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Midi Rouge ou Midi Vert? Organic Wine, Millesime Bio and Social Reproduction in the Languedoc Wine Sector

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Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, organic wine has emerged to occupy a significant market niche in France. Just under 9 percent of the nation's vineyards representing over 68,000 ha were certified organic or in the process of conversion as of 2015, and France, together with Spain and Italy, is one of the world's leaders in the production of organic wine (Agence Bio 2016).

We take the view, together with other scholars (see e.g.Guthman 2004, Mutersbaugh 2004, Krzywoszynska 2015) that in any agricultural sector, organic conversion, the commodification of organic food products, and the formation of markets for those products are not "natural" processes, nor are they socially neutral. Rather, they are in need of being situated, explained, and critically interrogated as specific socio-ecological transformations propelled by specific institutions and practices (including labour practices) that have definite political and social as well as ecological implications. Accordingly, how do we begin to situate and evaluate the emergence of organic wine from longer terms changes in the uneven geography of the French "winescape" (Crowley 1993)? More particularly, what specific forms of signification are attached to organic wine, and what do these reveal about the underlying socio-ecological trajectory of organic wine production and the establishment and consolidation of the organic wine market as historically and geographically situated processes?

Based on mixed methods research, including collaborative event ethnography conducted at the Millésime Bio organic wine trade fairs of 2016 and 2017, this paper is aimed at beginning to answer these questions, with a focus on the emergence of organic wine production from the important wine producing region of Languedoc-Rousillon. The paper has three conjoined objectives:

i. To exmine the role of Millésime Bio (and its institutional host Sudvinbio) in advancing and consolidating the organic wine market, particularly within Languedoc-Roussilon;
ii. To identify and appraise important narratives, representational themes and tropes, and other forms of signification deployed by important institutional and individual actors to characterize organic viticulture and viniculture; and
iii. To focus specifically on how relatively small-scale, independent growers from the Languedoc-Rousillon region account for their decisions to convert to organic production, how they characterize the evolution of their own approaches to organic viticulture and

viniculture, and the articulation of independent versus collective social relations in organic wine production.

Conceptual Foundations

Our argument and our approach are based on two core conceptual traditions and associated analytical themes: (i) neo-Polanyian substantivism; and (ii) agrarian questions pertaining to the articulation of independent propertied households within agrarian capitalism, and more generally, critical analyses of processes of signification and the socio-ecological production relations involved in organic and other alternative food regimes.

We view markets and commodification as neither the necessary outcome of a prior consumer demand, nor as generic processes that are uniform across space and time. Instead we embrace a neo-Polanyian view of commodities and markets as they emerge from and evolve in relation to specific social (including, we argue, socio-ecological) practices, relations, and representations. As Peck notes, neo-Polanyian substantivism calls for "an iterative engagement with actually existing (or formerly existing) *real economies*, understood…in a manner especially sensitive to socio-institutional context." (2013, 1553-1554, emphasis in original).

Path-dependent evolution is the predominant mode of explanation in this tradition, with an explicitly historicist emphasis, attentive to the ways in which context (including class and other social formations, social relations of production and exchange, formal and informal property and access regimes, social regulation, etc.) shape specific processes of market formation and commodification. However, as Peck also stresses, and as many geographers have emphasized, substantivism also means geographical context, including attention to the regional and place-specific character of economic processes, relations, and institutions. For us, this means a focus on the Languedoc-Roussillon region because of its singularity as a wine producing region in general terms, and because of the role of distinctive regional processes in constituting the emergence and consolidation of the organic wine market. We argue that the Millésime Bio trade shows are historically and geographically specific sites that concentrate a range of significant actors involved in shaping the organic wine market (in general and in Languedoc-Rousillon) in one place, thereby rendering more legible substantive processes of "making the market" that are otherwise more generally dispersed.

Our approach to revealing the historical-geographical substantivism involved in processes of commodification and market formation features a particular emphasis on semiotic context. By this we mean historically and regionally discernable narrative trajectories that shape "relations of meaning" as they animate relations of commodity production and exchange. In general terms, we agree with Mann (2009) that materialist explanations in political ecology (and more generally) should attend to ideas, values, behavioural norms, and systemic forms of signification as internal elements of (rather than as determined by) "…the material relations of production and the social and biophysical determinants of access to and control over resources and surplus extraction." (p. 337). Put simply, matter cannot speak for itself (even if it should speak). We see this as part of the neo-Polanyian substantivist project.

