



Unpacking Taste

the social life of wine

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Unpacking Taste. The Social Life of Wine

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"Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire."

Gustave Mahler

Abstract

Wine's context exceeds the story of pleasure and natural enchantment as it is also laden with conflict and controversy. Wine is part of contemporary discussions on globalization, class and postcolonialism, biodiversity and climate change. In a sense, wine does not only reflect nature, but wine also reflects and is embedded in its social context.

The narrative of wine is technical, mythical, historical, and cultural all at the same time. A large part is communicated through relationships. Narratives are spread through actors such as importers, sommeliers, and journalists. These relationships have also become a framing force on the field of wine as knowledge has become widely available. All actors individually construe narratives altering them as they reach consumers. Importers and consumers shape groups through the market creating subfields such as natural wine.

Natural wine started as a collective effort amongst small-scale actors to challenge the dominant discourse of conquering soil by technical effectiveness and instead reconnect and resonate with earth as a holistic system. This thesis establishes natural wine as a resistant force against the omnipresent consequences of modernity. Not a random cultural phenomenon but organized and deliberate. The success of natural wine on the market can be ascribed to how it correlates with a more general discourse on sustainability, environment, individualism, and a form of neo-romanticism. The narrative of being sensitive and connected to nature plays well with how consumerism demands goods to interplay with lifestyle choices. Wine is globalized and place bound at the same time. The connection to place and time make up the basis for traditions.

Recent research is calling for regulation of the term "natural wine". However, establishing regulations while being negligent of how natural wine is discursively defined amongst stakeholders may lead to discrepancy between perception and regulation, leading to unwillingness to comply amongst actors within the social field of wine. This thesis explores the context and relationships of actors within the wine industry and how the actors who make up these relationships influence, construct, and share narratives concerning wine. The aim is to create a deeper understanding of how wine is socially constructed and how relationships are created.

The research is based on thick descriptions with perspectives of informants, the researcher's observations from wine fairs, tastings, and travels in wine regions, as well as the contribution of narratives of wine literature. The intention is to concretize the social field of wine through an analytical lens of hermeneutics and structural phenomenology, disclose how external narratives influence informants and demonstrate how storytelling is constructed and construed through relationships to create an understanding of the reality that the modern *vigneron* operates in.

Keywords: social fields, modernity, tradition, authenticity, natural wine

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Abbreviations

AOC	Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée
BBB	Bien Boire en Beaujolais
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
EU	European Union
INAO	Institut National des Appellations d'Origine
LARVF	La Revue du Vin de France
PAN	The Pesticide Action Network
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
US	United States
VdF	Vin de France
VdT	Vin de Table

1. Introduction

What constitutes the captivation with wine? What makes people unhesitatingly give up large sums of money for a bottle of fermented grape juice? Enthusiasts engage with a bottle of wine in a ritualistic manner yet also quasi-scientific. The bottle is opened according to a ritualistic maneuver requiring special tools, tasted, assessed, perhaps decanted. The wine will then be tasted after an hour, three hours, the next day and sometimes a week later. The true enthusiasts keep notes to compare with other wines or the next occasion the same wine is tasted. *Vignerons* and philosopher Nicolas Joly writes: “We desire to understand how an equilibrium sometimes so delicate is achieved; how these bright and dark moods, these sorrows and joys of the vine can ultimately become tastes, scents or harmonies of an almost musical nature” (Joly 2008).

It is quite clear that wine differentiates itself from many other goods available for consumption today. Wine’s ability to resonate surroundings and grapes process of becoming wine intrigues its followers who proceed to speak about wine in a reified or mythical manner. Wine carries indicators that tell a story about place and time and as a sommelier I have myself been part of the networks that distribute the storytelling of wine. I have experienced how attaching stories to wine enthrall wine drinkers and enlarge the experience. The story can be historical or contemporary, about place or person. Anything that will produce a sense of uniqueness and authenticity. “Wine is a social product. It requires conversation”, as legendary wine importer Kermit Lynch puts it in his memoirs *Adventures on the Wine Route* (1988).

The narrative of wine is technical, mythical, historical, and cultural all at the same time. Much of the storytelling is embedded in taste for the initiated to discover, however, a large part is communicated through relationships and wine is thus a social construct far beyond its capacity of a refined agricultural product.

The description above gives wine a complex composition. Wine is a part of contemporary discussions on globalization, class and postcolonialism, biodiversity and climate change. Wine is thus not only a story about pleasure and natural enchantment, but it is also laden with conflict and controversy. In a sense, wine does not only reflect nature, but wine also reflects and is embedded in its social context.

The traditional role of the *vigneron*, the tender of vines, is to facilitate healthy vines and nurture the land. “We love earth, and we love plants. This is what we do, we are protecting life.” Languedoc *vigneron*, Jeff Coutelou, tells me in an interview. In modernity the term *vigneron*, tender of vines, has been politicized and draws a stark contrast to the manipulative process of the winemaker, a technically schooled oenologist that designs wine as any other product.

Practices that require balancing modern agricultural techniques and food preparation with ancient inherited layman knowledge and traditional practices that often border on being ritualistic. Modernity and tradition make up two trajectories that seem conflicting yet are simultaneously present in the social field of wine, framing how we relate to wine. The two trajectories have created a split in the collective discourse and created a subfield that leans heavier on cultural capital and less on economic capital. The subfield will further on be described as the natural wine movement, yet the name is filled with controversy as actors are diverse and ascribe different meanings to the term “natural wine”.

I will further on argue that the precarious situation described has great influence over the *vigneron*'s agency and how meaning is created.

Wines are most of the time sold with a narrative of traditional, cultural, and geographical embeddedness yet in most wines there are factors with a different origin than the place attested on the bottle. In fact, most modern wines have crossed cultural, symbolic, political, and physical borders before ending up in possession of the end consumer (Inglis & Almila 2020). According to Migliore et al (2020) consumers believe that wine in general is a natural product from small-scale production, yet consumers have a much greater access to knowledge. A small group of consumers have created a market segment where sustainable, environmental, and social considerations are integrated into choices creating values that are more abstract and elusive (Ibid).

According to Bauman (1998), when globalism expands, localities lose its meaning-generating capacity and become dependent on sense-giving action. When wine is removed from its cultural context there is a tendency by wine producers to try to mitigate identity loss by extensive story telling materialized through labels and mythical narratives of tradition and uniqueness which are spread with the assistance of journalists, importers, sommeliers, and fairs. By spreading the narrative of wine through networks, the reach can be extended across the globe. However, Gadamer argues that there is no final truth. Instead meaning is re-negotiated with each actor that takes part in the chain of narratives spreading the power of interpretation amongst those who take part in the story telling (Gadamer 1960).

Research on sustainable wine production has only just begun to take form and still contains large blank spots when it comes to producers and how they are embedded within and constrained by social and cultural frameworks. Here,

important questions are left unanswered. If natural wine production can be categorized as a social movement, either in its classical or late modern form, it is critical to gain knowledge on the contextual conditions that frame actors' decision making. Most references within the area of study are recent, especially when it comes to natural wine. There are few studies of social aspects of consumer behavior in relation to wine (Lo Monaco et al 2020). Research has dominantly taken an economic approach and been focused on consumer profiling. Here further study is clearly needed. Lo Monaco et al (2020) describe the consumer approach as influenced by social positioning in terms of cultural capital, socio-economic status, and gender. Social positioning is used to determine style and quality of wine which implies that defining what a natural wine is and if it is of high quality is constructed within discourse. Galati et al (2019), Gonzalez (2019), Lo Monaco et al (2020) and Fuentes-Fernandez and Gilinski (2021) all call for regulation of the term natural wine while mostly overlooking the need for further research of natural wine as a social field (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992). However, Gonzalez (2019) does see a need for a deeper theoretical engagement with the definition of natural wine arguing that the discussion now takes place outside of academia, by producers, consumers, bloggers, writers, and marketing professionals. Confusion derives from wine being seen as 'green' at large and instead of recognizing natural wine as a philosophical categorization it is often connected to certain styles of wine which are faulty and raw (Gonzalez 2019).

Establishing regulations while being negligent of how natural wine is discursively defined amongst stakeholders may lead to discrepancy between perception and regulation, leading to unwillingness to comply amongst actors within the social field of wine.

This thesis will explore the context and relationships of actors within the wine industry and how the actors who make up these relationships influence, construct, and share narratives concerning wine. Through interviews I will show examples of how actors within the social field of wine perceive tradition and contemporary conditions and how they create social relationships through wine.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

This thesis will address how pre-industrial cultural expressions are adapted to modernity and how they relate to, reproduce, and alter tradition. More specifically, the empirical material will explore how small-scale farmers in the wine industry cope with modernity and tradition and how they create and construe narratives which articulate this ambiguity. I will describe how narratives are constructed and shared to emphasize the tendencies of modernity and tradition from the farmers' own perspectives.

I have formulated the following research questions in relation to my empirical study:

- What forms of imagined traditions do wine producers articulate within the field of modernity and how are they constructed and construed?
- How do these narratives relate to notions and values of tradition and modernity?
- How are the narratives of the wine industry appropriated and used by other actors, connected to this industry?

2. Methodology

2.1 Phenomenological Approach

The research questions are formulated to place focus on how informants imagine, frame, and interpret wine production, consumption, and traditions (cf. Ricoeur 1991 Bourdieu 1992). In order to understand how actors interpret their lifeworlds the thesis is inspired by the works of Hans-Georg Gadamer's writings on hermeneutics and Bourdieu's (1992) structurally embedded phenomenology. According to Gadamer (1960), the truth is always interpreted and construed from a distinctive social, historical, and temporal perspective.

2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

The thesis is primarily based on 15 loosely structured in-depth interviews with informants connected to the wine industry.

Informants were chosen according to the preestablished criteria that the informant 1) produce wine from a small-scale farm, 2) the informant is personally part of the entire process, i.e. work the land, process the grapes into wine and sell the wine, and 3) the informant speaks sufficient English to express themselves and be part of a meaningful conversation. In addition to the predetermined criteria other factors such as availability would determine which narratives that could be included in this study.

My background as sommelier and importer meant that I could contact vigneron from my extended network. I chose however not to include any informants that I have worked with to minimize the risk of bias from any previous contact.

Interviews with vigneron were performed in conjunction with a single visit at their domain. Some visits would be a few hours and some visits would include a full day. The visits included additional activities such as tours of wineries and vineyards or me following the informant alongside their workday. My background gave me an insider approach that served as a foundation of trust and intimacy. I

have tried to maintain reflexive about any bias or misinterpretations because of my preconceptions. To the best of my knowledge, I have no such issues to report.

No template of interview questions was used. Instead, the interview took an explorative approach (cf Kvale & Brinkmann 2014) in the shape of a conversation about the informants' work, community, and general context. However, conversations followed a thematic frame of overarching subjects such as indications and influences of modernity, the importance of tradition, and how authenticity can be defined. I encouraged informants to compare the current situation with different temporal periods, both historical and future to determine perceived trajectories and change. Indications of modernity was discussed implicit as how the informants relate to their communities.

The interviews were supplemented with observations from the domains and surroundings and conversations with a number of people interacting with informants during the time of interview. People such as workers, friends, partners, neighbors, and visitors.

The remaining interviews with wine writers and importers was performed over telephone out of convenience for the informants.

All informants consented to being represented and quoted by name and are aware that the material will be published.

2.3 Discursive Language Analysis

Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) stresses how a knowledge society creates greater salience of language and discourse. CDA starts with a social problem with semiotic elements and then continues to identify context and discourse (Fairclough 2003). Discourse analysis is divided into two parts consisting of a structural analysis determining the order of discourse and a textual/interactional analysis focusing on interdiscursivity and semiosis. According to Fairclough (2003) discourse figures in practices in three ways: 1) As a part of social activity. 2) As representation of other practices. 3) In construction of identity. Discourses are never rigid or definite but rather renegotiated in actual interaction and by relation to other discourses thus stretching the concept beyond text. Fairclough sees discourse as oscillating between texts and the structure of social practices. The expansive definition of discourse that CDA offers make up an important analytical tool to determine the nature of social fields from a linguistic perspective. How informants speak about their practices indicate their plausible positions within the specific social area, i.e., social field, they inhabit, and reveals how dominant and oppositional discourses influence actors and relate to each other. The activities within fields are materializations of discourse making the narrative of wine permeated with the social order of discourse. It is thus crucial to understand how

and why informants express themselves the way they do and to contextualize these expressions by analyzing the social fields that organize them.

