alternative Food Politics. *Geography compass*, vol. 4 (4), pp. 355–369 Oxford, UK: Wiley.

Hinrichs, C. C. (2007). Introduction: practice and place in remaking the food system. In: Hinrichs, C. C. and Lyson, T. A., (eds.) *Remaking the North American food system: strategies for sustainability*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, pp. 1–15.

Hendrickson, H. & Heffernan, W.D. (2002). Opening Spaces through Relocalization: Locating Potential Resistance in the Weaknesses of the Global Food System. *Sociologia ruralis*, vol. 42 (4), pp. 347–369 Oxford, UK and Boston, USA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Holloway, L., Kneafsey, M., Venn, L., Cox, R., Dowler, E. & Tuomainen, H. (2007). Possible Food Economies: a Methodological Framework for Exploring Food Production–Consumption Relationships. *Sociologia Ruralis*, vol. 47 (1), pp. 1–19 Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Horrigan, L., Lawrence, R.S. & Walker, P. (2002). How sustainable agriculture can address the environmental and human health harms of industrial agriculture. *Environmental health perspectives*, vol. 110 (5), pp. 445–456. United States: Environmental Health Perspectives.

IFOAM EU Group (2013). *EU Rules for Organic Wine Production: Background, Evaluation and Further Sector Development.* Brussels: IFOAM EU Group.

Levkoe, C.Z. & Wakefield, S. (2013). Understanding contemporary networks of environmental and social change: complex assemblages within Canada's 'food movement. *Environmental politics*, vol. 23 (2), pp. 302–320. Informa UK Limited.

Llegeron, Isabelle. (2017). *Natural Wine: An introduction to organic and biodynamic wines.* Edn. 2, London: CICO Books.

Mills, J., & Birks, M. (2014). *Qualitative methodology: a practical guide*. 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications, Inc.,

Monroe, R., (2019). How Natural Wine Became a Symbol of Virtuous Consumption. *The New Yorker.* https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/11/25/how-natural-wine-became-a-symbol-of-virtuous-consumption

Morgan, K., Marsden, T. & Murdoch, J. (2009). *Worlds of Food: Place, Power, and Provenance in the Food Chain*. *Worlds of Food*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Murdoch, J & Miele, M. (2013). A new aesthetic of food?: Relational reflexivity in the "alternative" food movement. *Qualities of food*. Manchester University Press, p. 156–175.

Murdoch, J. & Miele, M. (2004). Culinary Networks and Cultural Connections: A Conventions Perspective. *The Blackwell Cultural Economy Reader*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, pp. 231–248.

Murdoch, J., Marsden, T. & Banks, J. (2000). Quality, Nature, and Embeddedness: Some Theoretical Considerations in the Context of the Food Sector. *Economic Geography*, vol. 76 (2), pp. 107–125 Routledge.

Murdoch, J. & Miele, M. (1999). "Back to Nature": Changing "Worlds of Production" in the Food Sector. *Sociologia ruralis*, vol. 39 (4), pp. 465–483. Oxford, UK and Boston, USA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Parkins, W. & Craig, G. (2015). Culture and the Politics of Alternative Food Networks. *Food, culture, & society*, vol. 12 (1), pp. 77–103 Informa UK Limited.

Pietrykowski, B. (2004). You Are What You Eat: The Social Economy of the Slow Food Movement. *Review of social economy*, vol. 62 (3), pp. 307–321. Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Ponte, S. & Gibbon, P. (2005). Quality standards, conventions and the governance of global value chains. *Economy and society*, vol. 34 (1), pp. 1–31 Informa UK Limited.

Salais, R. & M. Storper. (1997). *The worlds of production.* Harvard, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Starr, A. (2010). Local Food: A Social Movement? *Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies*, vol. 10 (6), pp. 479–490 Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Thévenot, L., Moody, M., & Lafaye, C. (2000). Forms of valuing nature: Arguments and modes of justification in French and American environmental disputes. In M. Lamont & L. Thévenot (Eds.), *Rethinking Comparative*

Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States (Cambridge Cultural Social Studies, pp. 229-272). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Leeuwen, C. & Seguin, G. (2006). The concept of terroir in viticulture. *Journal of wine research*, vol. 17 (1), pp. 1–10 Informa UK Limited.

Venn, L., Kneafsey, M., Holloway, L., Cox, R., Dowler, E. & Tuomainen, H. (2006). Researching European alternative food networks: some methodological considerations. *Area (London 1969)*, vol. 38 (3), pp. 248–258. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Wilson, A.D. (2013). Beyond Alternative: Exploring the Potential for Autonomous Food Spaces. *Antipode*, vol. 45 (3), pp. 719–737. Oxford, UK: Wiley.

Willer, H., & Julia Lernoud (Eds.) (2019). *The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends 2019*. Bonn, Germany: Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Frick, and IFOAM.

Wilkinson, J. (1997). A new paradigm for economic analysis? *Economy and society*, (3), p. 305– Routledge.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the wine producers who took the time to sit down with me and share their perspectives, experiences, and philosophies on what it means to make quality wine. I am incredibly grateful for the kindness and hospitality that they provided to me. The opportunity to connect with the wine makers and taste their wine made the experience of writing the thesis even more enjoyable and exciting.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Harry Fischer, for his guidance and support throughout the research and writing process. I am very thankful for his willingness to offer me his help and supervision after I had been away from my studies for so long.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, who have always supported and believed in me.