However, our emphasis on formal and informal processes of signification also reflects the cultural politics of wine, and specifically, the importance of highly selective narratives about regional origins that are central to the politics of distinction and quality in wine markets, particularly in France (see Ulin 1996, Guy 2003)}. This includes in formal and informal expressions of the highly place-bound notion of terroir and geographically delimited wine classification**.** While organic wine is no longer strictly speaking new, it does occupy a dynamic and still maturing niche within the larger wine market wherein important questions about difference, quality, consistency, reliability, accountability etc., are actively negotiated and play out differently in geographically distinct markets and in explicit relation to existing systems of signifying wine (formally and informally). A key consideration within this, amplified by organic wine and its emphasis (like all organic food products) on more ecologically sustainable conditions of production, concerns how representations of production relations and agronomic practices are communicated in the market in relation to prevailing norms for conventional wine (Krzywoszynska 2015). One of the key "problems" faced by organic wine producers (and their commercial intermediaries) is that organic wine is marked as simultaneously both different from and yet commensurate with conventional wine.

We also seek to explore the ways in which situating organic wine production in the Languedoc-Roussillon region and attending to the specific semiotic practices surrounding this market segment reveals the articulation of organic wine production with what has been called the "politics of quality" in the Languedoc (Smith 2016), a broader, ongoing, highly contested, and socially uneven shift toward higher quality, geographically delimited appellation wines for which export markets are increasingly important. Placing organic wine production in the Languedoc-Roussillon region within the politics of quality thus allows us to begin to engage with so-called "agrarian questions" concerning the role and reproduction of household petty commodity producers within capitalist production regimes, while also speaking to debates about contemporary economies of quality more generally (see Callon, Méadel et al. 2002). Though the debates about agrarian transition and the emergence of capitalist agriculture have evolved considerably over decades (see e.g.Bernstein 1997, McMichael 1997, Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010, Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010), the basic issue of how capitalist accumulation and its social regulation in agriculture articulate with rural livelihoods remains highly germane. Within this, an important focus concerns whether or not and how propertied small-scale primary producers can persist, a question of immediacy within the Languedoc wine sector and in French agriculture more generally.

By invoking the agrarian political economy tradition as it intersects with the politics of quality in the emergence of organic wine in Languedoc, we draw from and hope to at least begin to contribute to critical substantive analyses of organic and alternative food and agricultural production regimes. Numerous scholars have pointed (explicitly and implicitly) to the need to move beyond a particular kind of fetishism attached to so-called "alternative" food products, including those labelled as organics, fair-trade, or otherwise (see e.g.Guthman 2002, 2003, Friedberg 2004, 2004, Mutersbaugh 2004, 2005, 2007, Krzywoszynska 2015). Doing so allows us to consider and appraise organic conversion as a process that entails more than merely the shift away from use of synthetic chemicals in

the agronomy of viticulture. Our particular focus with respect to the politics of quality in organic wine is aimed at the intertwining of formal and informal processes of signification with respect to terroir, quality differentiation in organic wine, and the role of independent artisanal producers as these were observed at the Millesime Bio trade shows of 2016 and 2017.

Millésime Bio, Organic Wine Production, and the Politics of the Vine in the Midi

Millésime Bio

Billed as un "mondial du vin biologique", Millésime Bio is a unique opportunity to witness formative processes and interactions in the (re)production and consolidation of the market for organic wine. It is the world's largest organic wine trade show and occupies a singular niche in the marketing of organic wine. Millésime Bio has been organized continuously since 1993 by Sudvinbio, a professional association of organic wine producers formed in 1991 and originally named "L'Association Interprofessionnelle des Vins Biologiques du Languedoc-Roussillon (AIVB-LR)". Though renamed Sudvinbio in 2012 and with a broader mandate than in its earlier years, Sudvinbio is still based in Languedoc and Millésime Bio is very much a trade show whose roots remain in the region.