2.4 Analyzing Social Fields

This thesis draws on Hilgers and Mangez (2014) analytical approach to social fields which constitutes a three-stage analytical process to establish an understanding of a field as a social universe from a relational perspective and how meaning is produced. The first stage determines the autonomy of the field by analyzing the relation to external fields and capitals, especially the influence of power through the economic, political, and religious fields. The analysis will attempt to identify how the field both constrains and enable actors' construction of knowledge and agency. The second part of the analysis aims to establish the nature of the field by exploring actors' attempts of constructing materially and construing symbolically their lifeworlds. By looking at declarative activities within the field such as statements, practices, labeling, naming, and categorization we are able to describe much of the activities of the field and in what arenas and venues that interactions and struggle for domination of discourses and interpretations take place. Thirdly, actors' positions are determined by assessing material and immaterial resources, i.e., as different forms of capital and how they are drawn on by the distinct actors.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Modernity, Authenticity, and Resonance

“Time is a fundamental category of social reality”, Hartmut Rosa (2013) explains why all sociology will benefit from addressing a temporal aspect. Without temporal considerations one cannot account for changes in social practices, institutions, and self-relations.

However, the process of time is fragmented and moves at a different pace in different phenomena. According to Rosa (2013) modernity is not only a multileveled process in time but a transformation of time. With the ever-increasing possibilities that are presented to us by the modern world, demands on individuals to administrate their lives also rise, leaving us with more responsibilities and complex decision making instead of unburdening us from chores and liberating time. This puts pressure on the modern human and creates a new set of work tasks that needs to be handled. Modernity is the tendency of today’s society. It permeates all parts and is so omnipresent that it may be difficult to detect. Rosa (2019) describes modernity as an accelerator. Through technical advancements our reach is constantly extended, and communication is faster. In this way modernity has had two major influences on the wine industry, changing the rules of the game and ultimately altering how we perceive wine. 1) It has led to increased possibilities concerning large scale farming and corrective techniques in production, decreasing the need for manual labor and precision in the farming stage. Land that was formerly unsuited for grape growing can now be utilized expanding space that potentially can be laid under vine and increasing wine’s colonization of the earth surface. 2) More efficient transport and fast and wide-reaching communication has created market segments on a far wider geographical scale. Wine has shifted from a local food item embedded in rural culture and tradition to a global luxury item with speculative market prices and rock star-like wine makers.

However, the acceleration process is uneven as it encounters restraining phenomena such as slowing processes of nature and different forms of resistance from actors. Rosa identifies the negative side of modernity as a feeling of disconnect, a feeling that we are muting the world. With progress in producing food, we no longer have to eat according to seasonality. In colder regions we can still

have fresh produce during winter and in warm regions drought doesn't necessarily result in famine. Our houses protect us from cold or heat and rain or snow. Because our survival is less conditioned by nature, we perceive a separation from nature. The idea of a "voice of nature" is a sign of modernity based on the perception that humanity and nature are separate entities with each its own language and sometimes contradicting narratives. According to Rosa the concept of finding your individual essence by reconnecting to nature first appeared during Romanticism and promoted the existence of resonance between the inner self and the outer nature. The longing to reconnect to a resonant nature is widely present in modernity as it takes its form in practices such as gardening, wilderness explorations, keeping pets or even in having plants in our houses. Our modern society is filled with esoteric doctrines and practices where we connect to the stars or heal ourselves with herbs. Hope of resonance from nature is based on the idea that there is a non-instrumental, non-manipulative relationship of correspondence between subjects and natural objects or spaces.

Making wine is, with all its technical advancements, still subjected to nature's restraint. There can only be one harvest per year and quality and quantity is still, at least partially, determined by the conditions of the growing season. The decelerating effect of wine may be a reason for the increasing popularity in communities without a historically grounded wine culture.

Rosa explains our sensitivity for authenticity as being connected to our context by a wire. When we make true impact, we can feel resonance through our connection to earth. The feeling of resonance for a farmer is clear and direct when connected to harvest although resonance appears on multiple levels. For some farmers it originates from following cultural practices passed on through generations, for some the soil resonates when the farmer maintains healthy soils and produces wine that reflects place and time.

In line with how Rosa argues the connection between Romanticism and nature, Charles Taylor (1991) describes authenticity as sprung from the Romanticism as part of a critique of disengaged rationality and atomism. Taylor draws on Durkheim's theory of the disenchantment of the world and Rousseau's view on morality as the voice of nature within us, thus making authenticity an issue about morality and values. According to Taylor we realize our self-perception through dialogue and through special stories we create human significance. Authenticity is thus a part of modern individualism and as Taylor claims "identity is the background against which our taste makes sense".

The high level of creativity that is involved in producing grapes and turning them into wine is a form of production that is described by Marx as an endless pursuit of alienated refractions of itself, thus creativity makes us question authenticity and search for experiences of resonance (Graeber 2013).

The direct contact with nature and the way wine serves as an interlinkage between modernity and tradition gives the commodity a unique ability to create resonance, slow down acceleration and lessen disenchantment for both producer and consumer.

3.2 Tradition

The semantic meaning of tradition is ‘to hand down’ (Adorno 1992). Following Bourdieu’s theory on cultural capital (1984), the act of handing down tradition is performed between two actors who share a close relationship of familial sort and can be utilized to gain a better position within a social field, thus creating a specific meaning for the actor taking over tradition. Adorno (1992) places tradition in an opposed position to rationality. Its medium not being “...consciousness but the pre-given, unreflected and binding experience of social forms — the actuality of the past”. The way we eat is a cultural heritage of handed down tradition, but it is also central to individual identity (Fischler 1988) meaning that individuals attach a unique set of meanings to the traditions of the group. By exemplifying wine as a field influenced by tradition and applying Gadamer’s argument of history being reshaped by every interpretation (Gadamer 1960) I am able to reflect on how traditions are passed on and renegotiated with a new meaning as the outcome. According to Bourdieu (1992) meaning is defined and redefined in the dialectic between the objectifying intention and the already objectified intention, creating “an illusion of hindsight”, meaning that we assess our context and scope of agency through a lens of our previous experiences. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus describes that lens and explains how why we process tradition differently.

3.3 Social Fields

Drawing on Bourdieu’s study of religion (Hilgers & Mangez 2011) the field of wine can be described as created by a systematization and moralization of practices. Through traditional experience and practices a corps of specialists monopolize socially recognized knowledge thereby becoming the repository of specific competence necessary for the production or reproduction of the field’s legitimate knowledge and values. These specialists are the incumbents of the field (Fligstein & McAdam 2012). They have the symbolic power to dispossess those who are excluded from knowledge, thus creating, and reproducing, the borders of the field. The more autonomous and closed a field becomes the more specific the capitals are. Many of these forms of knowledge and practices are taken for granted, that is the doxa of the field (Bourdieu 1984) that conditions membership.

Social fields situate individuals in a certain context. A person can be active in multiple fields simultaneously and will often effortlessly move between and adapt to different cultural perspectives, values and action patterns depending on the form of the field and their position within it. Wine makers act and reflect differently in the field of wine making, global entrepreneurship, community, or family than they do as a tax paying citizen, for example (cf. Bourdieu 1992). Using social field theory enables me to explain how individuals take on different perspectives, sometimes conflicting, and how they interact within specific contexts.

Social fields also exist on a meso level social order and consists of collective action, social space, culture, and organization (Fligstein & McAdam 2012). When analyzing social interaction as collective fields analysis can be drawn on how communities are formed and conditioned. Communities create crucial benefits for its members, yet they also frame and imbue individual action with conditionality (Fligstein & McAdam 2012).

Fields are contextual and constitute social arenas where material and symbolic struggles are enacted between incumbents and challengers. The field of natural wine is a subfield to the larger overarching field of wine and the former was formed as the number of challengers grew and organized a counterreaction to the discourse of wine reassessing the order of values. Fields are thus a form of mobilization rooted in social, cultural, and economic values (Bourdieu 1992; Fligstein & McAdam 2012; Graeber 2013).

4. Background

In this section a short history of wine and its social context will be presented to establish some of the historical aspects that the informants further on are reacting to. I will also discuss how traditions have been established. The intention is to explain how wine has come to occupy its essential social and cultural position in a frame of modernistic individualism.

4.1 Wine Becoming Wine

Growing grapes and producing wine are ancient agricultural practices. There is archeological evidence that wine has been produced for at least 6000 years. Remains of wine production have been found in a cave in Areni, Armenia, that dates 6000 years back and residue of tartaric acid has been excavated in Haji Firuz Tepe in the Zagros Mountains of Iran, in a jar that is at least 7000 years old (Tattersall & DeSalle 2015). During Roman emperor Nero's time Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella wrote the agricultural handbook *De Res Rustica* (1941). Already in antiquity Columella understood that different soils needed different varieties of grapes and that cultivators ought to save the highest quality vines for the best soils. Columella's manual clearly draws up a commercial perspective on grape growing and wine production as it guides the reader to rationalizing production, thus establishing intensification, a concept of modernity, already in ancient times.

Much of Columella's thoughts and values regarding wine production are still valid today. The modern style of low-intervention wines is a return from technically advanced methods in wine making and going back to traditional knowledge. Some practices described by Columella in *De Res Rustica* in the first century of western time keeping are currently being reestablished, e.g., Columella states tree management as a crucial undertaking of rural husbandry (Columella 1941). Furthermore, Columella states that vines can thrive in meager soils where other produce will perish and that vinification enables grapes to be grown on further distance from markets than fresh fruit, supplying an argument for grapes' convenience as an agricultural product. Vines grow where other crops do not. However, Columella also discusses quality of wine and even touches on the subject

of authenticity as he describes a grape varietal as a source of “true taste” (Columella 1941).

Some practices that are considered modern, such as the use of sulphur, have a long history. Romans were the first to use sulphur when cleaning barrels to protect the wine from contamination. They would burn sulfur candles in barrels to make sure the new wine went into a clean vessel (Tattersall & DeSalle 2015). Although we connect industrialization to a much later time wine was industrialized and globalized by the Romans. Cereal production was eventually pushed away from the Italian peninsula due to the large areas required for wine production, and recentered in North Africa. This created merchant routes over the Mediterranean transporting wine one way and cereal the other (Tattersall & DeSalle 2015). Through the road and sea transport system across the Roman empire culture and religions also spread. From the winemaking region of the Levant an obscure religion started spreading. Its Judean founder, Jesus Christ, came from a culture embedded in wine. From being considered a produce of economic value by the Romans, wine was now attached to mysticism (Tattersall & DeSalle 2015).

Due to both economic and political changes, France started to develop industrialism in the early decades of the 19th century (Birnie 1930). The economic factors were determined by expanding markets due to Asian and American trade routes. As Adam Smith explains in ‘The Wealth of Nations’ (1904) specialization is conditioned by the size of the market. Larger markets create opportunity for increased levels of specialization and rationalization. The political factor was colonialism deciding which countries gained access to these markets. Industrialization in France did not transform the entire society and agriculture retained its importance (Birnie 1930). However, the dire conditions after World War II pushed the agricultural sector towards rationalization. Agriculture was mechanized, technologized, intensified, and specialized (Hardeman & Jochemsen 2011). This evolution meant the rise of the winemaker or oenologist. Educated and specialized the winemaker could use a toolbox of technology to manufacture the wine that they intended to make in the cellar. Tending the vines through time consuming manual labor, as the *vignerons* did, was now becoming obsolete.

The appellation system begun taking its present form in the 1930s while grape varieties gained importance as they started to appear on labels. These measures were taken to enable consumer engagement and differentiate the market. (Skelton 2020). With the politization of wine production through the appellation system and the increasing accumulation of economic capital an elitism was formed and the colonialization of the field of wine took its shape. This condition materialized through institutions of rules deciding on approved practices and varietal restrictions. There are many species of vine with some modern hybrid crossings that may be adjusted to cooler climate or resistant to disease. However, EU

regulation forbids non-vinifera vines in quality wine as a measure to maintain (mainly French) historical values (Skelton 2020).

Over decades the French wine lobby would establish French wine as the aristocracy of the wine world and lay the grounds of an aggressive culture ferociously attacking actors legally at any sign of infringements on controlled names. However, the French superiority was continuously challenged. In 1976 the British wine merchant Steven Spurrier held a blind tasting of Californian and French wines in Paris. The results were unexpected and gained a lot of media attention as Californian wine won both the white and red wine categories. In the aftermath there has been debate whether the tasting was carried out correctly or not. According to Lynch the California vs France tasting would have had less impact if it wasn't for the narrativization by Time magazine (Lynch 1988) making media coverage the factor of impact. However, one thing is certain, the results changed the perception of French superiority over wine quality.