In 2017, the show brought together 902 exhibitors, 78 percent of whom were from France, with a total of 4,850 individual visitors interacting over the course of three days. The show is funded in part by The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, the Regional Council of Occitanie, France AgriMer (an agency of the French government working in the agriculture, fisheries and forest sectors as a sort of liason between businesses and various ministries), and Direction Régionale de l'Alimentation, de l'Agriculture et de la Forêt Occitanie (the regional ministry of agriculture).

While Sudvinbio naturally hypes the distinctiveness of Millésime Bio as a trade fair "pas comme les autres…", the show certainly does represent a unique opportunity to witness formative processes and interactions in the (re)production and consolidation of the market for organic wine. As the press release announcing the 2018 show put it "Millésime Bio est depuis 25 ans l'un des acteurs et des moteurs de la croissance de la filière viticole biologique. Sudvinbio tient à poursuivre son action et garde à coeur l'accompagnement du développement économique et les intérêts des producteurs qui nous font confiance, en Occitanie en France et à l'étranger."[1] Notable in this quote are the emphases placed on the role of the show over a continuous lineage of 25 years as an "engine of growth" of organic wine and as a stakeholder in which producers place their trust.

[1] This is taken from the February 21 2017 French language press release from Sudvinbio following the 2017 show in Marseille, "Communiqué de presse de SUDVINBIO et MONTPELLIER EVENTS". A parallel English version was released with a similar (though not identical) quote in it: "Millésime Bio has been a stakeholder in and a growth engine for the organic wine sector for the past 25 years. Sudvinbio is determined to continue its work to support the economic growth and the interests of the growers in Occitanie, France and abroad, who have placed their trust in it."

Millesime Bio's niche as a trade show for marketing only organic wine reflects the importance of organic wine being "recognized" in the market as distinct from conventional wine, something the organizers and many exhibitors feel is worth retaining. These sentiments came to the fore in 2017 when the show was re-located to Marseille from its traditional home in Montpellier. The relocation arose as a consequence of a dispute between Sudvinbio, the city of Montpellier, and Vinisud, a Mediterranean region trade show for wines (organic or otherwise). Vinisud initially attempted to hold its 2017 annual conference in common with Millésime Bio but was rebuffed by Sudvinbio. The organizers of Vinisud then proceeded with a plan to hold their annual meeting in Montpellier coincident with Millésime Bio, prompting Sudvinbio to relocate Millésime Bio to Marseille for 2017.[2] The city of Montpellier and Sudvinbio have since reached agreement to return the show to Montpellier for 2018-2022, but on the condition that no other wine trade shows will coincide with Millésime Bio in Montpellier.[3]

In addition to organizing Millésime Bio, Sudvinbio is more generally an important institutional actor in the French organic wine sector, particularly in the south. Sudvinbio acts as an intermediary between organic wine producing vignerons on the one hand, and the French and EU governments and multi-lateral institutions (including the French Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry, Agence Bio, and the Institut National de l'Origine et de la Qualité) on the other hand. Sudvinbio also helps to train wine growers in organic viticulture and assists with the organic certification process.

Languedoc-Rousillon (Occitanie)

In general terms, wine production and marketing is geographically uneven. It is regionally differentiated by perceived quality, by market linkages, by predominant grape varieties and blends, by production techniques, by land-ownership patterns and agronomic practices, and by regulatory regimes. This regional differentiation is particularly evident in France. Pronounced regional distinctions in the wine sector are largely grounded in an historically developed form of "defensive localism"(Winter 2003) that was translated into a biocultural property through the transformation of the construct of "terroir" in the mid-19th century, then subsequently codified by social regulations that classified and protected geographically delimited wines through the appellation d'origine controlée system. The fundamental features of this regulatory system are still in place in France, protecting and reinforcing distinctions among wine producing regions (and comprising the basis for the EU Protected Designation of Origin system).

Among French wine regions, Languedoc-Roussillon (see **Figure 1**) occupies a singular position. This is for several reasons. One is that the Languedoc is the largest single wine producing region in the world, representing close to one third of France's total vineyard area (Filippi 2012). It is also a region where wine

[2] See La Tribune, "Le salon Millésime Bio quitte Montpellier pour Marseille" June 14 2016 (Marie Corbel), http://objectif-languedoc-roussillon.latribune.fr/entreprises/agroalimentaire/2016-06-14/le-salon-millesime-bio-quitte-montpelier-pour-marseille.html.

[3] Communiqué de presse de SUDVINBIO et MONTPELLIER EVENTS.

accounts for about 50 percent of total agricultural production and where vineyards account for one third of farmed area (Filippi 2012). Another reason for the region's singularity is that between the latter 19th century and the middle 20th century, the Languedoc was known for the production of relatively cheap, generic and (over)abundant wine (particularly red table wine known as vin de table), much of it produced through via intensive viticulture (including the use of synthetic agricultural chemicals) in mono-crop settings and by a preponderance of small-holding, independent family vignerons (Loubère 1990, Crowley 1993). Significantly, the primary outlet for this wine was the French domestic market.

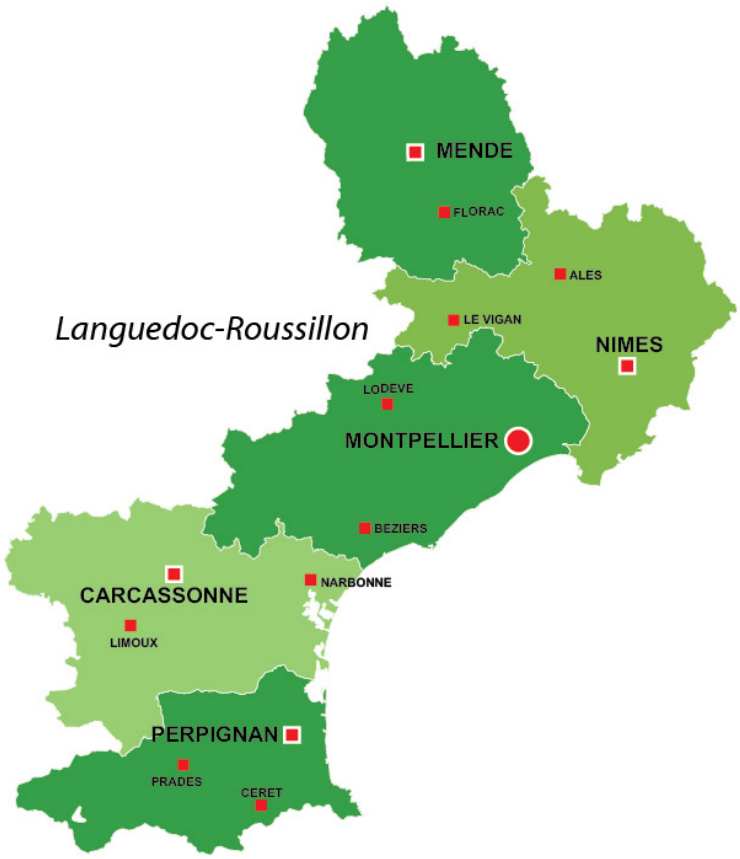

FIGURE 1: LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON (HTTP://WWW.FRANCE-PUB.COM/REGION/LANGUEDOC_ROUSSILLON.HTML) HISTORICALLY, THIS REGION INCLUDED THE PROVINCES OF THE GARD, THE HÉRAULT, THE LOZÈRE, THE AUDE, AND THE PYRÉNÉES-ORIENTALES AS PICTURED HERE, BUT NOW IT HAS BEEN SUBSUMED WITH OCCITANIE

Thirdly, the Languedoc, more than any other region in Europe, is known for its vinicultural cooperatives (Ulin 1996, Knox 1998, Simpson 2000, Touzard 2011). Beginning in 1901 with the formation of Les Vignerons Libre in Maurasson near Beziers (see **Figure 2**), the cooperative form took (in other regions as well, but never to the same extent), sustained by economies of scale in wine making and marketing for small-scale vignerons, cheap credit under-written by the French state, and social and political solidarity among small-scale vignerons. Though recent decades have seen retrenchment, cooperatives still account for one half of all of the wine production in France (Filippi 2012) and include one half of the

country's wine-makers as members.[4] Roughly 45 percent of France's vinicultural cooperatives are based on the Languedoc, where, despite having declined in number precipitously since the early 1980s (owing to some extent to a pronounced consolidation movement), they account for roughly 70 percent of the region's wine production (see Figure 3, Touzard 2011).