A major break with the mainstream discourse of wine was how concerns over environment, biodiversity and sustainability affected how we regard food production in general. Vines occupy 8% of European agricultural land yet consumes 80% of all fungicides (Skelton 2020). The Pesticide Action Network (PAN) states that grapes receive more synthetic pesticides than most crops, second only to citrus (Legeron 2017). Isabelle Legeron describes the implementation of synthetics (fungicides, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, fertilizers) in farming as a decoupling from nature (Legeron 2017). Furthermore, multiple wine writers portray an industry that is displaying a façade that wine is still made by families and that it is a natural and unmanipulated drink. That image does not coincide with the truth of large global corporations manufacturing a drink according to a recipe correlating with the demands of modern consumerism. We are being fooled and the way of finding clarity is through the movement of natural wine (Legeron 2017; Feiring 2008; Corino 2018).

The environmental- and climate challenges have created space for a more sustainability oriented and less interventionist discourse of wine production. In combination with individualism's need of reconnecting to nature and living an authentic life (Handler 1986) the minimalist wines, sometimes called natural wine, was created. However, Legeron writes that because of the lack of legislation anyone can call themselves a natural winemaker, it is instead determined by integrity (Legeron 2017).

Fischler (1988) describes human relationship with food as complex. Its dimensions span from the biological to the cultural and between individual and collective identity. Habits deemed as sound are markers of wisdom of the body and signals status. In a study of consumer profiling and wine label information Galati et al (2019) connects consumer behavior concerning food with that of wine and establishes that interest in sustainably produced wine is on the rise, especially

amongst young consumers. The increasing interest comes from a belief in altruism and self-interest combined in universalism (protection for the welfare of people and nature) and does not distinguish quality from social and environmental issues. Healthy living is another factor strongly connected with green purchasing behavior. However, there is an attitude-behavior gap amongst consumers (ibid), meaning there is an unrealized market potential in turning intention into action.

As traditional wine drinking cultures such as France change consumption patterns with better knowledge in health and a less permissive attitude towards alcohol consumption and driving, wine consumption has gone down. In search of new markets wine has been globalized and because of wine's strong association with place, it has thrived in global conditions, being able to transmit cultural values far removed from its place of growth. With the new conditions, wine needed voices that could transfer the cultural values and in connection with growing individualism a transnational network of world-renowned globe-trotting oenologists, critics and traders emerged (Viecelli 2021) reproducing narratives to their own advantage.

5. The Social Life of Wine

The following research result is based on thick description with perspectives of informants, the researcher's observations from wine fairs, tastings, and travels in wine regions, as well as the contribution of narratives of wine literature. The intention is to concretize the social field of wine, disclose how external narratives influence informants and demonstrate how storytelling is constructed and construed through relationships to create an understanding of the reality that the modern *vigneron* operates in.

“Is wine art? No, but it is an artistic way of expressing yourself. At the same time, it also moves people, thus it is art.”

Anders Frederik Steen

5.1 Actors

This chapter introduces the informants and attempts to position them within the social field of wine. Their stories provide the foundation for social field analysis and is intended to give a deeper understanding of the context shaping informants' reality.

The map displays informants' geographical spread to assist the reader through the following introductions.

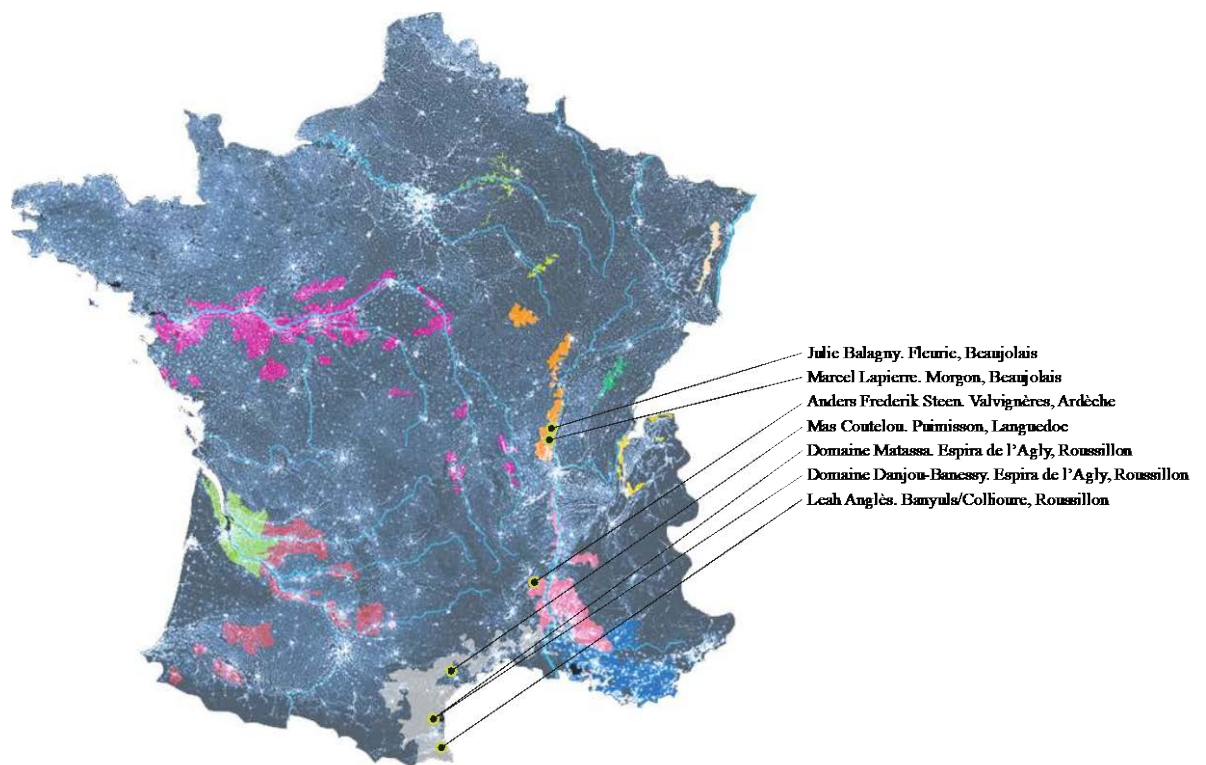


Figure 1. Map of informants

5.1.1 The successionists

Marcel Lapierre, Morgon, Beaujolais

Marcel Lapierre was a pioneer of the natural wine movement. He was the first to estate bottle in the village of Morgon in Beaujolais and has always farmed his soils organically, although in the 1980's his decisions were mocked. His son, Mathieu Lapierre, describes the Beaujolais of the 1970's and 1980's as the best student of chemical input farming. Marcel Lapierre has since become a fore figure to the movement of un-sulphured wine making and has inspired numerous *vignerons* to follow his path. According to Mathieu Lapierre, his father never chose to be a radical or start a revolution, however, he understood that he needed others to follow the same path to be successful.

Today the domain is run by Marcel's children Mathieu and Camille. The vineyard management is deeply influenced by place. The flat lands and sandy soils are easy to plow, there is no major concern for erosion since the vineyards are situated on the flats and higher temperature has in a way helped the cool climate region to

achieve maturity in the grapes and has made chaptalization superfluous. However, there has also been a lot of problems over the last years with hailstorms and late frost which have reduced harvests substantially.

The connection with the appellation of Morgon is important to Mathieu, as it was for his father. In 1999 the appellation board found Lapierre's wine to be atypical and the wine was declassified. This was somewhat of a crisis to Mathieu's father, and he nervously offered his wine to the market as a *Vin de Table* (VdT) with roman numbers replacing the vintage year because printing the vintage is not allowed on a VdT label. The wine sold out and today the domain is confident that the wines will get sold with or without the Morgon appellation. However, Mathieu still emphasizes his affection for Morgon and its heritage. Furthermore, Mathieu considers the risk to lose the appellation as minimal since the approval today is strictly based on laboratory analysis. Nevertheless, politics is still a heavy influence within the appellation association and the process of electing board members is far from democratic. Mathieu still believes that the AOC can be valuable. It represents an institution of knowledge about geology and soil, and it could be put to much better use. "The young people want change. We tried to make the *lieu-dit* of Côte de Py a glyphosate-free zone, but we were kicked out... the AOC is too much about the money at the moment."

Domaine Danjou-Banessy. Espira de l'Agly, Roussillon

Domaine Danjou-Banessy was created in the 19th century and has been cultivated by the same family for five generations. Today brothers Benoit and Sébastien Danjou control the estate. Their mother never wanted to make wine, so succession skipped a generation. She grew up in a time when the Roussillon *vigneron* had low status and mainly produced light and low-alcoholic wine to be blended with Algerian wine. Their grandfather, who kept producing wine until the age of 73, took great pride in the quality of his production. Even when he was called "the gardener" by his high-yielding bulk producing neighbors as a remark that the low production that he was working was unprofessional. He mainly produced a traditional style of wine, *rancio*, an oxidized white wine. "The history of red wine is only 40-45 years old here", the brothers explain.

During the 1970's and 1980's the aim of Roussillon producers was to produce high yields. Sébastien Danjou tells the story of how after World War II the perspective on farming in the Roussillon changed from subsistence farming to support the family to increasing production and getting France economically back on its feet. The new discourse of intensification had cultural impact on the Roussillon transforming small holdings into larger farms and subsistence farmers into agricultural employees and changed the landscape from diverse fields separated by hedges, so called *bocage*, into a vast monoculture. Rationality stayed in the mindset of farmers and increased production was still the norm when Benoit

and Sébastien grew up. As their mother wished the brothers an educated future outside of the village and the wine industry they did not attend the village school and gained an outside perspective from that.

Mas Coutelou. Puimisson, Languedoc

Jeff Coutelou took over his father's vineyards in Puimisson. His father had used organic farming since 1987 at a time where a mere 200 hectares of the region's vines were organic. As of 2020, there were 28 833 hectares of organic vineyard and 22 268 ha in conversion in the Occitanie region (Agence Bio 2020) which Puimisson is a part of.

"Different times, different wines", Coutelou replies when I ask about how his production differs from his father's. Coutelou's father produced wine for Bouchardon, a *negociant* in the Allier department. At this time the Languedoc mostly set out to produce bulk wine with light color and alcohol that could be blended with the dark, heavy alcohol wines of Algeria. Aramon was the most grown grape in the region because it corresponded to exactly that. When France left Algeria the demand for Languedoc wines changed. The market now demanded dense wines from varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. A lot of Aramon was uprooted and replaced with new varietals. Today Coutelou believes that Aramon has the potential for a comeback in the Languedoc because of its ability to handle the changing climate conditions and because the market now is open for lighter wines.

5.1.2 The Expatriated Vignerons

Domaine Matassa. Espira de l'Agly

The old estate of Mas Feriol in Espira de l'Agly is now the home of Tom Lubbe's Domaine Matassa. Lubbe has previously run The Observatory, an estate in his native country South Africa, but abandoned his project due to resistance from authorities calling his wines atypical and issuing an export ban on the wines. Lubbe later resettled in the Roussillon, France because of love and started his current enterprise, Domaine Matassa.

To Lubbe farming is directly connected to maintaining soils and extendedly guarantee the continuing fertility of earth and humanity's ability of further existence. "A farmer doesn't let things fall apart. You fix it". Along this ambition came the rising consciousness of consumers concerning environment and health which "keys in nicely with the concept of natural wine". One of Lubbe's strategies to establish healthy soils and strong vines is to restore trees along his vineyards. Trees that traditionally lined the vineyards were taken out during the rationalization period following World War II to make room for more vines. Lubbe replants partly due to rational decisions to combat heat and drought because the root systems of

trees retain water and as Lubbe says, “you cannot downplay the impact of the shade created by tree canopies”. However, Lubbe explains that he gets a spiritual kick from trees thus making the decision not exclusively rational but also about emotional attachment. Furthermore, Lubbe uses cover crops as his strategy to ease the negative effect of monoculture. Cover crops and trees integrate nature into agriculture and creates more natural conditions, as Lubbe reasons, “nowhere in nature is soil left bare.”

Lubbe has dealt with recurring cultural and institutional resistance starting in South Africa by producing atypical wine to being an English-speaking foreigner in a deeply culturally embedded community and in-lawed *vigneron* family. “They still call me the Englishman after twenty years, and I’m not even English”, Lubbe says with a slight smile. Lubbe’s impulsion comes not from inherited pressure, instead Lubbe is inspired by a belief in the responsibility of the farmer and in some sense controversy and the underdog role fuels him.