FIGURE 2: LES VIGNERONS LIBRES, MAURAUSSON. "TOUS POUR CHACUN, CHACUN POUR TOUS" (HTTP://WWW.AGENCE-SCARABEE.COM/PROJETS/CAVE-COOPERATIVE-DE-MARAUSSAN/)

While vinicultural cooperatives in Languedoc have remained viable in part because of their success as organizations responding to the economic needs of their members, they have also been central to political and social life in the Languedoc (Martin 1996). This includes their role within a broad sectoral alliance referred to as the "mouvement de defense viticole" or the vineyard defense movement. Specifically, in the aftermath of the violent wine-worker's revolt of 1907, regional and sectoral politics shifted away from revolutionary syndicalism toward a more politically moderate and pragmatic brand of regional and electoral socialism sustained by a cross-class alliance of small-scale independent and propertied vignerons and wine-workers unified in their pursuit of what has been referred to as "the defense of the vine", and expressed as a sectoral pragmatism oriented to making claims on the national state (Frader 1991, Martin 1998, Smith 2016). Crucial to the political representation and expression of this movement were viticultural cooperatives at the town and village level as well as t regional

[4] http://www.vignerons-cooperateurs.coop/fr/french-wine-co-operatives/french-wine-co-operatives_434.html.

organizations, foremost among them la Confédération générale des vignerons du Midi (CGVM). The phrase “Midi rouge” arose from this context as a double entendre referencing the predominantly red wine from the region’s vineyards but also its particular brand of left politics sustained by an alliance of independent vignerons and vine-workers.

In recent decades, the wine sector of Languedoc has endured more severe restructuring than any other wine producing region in France (Filippi 2012). The changes are complex and multiple. We cannot adequately describe them and their various underlying causes here. But in general terms, the region has moved away from the productivism that sustained its wine sector during much of the 20th century and toward a model based: on lower yields; privileging of state-sanctioned and ostensibly higher quality premium grape varieties; a dramatic reduction in vineyard acreage including via controversial uprooting programs (“arrachage”); a shift away from hybrid and American grape varietals and toward European grapes; the production of geographically delimited appellation wines at the expense of table wine (Crowley 1993).[5]

[5] The uprooting programs, together with the integration of the European market bringing cheaper wines from Italy and Spain into direct competition with those from the Languedoc, have been the most controversial and have elicited the strongest opposition. See e.g., “L'arrachage des vignes, « crève-coeur » des viticulteurs” http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/France/L-arrachage-des-vignes-creve-coeur-des-viticulteurs-_NG_-2008-09-13-676106