Anders Frederik Steen. Valvignères, Ardèche

Anders Frederik Steen grew up in Copenhagen outside of wine culture with Scandinavian individualist values. Perhaps this is the reason for his emancipation from tradition. Steen feels no obligation to reproduce previous cuvées. Steen himself did not follow in his parents’ footsteps and puts no expectations to his children to follow in his. His enterprise has contemporary value, and that value is not compromised if there is no succession. For Steen there is no need for familiarity or repetition, “I don’t get disappointed if a Sauvignon doesn’t taste like Sauvignon”. This post-modern approach also influences Steen to mix green and blue grapes, experiment with aging and process. Steen says that “Wine tasting is a social measurement” and that “wine making is constrained by how people taste wine”, thus recognizing that his wines may be created in an unconstrained mindset, but their existential value is still socially framed.

“Being a poet sells wines better than picking up your kids from school” although the stories are not always true. Steen continues to tell a story about a *vigneron* who made a bad vintage. A story spread that the *vigneron* had lost his long-time beloved dog and had been so distracted by his grief that he had not paid sufficient attention to his vine and wine that he made a bad vintage. However, the *vigneron* never had a dog, yet the story was widely spread. In the same sense another producer named his top cuvée after his ploughing horse that he only had for two years. The horse is now long gone yet the *cuvée* still carries the name. Steen points out that the stereotype of a harvest is authentic only because it confirms pre-conceptions and, in that sense, authentic wine is “a little stupid”. Steen perceives authenticity as marketing because it is something that people search for. For Steen wine is a form of expression. It can be consumable, yet it can also move people, wine can create resonance because context creates resonance.

5.1.3 The Neo-Traditionalist

Leah Anglès. Banyuls/Collioure, Roussillon

Leah Anglès took possession of her vineyards in December 2021, only a few months before this interview. Banyuls is an area of steep hills, hot climate and strong winds making agriculture a tough undertaking. For Anglès the harsh conditions are part of the attraction, she likes working when it is difficult. The attraction of being a *vigneron* comes from the freedom that comes with it. You work hard but get a lot of joy and you work only for yourself. Anglès finds it exiting to work with her hands and see biology and chemistry take place in nature. “You start with grapes, and it ends with wine. It’s an exciting process”, Anglès says.

She has worked six years with Philippe Gard at Coume del Mas in Banyuls sur Mer. Gard has inspired her to start her own enterprise and their relationship is more of a mentorship now than boss/employee as described by Anglès. Her vineyards expand a little over one hectare although she is also renting land that renders her surface under vine to 4,5 hectares. Anglès estimates that she is three years away from her first estate vintage, yet she is already planning 100 years ahead. We stand at the top of her newly acquired sloped uprooted vineyard. “I am creating this for my future grandchildren... One life is not enough for wine.” Anglès has a background as a pharmaceutical chemist and doesn’t come from a wine making family. Because of her background the relationship to Gard has been crucial to gain knowledge and confidence. She was nervous to set out on her own, but she quickly gained attention on social media and now she has connections with importers on at least four continents. The 2500 bottles that she produces from rented vineyards sell out in 20 days. Anglès aims to produce low-intervention wines with purity. She says that many natural wine producers in the area choose not to bottle under the appellation, but she is proud of Banyuls and Collioure. She wants to make wine that is authentic and true Collioure wine, deep and full bodied with high alcohol yet in a modern way, with more freshness.

5.1.4 The Minimalist

Julie Balagny. Fleurie, Beaujolais

Julie Balagny describes how she grew up in an affluent Parisian family. In 1999 she left Paris in search for a life more deeply connected to nature. “My family is *bourgeois*. To me it was interesting to see how you can live without the help of your parents”. She settled in Perpignan in the south of France. There she worked a small farm and produced conventional wine for five years, but it was not the wine that Balagny wanted to make, and the experience didn’t offer the connection to nature that she was searching for. “Just chemicals in the vineyards. Everything was made in the cellar” Balagny explains. At the time there was no internet filled with

information, only books and people. It was not easy to get the older generation to share knowledge and it was especially difficult being a young Parisian woman, so Balagny had to search hard for the right people to talk to. Eventually she found people that could mentor her to the knowledge that she needed. Balagny met two pioneers of natural wine, Yvonne Métras, and Marcel Lapierre, and they became a source of knowledge and provided a network of people that Balagny needed to establish herself. She was offered a parcel of vines in the Jura by legendary vigneron Jean-François Ganévat, yet she passed on the offer and let “this Japanese guy” take it. The Japanese guy was Kenjiro Kagami of Domaine des Mirroirs, today a producer of highly sought-after wines with global acclaim. Instead Balagny settled in the Beaujolais and took over a parcel at the top of the heights of Fleurie.

Balagny describes her journey as a struggle. Determined to create something on her own with no investors she embarked on a tough route. With no roots in the area, working cold and sloped vineyards of Fleurie by hand was tough although the toughest part was the social isolation. “Everybody just saw a girl from Paris. Give her two years and she will be gone, they said”. However, Balagny’s cultural unattachment left her free to create. “I have no retired father telling me that what I am doing is crazy, for me this is *liberté!*”.

5.1.5 The Consumer

Wine consumers importance as actors in the field of wine has increased with accessibility of knowledge and has led to more control of defining and categorizing wine and thus affecting discourse. This section therefore provides a demographic and social profile of an influential collective actor within the field of wine.

“When I started making wine nobody told me I also had to sell the wine!” Lubbe proclaims in a bantering tone. He is expressing how large part of running a domain is focused on sales. Even if Lubbe is mostly disconnected from direct contact with consumers he says that communication is a large part of the work. However, when it is tourist season in the area the requests for visits rise. “A lot of people drop by with no knowledge of the wines. These kinds of uninformed encounters are seldom fruitful or reciprocal. People taste the wines, give very few comments, and leave”. Therefore, Lubbe only accepts visits by appointment and only after inquiring about how they know the domain.

Fuentes-Fernandez and Gilinski (2021) identifies a difficulty for natural wine producers to reach consumers with proper information on what natural wine is. Lo Monaco et al (2020) establishes a set of cues separate from the intrinsic values of the wine, that consumers use to decide what wine to buy. These cues are connected to the consumers socio-economic status and cultural understanding and are made up by place of origin, labelling and historical context of the producer. Wine is a credence good that requires consumers to relate to productional context to fully appreciate a wine’s quality (Fuentes-Fernandez & Gilinski 2021). Gonzalez (2019)

also concludes that there is a personal relationship between producer and consumer which is ascribed to alternative distribution channels and small production output.

Lubbe describes his average consumer as 20-something which concurs with the research of Galati et al (2019), Migliore et al (2020) and Fuentes-Fernández and Gilinski (2021) who describe the target group for natural wine as the millennial generation. Their reports connect the interest of natural wine with a general interest in preservation of biodiversity and environmental issues. Lubbe believes that the narrative of natural wine fits well with environmental awareness.

Aaron Ayscough, blogger, and freelance journalist, describes how individualism combined with the dominant position of capitalism has had an impact on wine production. The consumer has gained power over the narrative. “The ideology of consumerism tells everybody that they are king”.

Swedish wine importer, Ida Sundqvist, sees a will amongst consumers to buy wines from familiar places or a familiar grape variety. However, trust can also be built between consumer and importer or *caviste* (wine retailer). Sundqvist receives requests from recurrent consumers who give her the trust to choose wine for them. The connections between importer and consumer allow winemakers to extend relationships beyond their own reach.

The consumer demographics are changing. Emil Broomé operates an import business in Sweden. He tells me how the producers that he works with have attracted little attention from the collectors over the years, but things are changing. A bottle of wine from Domaine de Mirroir recently sold for almost 2000 euros at a wine auction (iDealwines 2022) and there are more producers that have morphed from eccentric peripheral wine producers to superstars in consumers’ eyes. Ayscough continues, “Ganevat was a rebel fighting for a cause. Now he has been appointed wine maker of the year in France and recently sold his domain for millions of euros. Eventually popularity creates status and then a new group of consumers pick up interest.”

5.1.6 The government and the AOC

Government is the embodiment of the political power that influences external restraint on the field of wine. The relationship between wine and politics and between the *vignerons* and government frame the scope of decision making, affect discourse and take part in building narratives of wine ultimately affecting the perception and being of wine.

When it comes to government contacts many of the informants are reluctant to pursue them. Balagny says: “If you get 100 euros from the government, they will come back for 500 euros later”. The Danjou brothers have received some subsidies for organic farming in the past but not anymore. “The money should go to young people. The government cannot be your father.” The Danjou brothers also believe that it will not help to politicize some issues. “Ecology should be a part of

everybody. It shouldn't be a part of politics." Bertrand Celce brings up the same issue saying that "I don't believe in green politics. You shouldn't punish people and you can't push issues from the top. It needs to grow from the roots."

France's controlled appellation system, *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC), took its form in the 1930's. It is a protectionist system that grew out of a situation of economic depression, a widespread use of hybrid vines and a large surplus production (Robinson 2006). The AOC is primarily focused on geographical categorization although regulation can also concern vine varieties, ripeness and alcoholic strength, yields, viticulture, and oenology.

The AOC suffers currently from the basis of how it was originally drawn up. Florian Humbert writes in his report on the INAO, the government organ that oversees the AOC-system, that "the lack of consensus and the multiplicity of local configurations, especially from the point of view of the old elements of expertise and power relations between producers and traders, are part of a registration protean standard and the development of adjustments from these early years" (Humbert 2011). Regulation was to a large extent made with the convenience of the largest and most powerful producers in mind and lacks any unifying standard across regions. Because of power imbalance between producers and traders the aim was rather *typicité* than *terroir*. *Typicité* being a more rigid definition of what a wine should taste and focused on consumption while *terroir* takes the perspective of production and aims to bestow the wine with meaning (Demossier 2011). "Wine is more than just the taste, although it is the entry point. In good wine it is the marvel, the fascination." Alice Feiring expresses how wine can achieve greater meaning than mere taste, yet it unconditionally starts with a fascination for taste.

At present decision making is still saturated with power structures and somewhat arbitrary (Robinson 2006). The AOC is administered by Paris-based *Institut National des Appellations d'Origine* (INAO). The INAO has experienced a power increase over time, especially after gaining strong influence in the formation of EU regulations, now administrating more than 50% of French wine production and 75,000 grape growers (INAO 2022). The INAO forcefully litigates any infringements on its protected names of origin.

Kermit Lynch believes that the AOC is an implication of control, and this is something that consumers respond to and even though the purpose of the AOC is to define the raw materials of a wine it is perceived as a rating. "The AOC exists more to soothe the pride and commercial interest of local growers", Lynch (1988) further writes.

Jean-François Coutelou bottles all his wines under the generic label of Vin de France (VdF). He does so because the region of Languedoc only offers the appellation of Vin de Pays d'Oc which Coutelou perceives as an empty label without meaning or value. When the appellation system was established in 1936, the Languedoc showed no interest and there are thus no specifications of appellation

in the region. Coutelou believes that due to the lack of cultural value in locality, the wines of the Languedoc have taken on a more individually orientated character.

The situation of the Roussillon resembles that of Languedoc. “The appellation has no meaning here. It is a shame” Sébastien Danjou explains. Danjou-Banessy labels their wine as Côtes Catalanes because they take pride in their geographical heritage, but the appellation renders no higher status or price. The brothers Danjou regard the AOC as the opposite of diversity. Their wines sometimes get remarks for being too light in color. Although they are unhappy with the work of the AOC, they do not want to get involved themselves. “We are not Don Quixote. We don’t fight them or go to the meetings.”

Alice Feiring questions the legitimacy of standardizations such as the AOC altogether. “Typicity is not important. In the early days appellation was not about taste, that came in the 1970’s. The system is supposed to be flexible, but it has become rigid about what you can and cannot grow. If you want to put Riesling in Burgundy, you should!” In Feiring’s opinion the rules inhibit experimentation and diversity on behalf of the mundane and unimaginative. “The AOC enables uninteresting wines to be sold just because it is awarded an appellation.”

Leah Anglès works in a small appellation where everybody knows each other making the AOC a social platform. She believes that she sticks out as a young woman and as a first-generation *vigneron*. Anglès feels that it has been difficult to be accepted as a serious actor. Some people keep forgetting her name even though they met many times. Anglès says she doesn’t take it seriously but acknowledges the hierarchical structure of a small AOC such as hers.

5.2 The Social Act of Communicating Wine

Most informants state that they are making wine because of an inner passion although it is obvious that getting attention for what you do carries importance. All informants agree that reciprocal relationships are necessary to keep going. “Networking is not only about selling more wine. People need interaction”, Lubbe explains. Anglès finds reciprocity through social media. The interaction is extra important during the startup process because communication is an indication of support. Anglès says that she will remember those who supported her from early on thus underlining how important attention and support is. *Vignerons* may work their land for a wide variety of reasons, yet wine needs to relate to a community, not only relating to the activity of sales. It is through reciprocal conversation that wine becomes the concept of wine. “The wine business is social. People who like wine like to eat and talk. It’s a *bon vivant*”, Anglès says. When Anglès is replanting a vineyard, she is also planning for a space at the top of the hill where she can receive visits for tastings and dinners. “It is easy to talk about a place like Banyuls because of the dramatic landscape of sea and mountains.” The attractive

surroundings make it popular on social media and easy to narrativize. The social element is thus built into the material structure of her domain. It carries the same justified claim to space as a tool shed or any other practical structure. Balagny is also happy to receive visits and regards it as an obligation for her as a *vigneron* but also for the people that sell her wine. “The context is very important! The people that buy my wine must see this simple place and how hard you have to work here”. The way wine is connected to place is complex and can never be fully understood without a physical visit. Lubbe acknowledges the crucial element of social relationships in wine production and thus the ability to communicate becomes a tool. “Bad communicators have more difficulty to be successful, but they also find happiness”, Lubbe says, displaying a kind of dualism that other informants share with him. Several other *vignerons* recite the French proverb “*pour vivre heureux, vivons caché*”, which translates “to live happily, live hidden”. The longing for both attention and seclusion may not be exclusively a trait of *vignerons*, but a symptom of our time, it is however a notably recurring subject during interviews. “Wine is an element of dialogue. To share wine is to communicate.” Coutelou says. Speaking English is part of success for a *vigneron* with the intention to distribute wine internationally and social media platforms are key tools to reach people. The platforms are used to reach consumers but also to build stronger relationships with other actors.

Interaction with other wine producers is important for support and a sense of community but relationships also create opportunities for sharing knowledge, machines, and tools. Anders Fredrik Steen stresses the importance to talk to everyone. Dialogue creates understanding even when you do not agree. Therefore, it is dangerous to close off in homogenous bubbles. In the same spirit of thought Mathieu Lapiere arranges the *Bien Boire en Beaujolais* (BBB), a Beaujolais tasting that welcomes all *vignerons* regardless of production philosophy. “We all have something to learn from each other. Disregarding a person because they follow a different path means you are missing out. I want the BBB to represent the full picture, the truth”, Lapiere explains. Steen gives an example of an unexpected exchange: “It is a privilege to be a part of this global network. We got in contact with a rice grower in Japan through Instagram and could exchange knowledge and perspective with each other. We feel inspired by people. This is a movement that really moves. We move like a herd and all benefit from the motion.”

Peer networks are especially important the first 10 years according to Lubbe. Other winemakers will refer you to importers and journalists. When you get more experience, you help others not to repeat your own mistakes. Anglès perceives that it would be difficult to start up as a *vigneron* without the help of peers. She herself has a mentor type relationship with her former employer Philippe Gard. Gard was the one to push her to start her own domain and it is through him that Anglès gained knowledge and established important relationships. Maybe even more important,

Gard gave her the courage to go off on her own and his faith in her has served as fuel for her to succeed because she didn't want to disappoint him.

Swedish wine importer Ida Sundqvist brings up how networks are used to pursue political issues. When a group of small-scale producers share a cause, they can collaborate and push for political change. Size can be an important factor when trying to bring on political change. Sundqvist shares an example of a group that is trying to bring on regulation demanding mandatory table of content for wine. Fuentes-Fernández and Gilinski (2021) discusses in a paper on cooptation how the competitors in the wine market creates clusters to achieve change of regulation and joint marketing. The method establishes a shared narrative that benefits all actors in a network of competitors against another group.

Coutelou feels strongly connected to his local community. He grew up in the village and knows almost everyone. "Jeff knows everyone, and he talks to everyone", his niece says. As an example, he cooperates with the local hunters and lets them hunt wild boar by his water reserve. One of Coutelou's workers used to be a conventional wine maker in the area. His own domain suffered economically, and he now works for Jeff. He does not believe in natural winemaking but he and Coutelou come together in their love for tending vines. Many *vignerons* also use their network to trade products and services for wine. Julie Balagny, for example, regularly trades a few bottles of wine for bread with a bakery in Lyon. The bread is used to feed her animals.

5.2.1 Platforms of Interaction

The wine fairs, or the *salons*, are important arenas to strengthen relationships and share narratives. The larger ones such as *Biodyvin* in Marseille and *Millésime Bio* in Montpellier, or *Salon des Vins de Loire*, are open events. However, there are many fairs such as *La Dive Bouteille*, *Pénitentes*, *Les 10 Vins Cochons* and *Indigènes* that actively invite wine makers to participate creating networks around participants.

The *salons* were created as a marketplace where *vignerons* could connect with *cavistes* and importers and sell wine. The modern *salon* represents something different since most established *vignerons* are already sold out long before the *salons* start, so they have no wine to sell. *Salons* would also serve as social platforms enabling opportunities to meet other *vignerons* and share knowledge and support. "*La Dive* has lost some relevance. Popularity has destroyed the social benefit of the fair. There is no time to talk to other *vignerons* and established *vignerons* will be sold out of wine even before the fair", Lubbe explains and continues, "it's an event where people come to buy wine and all you say is no, no, no." Importer Emil Broomé shares a similar picture. Many of the established *vignerons* that he works with are choosing not to attend the *salons*. Some reason that there are probably some young *vignerons* in better need of their table. The

Danjou brothers go to two *salons* per year, *La Dive Bouteille* in Anger and *Bio Millésime* in Montpellier. “It’s an act of humility to go to our customers and show them what they buy. Sometimes we go to tastings, but it is more to share than to sell. The wines are already sold”. The Danjou brothers attend a selected number of *salons* with a sense of duty towards the relationships that they have with customers. It is a renegotiated form of benefit compared to the original intent.

Feiring sees a rising popularity in visiting the *salons* although the intent has changed. She compares it to a competition with visitors asking each other “how many wines have you tasted today?”. Although Feiring sees a change in purpose among visitors, she believes that the *salons* attract and create interest in wine. “People that visit the big fairs are interested in knowing the story behind the wine. The wine fair has become the modern Wine Spectator”. However, Feiring believes that the tasting events offer shallow knowledge and takes you away from the more important task of visiting *vignerons* at their domains. Ayscough shares Feiring’s thoughts on the *salon*’s shallowness. “When you go to a *salon* people show you rocks to not have to discuss the complex issues of wine. That doesn’t mean that *terroir* is not a real thing, just that people hide behind the concept of it”. Feiring concludes that “*salons* make more sense when you are able to sell wine”. Importer Emil Broomé is seeing a tendency amongst the *vignerons* he works with that they are attending fewer *salons* in favor of accepting visits at the domain. “This is of course a luxury from being successful” Broomé reasons. Nevertheless, popularity of the *salons* is rising with more visitors each year although the recent pandemic seems to have settled the evolution some, according to Feiring.

There are also new *salons* being created. Some of them carry a different purpose. Every year since 2006 Mathieu Lapierre arranges the national tasting of Beaujolais wine Bien Boire en Beaujolais (BBB). He saw a need of creating a mutual picture of reality in the Beaujolais and all producers are welcome, regardless of their productional principles. “It was hard with the federation people to join. It took 4-5 years, but they came around”. Lapierre describes the essence of the *salon* to be inclusive to all. “Organics is just a certification. You can work better without it than someone that is certified”. The most important point according to Lapierre is to create an arena for dialogue and to display a true picture of the Beaujolais.

5.3 Writing the Narrative of Wine

Journalism has a complicated relationship to the wine industry. Mathieu Lapierre explains the relationship between *vignerons* and the established wine publications as framed by conflict. “Journalists wanted to oppose the classic and embrace the modern by constructing conflict”. Lapierre believes that some journalists have used conflict as a tool of gaining influence. Criticism sells better than praise. In the 1990’s Robert Parker Jr introduced the 100-point scale which he used to assess

wines and published his reviews in *The Wine Advocate*. The method was widely adapted, and measurability raised the impact of competition on wine and streamlined a generic international style of highly extracted, high alcohol and heavily oaked wines made from a handful of grape varieties. Parker's model has institutionalized him into being a prize determining factor in regions such as Bordeaux. Colin Hay (2010) writes: "Parker's influence is analogous to that of a credit-rating agency in a more conventional futures market. Parker has become part of the institutional embedding of this market - arguably as key to the process of both price and status formation as the 1855 classification itself". Hay continues to argue that Parker's influence is a marker of how a wine region such as Bordeaux is "de-spatialized". According to Hay price is determined by global factors and not within the geographical space of Bordeaux limiting the regions agency and displacing power.

Alice Feiring is highly critical to how Parker's wine ratings have turned wine into a quantifiable good, calling it marketing rather than journalism. "Once wine became a number, people lost interest in the story". Not many publications cover wine today according to Feiring. "Wine has lost its story. Who wants to write about wine today? What is the next story?"

La Revue du Vin de France (LARVF) was established in 1927 and thus predates the appellation system that was put in place in the 1930's (Robinson 2008). It has over time acquired authority over commenting on the French wine industry and is, according to Lubbe, an institutionalized publication of wine in France. Lubbe explains how a good review will create interest from up-scale restaurants and wine collectors creating opportunity for the *vigneron* to raise prices with increasing demand. Lubbe recognizes the potential power of wine writers. "Journalists can be kingmakers and you cannot challenge a canon once you put it into place".

However, there is another form of wine journalism. Journalism that takes part in the storytelling and myth building of wine, part of a network that is less institutionalized, more decentralized, and often interactive. Outlets are traditional publicized papers and magazines, but especially blogs and social media. The network is integrated with wine producers, importers, and sommeliers who take part in spreading the narrative through social media. According to Lubbe the creation of narratives belongs to a certain extent to the journalists and sommeliers.

Aaron Ayscough, blogger, author, and freelance journalist believes that journalism has a completely different purpose than to give verdict on value and quality. "It is important to humanize wine making. I try to maintain friends with vignerons. I feel like I am working for them." Ayscough uses silent criticism as he focuses on vignerons that produce wines that he personally enjoys although he puts in effort to write factual texts and tries not to be opinionated.

The entangled networks sometimes create delicate problems. Ayscough has different roles in the wine industry that sometimes complicate objectivity. It can be

difficult to write a critical piece if you at the same time assume a different role where you need to have a positive relationship with the people that are subjected to criticism.

Bertrand Celce started his wine blog 'Wine Terroirs' in 2004, before social media dominance when blogs were a new communicative outlet. He chose to write in English to be able to communicate outside of France, making his readership base largest in the US. According to Celce, the blog has lost some of its importance since social media made communication easier and open to everyone. Celce does not initially belong to the sphere of wine and tries to take an outsider perspective. His interest is based in the consumer traditions of his father who used to buy wine directly from *vignerons*. Even though the father bought wine direct he was not knowledgeable about wine. He belonged to a time when "people loved wine but were not intellectual about it", Celce says. Estate bottlings were uncommon, and wine was mainly sold in bulk as a staple, not a luxury good, "in the past people would drink almost directly out of the barrel".

Celce gives the impression that he is writing his stories as a kind of duty. He explains that he receives a lot of feedback from readers that his blog has influenced them to change their position. He gives examples of wine makers that have been inspired to convert their vineyards to organic farming and softening technical manipulation in the cellar. At the same time Celce dislikes the intellectualization of wine that is created from in-depth reporting. "Maybe, in the future we don't have to speak about wine, we can just drink it." Celce hopes to see a standardization of natural production methods in all wine production which would mean that narrativization is no longer needed.

"Grading wine is not journalism" Feiring says with dismay. "I have said what I want to say, and I want to move away from wine. I have become disgruntled. For 15 years people have viewed what I write as threats. Now the same people are capitalizing on it." Feiring sees a diminishing market for in-depth wine journalism and simultaneously more people read about wine. It is the shape of journalism that is changing. "People want to be told what to drink but very few read long articles." Feiring says. Feiring's own interest has moved from taste to being more contextual. "Wine concerns beyond taste, it is about agriculture, land use and culture. I tell stories about wine, but I am not an expert. People want to know the story. When people have a cocktail, they don't ask the same questions. You don't need to know the story of the ingredients or where the bartender comes from. There are so many stories in a bottle. It is hard to get away from. If readers understand that there is a person on the other side, how much work they do and the risks that they take. That this is a once-a-year chance and that a livelihood can be wiped out in an instance."

5.3.1 The Power of Social Media

According to Lubbe Instagram has been especially important to the movement because it visualizes the place and work of the *vigneron*. Instagram gives continual contact with consumers as they can respond and ask questions. Ayscough believes that social media has a unique ability to visualize the work of *vignerons*. It exposes the difference between handcrafted and industrialized production. “In the 1990’s you had to enroll in winemaking school to see what racking was. Now you easily find YouTube-videos of any process of winemaking”. The availability of knowledge and the continuous communication of winemakers bring practices out in the open. The social media platform is well adjusted to communicating the narrative of wine as it gives *vignerons* like Anglès, who lives in picturesque environments an extra advantage with the opportunity to communicate the beauty of her place and at the same time continuous publications of pictures and videos demonstrate how difficult it is to work the land practically in real time. Anglès believes that being able to document the everyday struggle of working her steep hillside vineyards give legitimacy to a higher price. According to Ayscough a format such as Instagram exposes the differences between working land by hand and industrialized production. Ayscough believes that social media has extended the reach although at the same time it limits the depth of the conversation.

Social media constrains communication limiting the space for answering complex questions, Lubbe says. Subjects may be trivialized by limited caption space leaving not enough room for complexity. “It’s a caravan of bullshit” Ayscough exclaims. Feiring deems social media as shallow, and she is critical of the instant star making effect. “Social media creates celebrities. It puts gas in the engine. You tell a short story and post a bullshit picture and suddenly your wine is sold out”. On the other hand Feiring values how it can be a tool in building relationships. “Instagram is a great telephone book. You instantly get access to peoples’ contacts”.

5.4 The Complexity of Being Categorized

The categorization of wine is how the social field of wine is organized. The categorization is a materialization of dominant discourse and power structures. I therefore devote this section to explaining how informants perceive the process of categorization to further on position them within the social field of wine.

Kermit Lynch (1988) writes: “Wine has a national viewpoint. Each culture with its own vocabulary. Precise translations are difficult.” The terminology and categorization of wine is diffuse. “The language around wine is extremely unprecise”, Ayscough says. The terminologies impreciseness has also created methodological problems for this thesis. What terminology should be used to

describe the field that is being researched? Is it about natural wine, low-intervention wine, artisanal wine, traditional wine or is it uncategorizable? Should we only speak about wine as one extremely diverse and large category? Benoit Danjou says that “some people may consider that we make natural wine, but we don’t know what that really is. We are trying to make wine as pure as possible. That’s it”.

Alice Feiring believes that categorizing natural wine may be necessary while it is at the same time against the essence of what natural wine is about. “Natural wine started as something anarchistic. It was a reaction to something. There is a fraction of *vignerons* who always will resist regulation. I don’t like the idea of certification, but it is needed, the consumer should have some classification to go on. It is like a romantic relationship. In the beginning everything is great but eventually it becomes complicated, and someone needs definition”.

Ida Sundqvist believes that the current subjective interpretations are problematic for consumers who are unable to access full information. Sundqvist is active as a wine importer in the regulated market of Sweden. The state’s monopoly over private market imposes a break in communicative chains between producers and consumers. The difficulty of reaching consumers with information calls for regulated categorization. However, Sundqvist believes that there are other solutions to the problem. Instead of creating regulations around natural wine, all wine could be required to present a declaration of ingredients giving consumers the option to make informed decisions on their own. According to Ayscough the existing categorizing of wine is not constructed with the intention of creating understanding of wine, it more accurately serves as admittance to different social groups. “Why else would it be so popular to document and publish the labels of wines we drink?” Ayscough asks and continues. “Natural wine doesn’t benefit from being defined. It’s not monolithic. It’s a cultural phenomenon, a way of thinking about wine”.

Celce believes that there should not be a legal definition of natural wine since it is by nature elastic. “There is no formal line for a living wine, but big business loves written rules” Celce says. As opposed to natural wine, the categorization of biodynamic farming is regulated and there are several third-party certifications available. Even with regulation and inspections, Lubbe regards biodynamics as a term that has been manipulated by market interests and mostly serves the purpose to sell wine. Anders Fredrik Steen shares Lubbe’s opinion that the biodynamic labelling is mainly about marketing. Certifications exclude some of the most important factors of being sustainable. Rejuvenating soil and planting trees does not belong to the framework of certification bodies as Sébastien Danjou explains: “Bio doesn’t care if you plant trees. We are certified since 2012 because it helps with export but the way we work is more of a lifestyle philosophy”. Danjou does however acknowledge that certification labels help consumers to make decisions. Broomé believes that regulating natural wine will play in the hands of the large producers who will use it to label wines for sales purposes. “On the other hand, it

might improve large-scale production methods and I don't want to decide what is an honest natural wine and what is not. We want to build a relationship with the producers that we represent in order to pass on their idea of the wine."

Celce regards categorization of wine as part of its intellectualization. It polarizes wine. In natural wine it is taboo not to be organic which creates a divide between organic and conventional wine which Celce finds difficult. "Some of the organic preparations kill everything in the vineyard, yet people think it's better. We need deeper knowledge. I don't believe in green politics that wants to stop conventional farming. You shouldn't push things from the top, it needs to grow from the roots".

"One reason for simplifying things through categorization is to make products easier to sell. We rather try to encourage consumers to be more active in their choices. I never been particularly keen on using the word natural wine but what else can you call it? Small-scale wines or artisanal wines? Those terms are equally diffuse. You could talk about organically farmed wine fermented on wild yeasts but that is a little complicated. That's why natural wine sticks because it expresses something understandable." Broomé shares the previous perspective of categorization being a market interest. Broomé compares the present with when he started working in wine "Things weren't so fussy when I started. Everything organic was lumped together. From Leroy to Cousin... Wines that are fundamentally different really. On the other hand, the absence of categorization opened opportunities to taste a lot of different wines." However, Broomé describes a change in categorization, implying that the question is not whether categorization is increasing but taking on new forms. "Status will always be important in the world of wine but today we can sell a wine labeled VdF for 70 Euros. That would have been unbelievable ten years ago." The VdF-label is a geographically generic label meaning that increasing prices of such wines is the result of new value being created outside of traditional geographic origins. This can be interpreted as the market's attention is shifting from a geographical categorization towards a categorization of intent moving focus from tradition to individual.

Ayscough is weary about locking the definition of natural wine into a rigid form with regulation as he sees a different purpose than market differentiation. "The most important thing that natural wine can do for us is to make us question the general state of things", thus ascribing a normative force to natural wine.

5.4.1 Labels

The approach to label design varies considerably between producers. "A capturing story or a cool label catches interest and can even sell wine but unless the intrinsic values back it up the interest will not last for long", Broomé states. Domaine Marcel Lapiere uses a traditional label where Morgon, the geographical appellation is dominant while Steen and Coutelou who have no appellation use a more individually focused labelling. Coutelou uses modern and colorful labels while

Steen communicates through the name of the *cuvée*, a specific bottling. Individual labels will often express the thoughts or personality of the *vigneron*. Jeff Coutelou's wine "*Quoi qu'ill en goutte*" (No matter the taste) is a satire of Macron's proclamation "*quoi qu'ill en coute*" (no matter the cost) in relation to fighting Covid-19. The design of Steen's labels is minimalistic, instead he communicates through text. Steen uses his thoughts and contemporary context to make his labels. "We think about the names every day. It can be a conversation or something that occurs in our life... Sometimes we name our wines after poetry, but it is often political..." Steen's approach is exemplified by wines named "Don't throw plastic in the ocean please", "Sweet beginning of a better end", "What if the Photo really stole our Soul?", "We can do what I can't", and "When a piece of pink rice paper hits the glow of a cigarette". All poetic or political statements far from how tradition prescribes naming of *cuvées*.

Danjou-Banessy keeps labelling design low-key. The domain carries the family name, and the wines are named after the growth place. "We have very low imagination" explains Benoit Danjou with a smile, although their choice of wine names rather connects to the way the brothers are deeply connected to family roots and place and their respect for tradition. Their decision to use the appellation of Côtes Catalanes is made from their sense of belonging to the area. "We are Catalans. That's why the appellation matters. It doesn't sell our wines."

Domaine Marcel Lapierre uses a classical label with the appellation of "Morgon" dominantly printed in the middle of the label communicating the importance of place in the minds of the *vignerons*. The label was created by Mathieu's and Camille's father Marcel, the namesake of the domain. Perhaps the label focuses less on an individual profile because of Marcel Lapierre belonging to a different generation, with less individualistic focus.

Julie Balagny never considered adopting an estate name because she started out with only a small parcel. However, she wanted her wines to be noticed for what they were and not create attention around her being a woman. Therefore, she considered to label the wines under a non-gender specific name such as 'J Balagny'. Balagny never put certification logos on the labels, nor did she communicate that the wines were untouched by sulphur. In fact, when it became mandatory to print the certification logo in 2015, she stopped certifications altogether.

Balagny's labels are eye-catching with expressive artwork. The same artist has made all her labels for all 14 years of production. Balagny insists that there is no message behind the label, it is just a beautiful piece of art. Nevertheless, some labels have created political reactions. Balagny's bottling Simone has a label of the artist Nina Simone which did not go down so well with her US importer. Because of fear of raising critique of cultural appropriation and racial delicacy the importer would not accept the label on the US market. The importer explained that it would be culturally problematic in the US for a white person to use a person of African

descent to market a product. However, Balagny does not acknowledge those concerns and will not relabel. “I cannot take advantage of a person like Nina Simone. She is huge. Nina Simone is *a Grand Dame!* If they don’t buy the wine, I have friends that can drink it!”

5.5 What is Authenticity in Wine?

The values of tradition and modernity appear in a synthesized form in the notion of authenticity. The last empirical section describes authenticity as it is perceived by the informants of this thesis. The intention is to present a collective statement of what authenticity can be in wine, uncovering the discourses within the field.

The answer to what makes a wine authentic is far from homogenous. Steen believes that “authenticity is created in the minds of the people that drink the wine. Every wine is authentic in its own way. It doesn’t have to be produced by hand and you can even make a truly natural wine that is unethically produced. The stereotype of a harvest is authentic because it confirms pre-conceptions”. Steen places the determination of authenticity in the beholders hands while questioning whether authenticity is actually authentic or a confirmation bias.

According to Ayscough authenticity is a fabrication that originates in peoples’ efforts to gain access to different social groups. “We are all composing fruit poetry when we talk about wine. We don’t talk about wine in a realistic way. The intrinsic value is socially constructed. The quality of the most hyped wines can be found elsewhere”. Instead Ayscough believes that our preferences in wine are a tool to create tribes. There is no intrinsic value, instead the membership is the true value that we are buying. Authenticity is less about the wine and more about the intention of the *vigneron* or perhaps the preconceptions of consumers. Steen expresses a similar opinion saying that “wine can be a mere consumable, but it can also create resonance. Context creates resonance. It’s not about the wine.” On the other hand, Bertrand Celce believes that authenticity is intrinsic and that it can be detected by drinking a wine: “the feeling of authenticity is mysterious. It occurs when you feel the presence of energy. When you drink these wines, you don’t feel tired, you feel high”. Mathieu Lapierre finds authenticity in wines that reflect place. “When I taste a wine, I taste the decisions that was made” Lapierre says, implying that there is no way of hiding manipulative acts because the wine will resonate them. However, following tradition is not a silver bullet as Broomé explains. “It can be truly wonderful to drink wine from a producer that you have a personal connection to. If you have tasted a wine for the last consecutive vintages, you will be able to make out a pattern. That sensation is incredibly fulfilling.” Yet “tradition and history can be a heavy load to carry. It can be inhibitive or a bad excuse to keep doing something in a negative manner. A region can have a certain status and just keep doing what they do with no will to improve anything concerning product or

methods.” Reproduction or tradition can add meaning to wine given other contextual values being in place. Lubbe speaks about a temporal aspect of authentic wine in a different way, one that is slipping away. “The negociants who used to cellar wine and sell when they reached maturity don’t exist anymore. People need higher turnover today and this has led to a demand for wine that is drinkable young.”

Alice Feiring explains how natural wine came into existence as a reaction against something, a counterreaction to the high levels of manipulation that was being practiced in industrialized wine production. “The more fake there is, the more you need what is real.” Feiring comments on why there was a need to speak about natural wine. “The connection to land was important from the very beginning. Natural wine starts with organic viticulture... honoring the land... nothing added, nothing taken away...” Feiring explains what natural wine initially was before continuing to describe the movement as evolved into something dogmatic. She sees a new generation of wine drinkers that are interested in natural wine as something fun to drink and seek out the wines that are faulty because of their particularity. Lubbe mentions a similar occurrence or trend that wine has become about novelty and exclusivity. “Novelty is as strong as authenticity and exclusivity is highly valued. A restaurant selected a *demi-muid*, a 600-liter oak barrel, over the same wine from *foudres*, a significantly larger oak vessel. The *foudres* actually tasted better but they made their choice because of exclusivity.” Lubbe says.

To some vigneron, such as Tom Lubbe, authenticity comes from the way you farm your land. To Lubbe the real responsibility of a farmer is to take care and improve his soil. Natural wine comes from the work of rejuvenating soil and caring for your piece of land. It is the whole process that produces authenticity. “A lot of natural wine is made from bought grapes. The effort goes into creating a lifestyle instead of the soil”, Lubbe says. Adding to the same thought Steen tells me an old proverb that goes: “there are two types of winemakers. One wears boots and the other wears sandals. The sandals never touch the soil”.

Feiring sees a commercialization of authenticity in wine that is diluting the term. She believes this to be a reaction to the increased commercial interest for natural wine. However, Feiring also sees that different regions are at different stages of the evolution and some areas are just finding their own expression and has not yet been compromised by market forces. Ayscough sees the same tendency with more and more people getting interested in what used to be a marginalized sub-genre. “Some people are just out for fame, but natural wine is not a recipe. It is a community where ambitions of fame and wealth are frowned upon”. According to Ayscough the new attention seeking wine producers are misunderstanding the true essence of natural wine that is crucial to make authentic wine.

6. A Social Deconstruction of Wine

The following section will attempt to theorize empirical findings by drawing on the theoretical framework and the use of analytical concepts, creating a deeper understanding of how wine is socially constructed and how relationships are created through wine. I attempt to unfold the discursive backbone of wine and show that wine is a social factor beyond its primary value as a food item.

6.1 Natural Wine Movement

Natural wine started as a radical movement. Informants have described natural wine as a collective effort amongst small-scale actors to challenge the dominant discourse of conquering soil by technical effectiveness and instead reconnect and resonate with earth as a holistic system. It is partly made up by the will to abandon modern practices and take back pre-industrial traditions, some relating as far back as Columella and the Roman civilization (Tattersall & DeSalle 2015). Celce describes natural wine as an elastic concept and Steen talks about *vignerons* interacting with the circle of life. According to Steen the movement progresses collectively, like a herd.

As much as natural wine is rejuvenating traditions it is also a form of accentuated modernity. Globalized, creating space for individualism, and throwing out, or reconstructing, traditions that do not serve the movement's purpose. At times leaning towards post-modernity, as the movement frees wine from obligations of reproduction, maintaining tradition and challenging the core values, the movement of natural wine carries contradictory discourses of tradition and the emancipation from them. In the end the core value of diversity can be distinguished. All informants operate with strong conviction, yet none of the informants have an ambition to dictate the definition of natural wine through regulation. The normative message of the natural wine movement is foremost to harmonize with nature but also to follow your own path.

The success of natural wine on the market can be ascribed to how it correlates with a more general discourse on sustainability, environment, individualism, and a form of neo-romanticism. The narrative of being sensitive and connected to nature plays well with how consumerism demands goods to interplay with lifestyle choices as described by Galati et al (2019), Migliore et al (2020), Lo Monaco (2020), and

Hu (2020). Handler (1986) argues that choosing goods that are perceived as authentic enriches the consumer's own existential authenticity.

Moving further, I will establish that natural wine is not a random cultural phenomenon but a resistant force against the omnipresent consequences of modernity. Organized and deliberate. As Bourdieu conceived: Knowledge is always constructed, never passively recorded (Bourdieu 1992).

The movement focused on creating a pure product with less economical influence and a strong cultural base. As it grew amongst avant-gardes in low valued geographical places occupying lower positions within the field, they were able to produce innovative cultural goods with potential to change or create new discourse. With growing interest comes the potential to gain economic capital and the temptation of "selling out" by compromising cultural capital for the sake of economic gain. Eventually elites of the field pick up interest and renegotiate the products meaning, form, and shape to fit new conditions enabling mass appeal and mass production to follow. It is at this precarious stage that natural wine is at present. "I want to move away from wine... I am disgruntled" Alice Feiring reflects when contemplating current reality. Her perspective as an observer for 20 years presents a picture of how natural wine is going through a commercialization process compromising cultural capital to make room for expanding economic capital. Meanwhile, modernity's accelerating force leads consumers away from Feiring's style of in-depth reporting creating a struggle for her to maintain her voice.

The field of wine is conditioned by power structures and the balance between economic and cultural capital. The rules and framing are contextualized by the relational space between other fields. However, a specific characteristic of the field of wine is how it is strongly conditioned by nature. The relationship to natural cycles is part of the mythification of wine and a significant part of its attraction. The connection to place and time that conditions wine heavily influences the social field of wine and the scope of agency. Firstly, natural restraints frame the field. No matter how much technical innovation can improve production methods, production is still conditioned by a single harvest of grapes per year. Also, constraints of nature create both capital value as it limits what can be supplied to the market and moral values. The moral values of naturalness limits agency of actors and permeates the discourse of wine.

Natural wine was created as a radical movement within the field of wine. The movement opposed standardization and technical staleness and sterility of conventional winemaking. By choosing to stand outside of the appellation system and labelling wine as VdF, formerly a reserved label for the cheapest and most industrialized wine, actors were able to establish an alternative discourse.

Once the market took a liking to natural wine its discourse has been altered from being radical to offering a more mainstream discourse. The pioneers have changed position within the field and control a much larger proportion of economic capital

Although natural wine is a movement to change the value equilibrium between cultural and economic capital it can never detach itself from the market. This has led to success creating opportunities for actors to possess more economic capital moving them towards an incumbent position. The transformation adds to the confusion of what natural wine is and what intentions fuel actors.

6.1.1 Relationships

Informants describe a complex reality influenced by nature, locality, tradition, globalization, financing, environmental- and climate issues framing their scope of agency. Wine is a social factor as it conditions all relationships within the field as a communicative vessel, packed with symbolism. How we speak about wine is highly determined by our cultural influence and what is said always relies on a mutual semiotic understanding. Wine describes place, power, culture, and tradition to those who understand its particular semiotics.

Relationships are essential to operate within the field. As a newcomer in a field, you are dependent on the acceptance of incumbents. Anglès describes how important her relationship to her mentor is, how she gained her social position through him, and Steen's relationships are an opportunity to exchange knowledge.

Importers build relationships with consumers in places where the *vigneron* is out of reach. Through these relationships narratives and knowledge can be extended and the reach of the *vigneron* is thus extended. However, following Gadamer's theory on interpretation (Gadamer 1960) the relationship also bestows the couriers of storytelling with power to interpret and alter narratives according to their perspective.

The trust between an importer and customer can be substantial and result in customers buying wine that they have no knowledge about or may be for some reason skeptical towards, meaning that actors have the capability to overwrite negative narratives and expand potential interest. Importers also organize both consumers and *vignerons* into groups. For marketing reasons or personal belief and taste importers may choose a certain style of *vignerons* or construct a group around their portfolio. Decisions are based on the importer's pre-conceptions, or cultural capital, in the same way as consumers are approached through utilized social capital (cf. Bourdieu 1992). Marketing events, such as tastings, are commonly executed with several domains simultaneously resulting in groups being formed based on the social and cultural capital of the importer. There appears to be systematic storytelling attached to consumer contact on the unique relational markets set up for natural wine (Gonzalez 2019). Relationships that carry knowledge and narratives creating a collective understanding and discourse of wine and shaping borders of a subfield of natural wine within the larger social field of wine.

Consumers are placed in collective control of distributing economic capital and hence determine what group will take a dominant position. Conventional wine has

dominated the field at least since the 1970s according to several informants. The conventional model has made a nice fit with the general discourse of agricultural intensification and capitalistic expansion. However, with current political movements emphasizing more cautious techniques of extracting the Earth's resources the natural group is gaining traction.

It is through relationships that the field of wine is constructed and construed. The narrative is collectively determined, leaving each actor to influence its shape.

6.1.2 Autonomy

The field of wine is made up by a body of knowledge. Until recently this knowledge was possessed and guarded by the field's incumbents and only shared through succession as witnessed by Julie Balagny's great struggles in her early days trying to obtain this knowledge or Léah Anglès' difficulty to be accepted in her appellation. The language of wine is specific with semiotics only apparent to the initiated. With specific language a narrative of mysticism is built around wine which determines who is on the outside and who belongs to the inside strengthening the field's borders and autonomy. With social media decentralizing the control over knowledge more actors have gained access. Many of these actors do not share the habitus of the field's incumbents with the result of diversified perspectives appearing (Bourdieu 1992). The renegotiation of the field has led to a new equilibrium of power and a formation of new mainstream discourses.

The natural wine movement gained momentum from a need of emancipation. Its actors searching for a different form of autonomy where cultural capital carries a higher value in relation to economic capital. After WWII, the incumbents of the social field of wine established a discourse focused on technical advancement creating little space for preserving traditional manual methods or nature and instead pursuing the goal of increasingly mechanized production. Specialization within the field created a unique language. The language of wine is used to speak about the character of a wine or underlying practices and carries hidden values that positions the *vigneron* within the field. Exemplified by how the words *vigneron*, winemaker, and wine producer all describe the same practice, yet the choice of word will imply different values ascribed to the mentioned person. A *vigneron* tends his land and vines and grows grapes. The outcome is conditioned by nature and will not fully reveal itself until it is time for bottling. A winemaker tames the land and constructs a predetermined wine. The winemaker aims for full control and forces natural elements to appear to their favor. However, the winemaker is constricted by other dependencies. Modern wine production requires more input and machinery than traditional techniques, which leads to a higher need of economic capital. The chemical input is often regulated by government adding the influence of the political dimension to the field of wine.

The political field restrains the field of wine through regulations and subsidies in the agricultural and food segment. Balagny believes that receiving subsidies from government comes with higher level of control and restrictions on freedom. The natural wine movement is on a trajectory moving away from governmental interaction basing categorization on individuality instead of collective traditions.

The INAO and the AOC are both institutions and symbols of the political field. Compliance with political rules is awarded with access to systemized titles. A high-status appellation will rapidly increase a wine's position on the market and increase the *vigneron's* ability to transform cultural capital into economic capital. Furthermore, the natural wine movement shows ambition to increase autonomy from the political field by questioning the AOCs legitimacy. Informants share doubts about how valid the regulations of the AOCs are and whether there are advantages from conforming to them. Feiring questions restrictions on practices, Danjou-Banessy and Lapierre wants the AOC to focus on sustainability issues and Anglès refuses to acknowledge hierarchical structures. Many informants raise concern over democratic values and how government limits autonomy.

Several informants described an ambition amongst *vignerons* to limit government interaction even when the consequences would be financial loss, displaying how the struggle for autonomy is central to the actors within the field of natural wine. Economic dominance is always present through the capitalistic structure of society and the market. All actors are dependent on accumulating economic capital for life expenses and keeping up operations. Part of the critique presented by the natural wine movement concerns the dominance of economic capital, embodied by the market, overwriting all other interests. Yet all production of wine is conditioned and categorized by the market. Being part of the market is a condition to be accepted as an actor within the field of wine as scale carries importance thus displaying how the economic field dominates the field of wine.

When Celce describes how the importance of economic capital relates to cultural context he is providing an example of how habitus causes a slight diversification in perceived scope of agency. According to Celce's argument, habitus formed in a French cultural context will allow for greater autonomy from the economic field than in an American context because low consumption is more socially acceptable in France than in America. When economic capital is valued over cultural capital opportunities are created for a dominant elite to control the field through economic means and hold cultural innovation back. The internal hierarchy of relationships creates challengers who try to renegotiate the value of cultural capital, as the natural wine movement has done within the field of wine. The third dominant field is religion. The field of religion has faded in dominance with an increasingly secular French society and the separation from the state, yet religion is still embedded in wine culture. The relationship between religion and wine was forged during the Roman empire and has had structural influence over the establishment of many

wine regions and the spirituality and mysticism of wine draws from this connection (Tattersall & DeSalle 2015).

6.2 Wine and Tradition

As the empirical findings of this thesis has shown, wine is a socially and culturally embedded product. Its quality constitutes a complex matrix determined by intrinsic values of taste and scent, and extrinsic values, such as labeling and image (Lo Monaco et al 2020). What we ingest is central to our self-perception and plays a role in organizing our society. Food culture is a way for a group to assert diversity and hierarchy and on an individual level we are constructed biologically, psychologically, and socially by how and what we eat and drink (Fischler 1988). However, tradition will continuously be altered and reshaped according to the contemporary perspective. Although, as Bourdieu (1992) argues, meaning is an illusion of hindsight as it is negotiated through our habitus, a lens made up by our previous experiences. This means that the processes of wine production can be reproduced step by step, yet the meaning will be substantially different. The decisions of an older generation may have been drawn from the necessity of survival or from a limited scope of agency. To reproduce these methods today has a different set of meaning. In this perspective tradition in itself carries meaning autonomous from the previous intention (cf. Ricoeur 1991). With continuous reproduction an act becomes ritualistic and mythicized into unescapable and institutionalized traditions, yet the hermeneutics change with each practitioner.

However, traditions matter and influence modern practices. According to Bourdieu tradition is passed on in the form of cultural capital and is stronger amongst incumbents who will maintain dominance through the upholding of practices (Bourdieu 1984). The Danjou brothers and the Lapierras have inherited land but also cultural capital. The legitimacy of their position is based on tradition. However, culture can also be reimagined as in the case of Léah Anglès in Collioure who does not come from a succession. Instead Anglès is creating cultural capital by reimagining tradition and gaining legitimacy through the relationship with mentor Philippe Gard. Coutelou also succeeded his father yet is much less concerned with tradition. Perhaps because his father's domain was less embedded in tradition and therefore requires less cultural capital.

Wine is place bound as a specific wine can only come from a certain place and nature puts limits on the production volume. When we apply traditions on natural circumstances, we achieve the full personality of the wine. Wine is thus not complete as we know it without tradition being applied to it.

The symbolic order of natural wine in relation to the field of wine is changing with the increasing popularity of natural wine on the market. Former "rebels" attached climate and environmental fields to the discourse of wine in order to

change the dynamics from an economical focus to strengthened cultural capital, yet with rising popularity, they are now selling out their wine and gaining more dominant positions. This is creating confusion amongst actors what discourse is being followed. When natural wine emerged as a social field the conventional school dominated the field and controlled large parts of the economic capital. The natural wine school are challengers to the order of capital. Through a narrative of the importance of tradition they are renegotiating the value of cultural capital within the field. With the increasing accumulation of economic capital by leading actors of the natural wine movement, meaning is being contested. According to Bourdieu (1992) this constitutes the dilemma of successful challengers to dominant discourse. The temptation of “selling out” for economic gain is strong. These changes alter the symbolic order of natural wine as economic capital is regaining value through the influence of the field of the market.

6.3 Wine and Modernity

Natural wine is a symbol of reactions to economic capital-based power structures and is often perceived as a counter reaction to cultural loss and a social movement for renegotiated values and strengthened cultural capital. Actors within the subfield are challengers to the established order and discourse. In the individualism of modernity, the wine that you make becomes embedded in identity and thus has a part in determining your position within the field.

The fragmentation of social order described by Hartmut Rosa (2013) leads to time differentiation and higher complexity in our relation to temporal factors. The field of wine constitutes a fragmented unit of social order with a wide variety of temporal scales. Communication is instant, shipping has unlimited potential across the globe, yet the production of wine is restrained by nature and limited to one harvest per year. With time being substitutional in relation to economic capital just like other production inputs it also retains a value. As Benjamin Franklin said: “Time is money” (Rosa 2013). It is the non-negotiable inertia of temporality, permeating the culture of wine, that retains an aura of luxury and creates the mythical narrative of a good so deeply connected to nature that humans cannot fully control it. As Léah Anglès contemplates that “one life is not enough for wine” she confirms the perception of wine’s connection to nature and how it is larger than any individual human.

Clear and straightforward indications of modernity’s integration in the field of wine are how the field has moved from local relationships to a global network and how technical advancement has made production more efficient and less labor intensive. Factors that have created a faster moving and more complex reality with larger entities and wines for early consumption. Kermit Lynch writes about how

the traditional types of *cavistes*, who bought wine and stored it for sometimes twenty years before release, do not exist anymore (Lynch 1988). This aspect coincides with the intent of the natural wine movement to make wine that is available for early consumption. In this aspect natural wine is moving along the accelerating trajectory of modernity (Rosa 2013).

Issues of scale can sometimes be problematic and lack synchrony. Principally, none of the informants oppose that an authentic wine could come from a large-scale operation and at the same time the scale is often part of the critique when discussing bad examples of the industry. The *salons* that have been important arenas for small-scale *vignerons* to create interest for their wines now receives criticism for the way they have grown. They are perceived as commercialized with a shift in intention from support to exploitation. With rising popularity of natural wine many informants also witness to not having enough wine to settle demand. The inability to satisfy the market's demand increases the economic capital in the field. The current natural wine movement is renegotiating its identity as popularity is pushing the movement away from a collective role of a challenger to mainstream discourse and into an incumbent position with substantial control over economic capital. Because development is moving unevenly collective unity is challenged breaking the movement into individual trajectories.

Individualism, a defining characteristic of modernity, is evident in many ways in the field of wine. *Vignerons* might express individuality by passing on AOC approval or choosing to bottle wines under their own name instead of a domain name.

The relationship between journalists and *vignerons* is changing with individualism. The relationships are more personal and are sometimes constructed around conflict. Mathieu Lapierre considers the exercise of hard criticism as a way for journalists to gain attention and influence, thereby building their persona as a brand. He believes that criticism has a higher market value which gives journalists incentives to take critical positions against *vignerons*. As journalists gain influence *vignerons* may feel pressured to make changes according to the presented critique. This way wine production changes under the discourse of the market. Meanwhile, relationships between journalism and *vignerons* undergo diverse developments. Aaron Ayscough's and Alice Feiring's writings describe personal relationships with deep insight into process and context of the portrayed *vignerons*.

If wine can be considered to be constructed by narratives that also means that the unrestrained ability of communication challenges the boundaries of space.

6.4 Why We Perceive Wine as Authentic

Imagined authenticity is what replaces social order when individualism replaces tradition (cf. Taylor 1991). Throughout modernism humanity has tried to heal a

sense of disenchantment, a decoupling from the Earth that we stand on, by reconnecting to nature. According to Rosa (2019), work becomes fulfilling when it contains our ultimate objectives. By working the soil and growing grapes we construct a relationship to earth, and we feel resonance. Feelings of resonance are transferred to the bottle of wine and by drinking the wine we can experience joy and resonance by proxy. A process that transforms the wine from being a stale object into a communicative extension of the *vigneron*. The wine appears alive to us and through consummation we materially incorporate Earth (Rosa 2019). The hope of experiencing resonance from nature is based on the idea that there is a non-instrumental, non-manipulative relationship of correspondence between subjects and natural objects or spaces thus making us search out those objects that we perceive as pure and undiluted by human hand. Genetic manufacturing or technical compensation for natural conditions means that nature will no longer have anything to say to us.

However, we also perceive authenticity in human indications as we find social and cultural capital in wine. Mathieu Lapierre describes how an authentic bottle of wine will resonate the process of the *vigneron* and that ability is also authentic value. In Lapierre's example it is the discourse and semiotics collectively created by the field's actors that enable them to dialogically create a feeling of authenticity. Ayscough connects our perception of wine to the need of categorizing ourselves and finding that we belong to a certain group according to the wines we consume. As Anders Frederik Steen contemplates that authenticity can only be accomplished by attaching context to the wine, wine also becomes inseparable from the person and conditions making it. Lubbe feels the demand to apply part of himself to each wine or the wine will be incomplete.

Notions of authenticity never cease to be challenged. Innovative cultural goods are commonly produced by an avant-garde who occupy a low position within the social field. They attempt to produce imagined "pure" products and distinguish themselves from established figures. As avant-gardes receive symbolic recognition, they move to a more consecrated position. From this position they risk selling out because they get attracted by the attention from the economic elite who seeks new cultural products (Hilgers & Mangez 2014). The mass imitates the elite turning avant-garde into mainstream. As cultural products move from one social space to another, they are renegotiated to suit the logic of that space. Meaning, form and shape is translated.

7. Conclusion

As wine becomes inseparable from its context in the effort to achieve authenticity it transforms from simply being fermented grape juice to being an extension of the *vigneron* and a carrier of tradition and place. Wine thus embodies culture. The *vigneron* is as dependent on their wine for definition as the wine is dependent on the *vigneron*. By culturally explaining the practice of producing wine as a lifestyle the *vigneron* is defined as a person by the wines that are offered and how they communicate place. The individualism imposed by modernity embeds identity in the narratives of wine and determines positions within the field. Authenticity corresponds to the notions of tradition and modernity and remakes social order, as we search for narratives that we perceive as authentic to organize and categorize the social world. As authenticity is constantly renegotiated the need for communication never ceases. Authenticity is an attempt at reconnecting nature as much as it is to connect with each other and ourselves. making the construction of narratives essential to communicate identity and none the less to construct identity itself.

The field of wine constitutes a fragmented unit of social order with a wide variety of temporal scales. With time being substitutional in relation to economic capital just like other production inputs it also retains a value. It is the non-negotiable inertia of temporality, permeating the culture of wine, that retains an aura of luxury and creates the mythical narrative of a good so deeply connected to nature that humans cannot fully control it.

Narratives are shared through relationships with actors such as importers, sommeliers, and journalists. These relationships have also become a framing force on the field of wine as knowledge has become widely available. All actors individually construe narratives altering them as they reach consumers. Importers and consumers shape groups through the market creating subfields such as natural wine.

The success of natural wine on the market can be ascribed to how it correlates with a more general discourse on sustainability, environment, individualism, and a form of neo-romanticism. The narrative of being sensitive and connected to nature plays well with how consumerism demands goods to interplay with lifestyle

choices. Wine is globalized and place bound at the same time. The connection to place and time make up the base for traditions.

The success of spreading wine beyond producing cultures can be attributed to our increased ability to communicate and our search to reconnect to imagined nature. In this sense wine is part of modernity and a way of restricting it. Our quest for finding resonance with nature is a way of slowing down modernity, a resistance. Wine offers consumers a chance to connect with imagined nature and cultural heritage. By consuming a good that resonates with the imagination of nature and materializes the narrative of old traditions we establish a notion of authenticity and resonance. However, modernity is changing the form of narratives into shorter and shallower knowledge framed by the format of communicative outlets such as social media.

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Popular science summary

Wine exceeds the story of pleasure and natural enchantment as it is also laden with conflict and controversy. Wine is part of contemporary discussions on globalization, class and postcolonialism, biodiversity and climate change. In a sense, wine does not only reflect nature, but wine also reflects and is embedded in its social surroundings.

The story of wine is technical, mythical, historical, and cultural all at the same time. A large part is communicated through relationships. Stories are spread through actors such as importers, sommeliers, and journalists. These relationships also influence our perception of wine as knowledge has become widely available. All actors that take part in the storytelling interpret and alter them as they reach consumers. Importers and consumers shape groups through the market creating subgroups such as natural wine.

Natural wine started as a collective effort amongst small-scale actors to challenge the dominant practice of conquering soil by technical effectiveness and instead reconnect and resonate with earth as a holistic system. This thesis establishes natural wine as a resistant force against the omnipresent consequences of modernity. Not a random cultural phenomenon but organized and deliberate. The success of natural wine on the market can be ascribed to how it correlates with a more general ideas of sustainability, environment, individualism, and a form of neo-romanticism. The narrative of being sensitive and connected to nature plays well with how consumerism demands goods to interplay with lifestyle choices. Wine is globalized and place bound at the same time. The connection to place and time make up the basis for traditions.

Recent research is calling for regulation of the term “natural wine”. However, establishing regulations while being negligent of how natural wine is defined amongst stakeholders may lead to discrepancy between perception and regulation, leading to unwillingness to comply amongst actors within the social field of wine. This thesis explores the context and relationships of actors within the wine industry and how the actors who make up these relationships influence, construct, and share narratives concerning wine. The aim is to create a deeper understanding of how wine is socially constructed and how relationships are created.

The research is based on the perspectives of informants, the researcher’s observations from wine fairs, tastings, and travels in wine regions, as well as wine

literature. The intention is to demonstrate how storytelling is constructed and construed through relationships to create an understanding of the reality that the modern *vigneron* operates in.

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