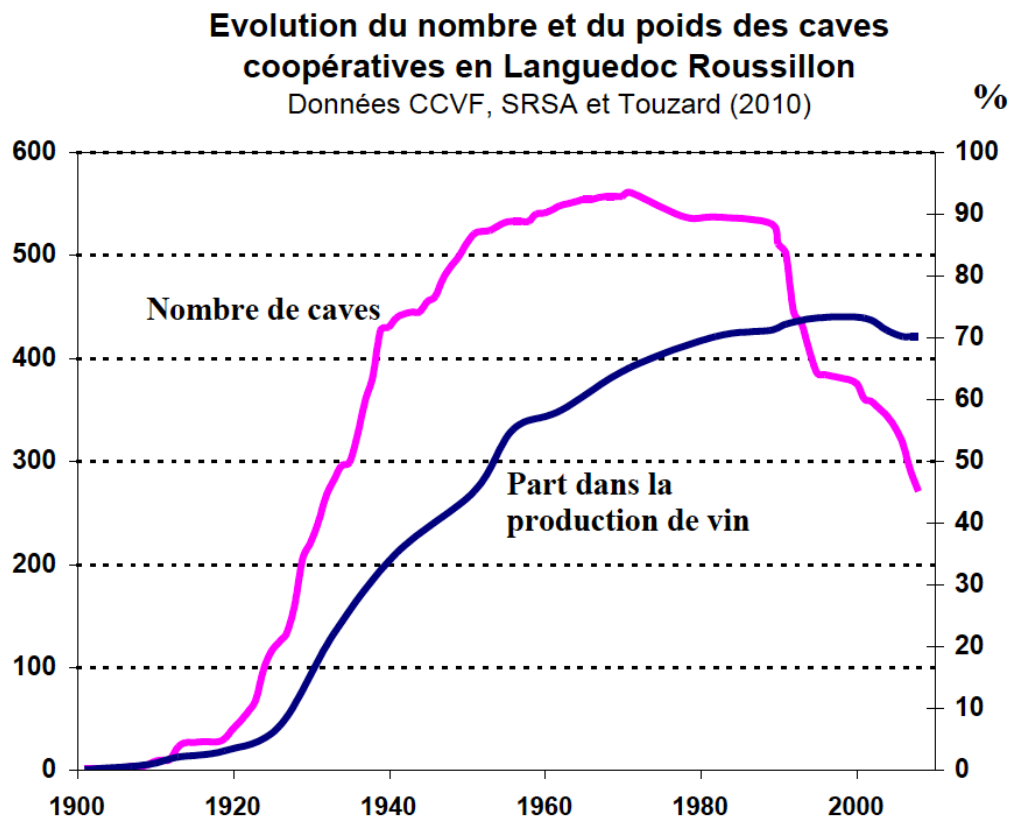

FIGURE 3: NUMBER OF COOPERATIVES AND SHARE OF TOTAL WINE PRODUCTION, LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILON (TOUZARD 2011)

Organic Wine

In recent decades, Languedoc-Roussillon has emerged as a leading region in the conversion to organic vineyards. While organic viticulture pre-dates what is now referred to as conventional viticulture, growth of the organic viticulture movement in France and in other parts of Europe commenced in earnest in the mid-1980s, with the first use of the distinctive French "AB" label in 1985. Certification of organic agriculture under European regulations commenced in 1991. During the 1990s, organic viticulture in France grew slowly, then began to accelerate in the following decade, with a 171 percent increase in the total area of certified organic vineyards in France between 2007 and 2011, led by the Mediterranean departments of the Languedoc and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur. Agence Bio reported 8,643 ha of certified organic vineyards in Languedoc-Roussillon in 2011 (and another 11,264 ha in conversion), representing just under 10 percent of the region's total vineyard area and 30 percent of the nation's total are of organic vineyards (Agence Bio "La filière viticole biologique" 2016). In 2014, the new region of Occitanie led France with more than 20,000 ha of certified vineyards, roughly one third of the national total (see **Figure 4**).[6]

[6] France ranks third in Europe behind Spain and Italy in area of organic vineyards; almost 80 percent of the world's organic vineyard area is in Europe, with 70 percent in Spain, Italy, and France alone Mercier, E. (2016). La situation des marchés des vins biologiques, Agence Bio..

The fact that Sudvinbio and Millésime Bio emerged from the Languedoc are confirmations of sorts of the importance of the Languedoc to the historical-geography of the organic wine movement. There are clearly ecological factors that explain why the Languedoc has been a leading region in organic wine production. These include the relative aridity of much of the region, conducive to eschewing fungicides with a lower penalty in terms of yield reductions. However, as organizations such as Sudvinbio and events such as Millésime Bio demonstrate, conversion to organic production and the emergence and consolidation of markets for organic products, including wine, need to be seen as specific and embedded socio-ecological or metabolic processes. The singularity of the organic wine sector is reflected in numerous respects, including:

- A heavy reliance on exports (44 percent of sales in 2014), particularly pronounced in the Languedoc (53 percent exported);
- More reliance on manual harvesting with a concomitant increase in labour inputs;
- 84 percent of organic wine was marketed in 2014 directly by vignerons as opposed to 16 percent by cooperatives; and
- 74 percent of organic wine in 2014 was produced as AOP wine, while a further 19 percent was produced as IGP wine (Mercier 2016)

Our observations at Millesime Bio 2016 and 2017 reflect and reinforce many of these tendencies and point to the need to better understand the socio-ecological processes that have given rise to the organic movement and to understand the articulation of organic wine production and commercialization in relation to conventional wine, particularly in the Languedoc.

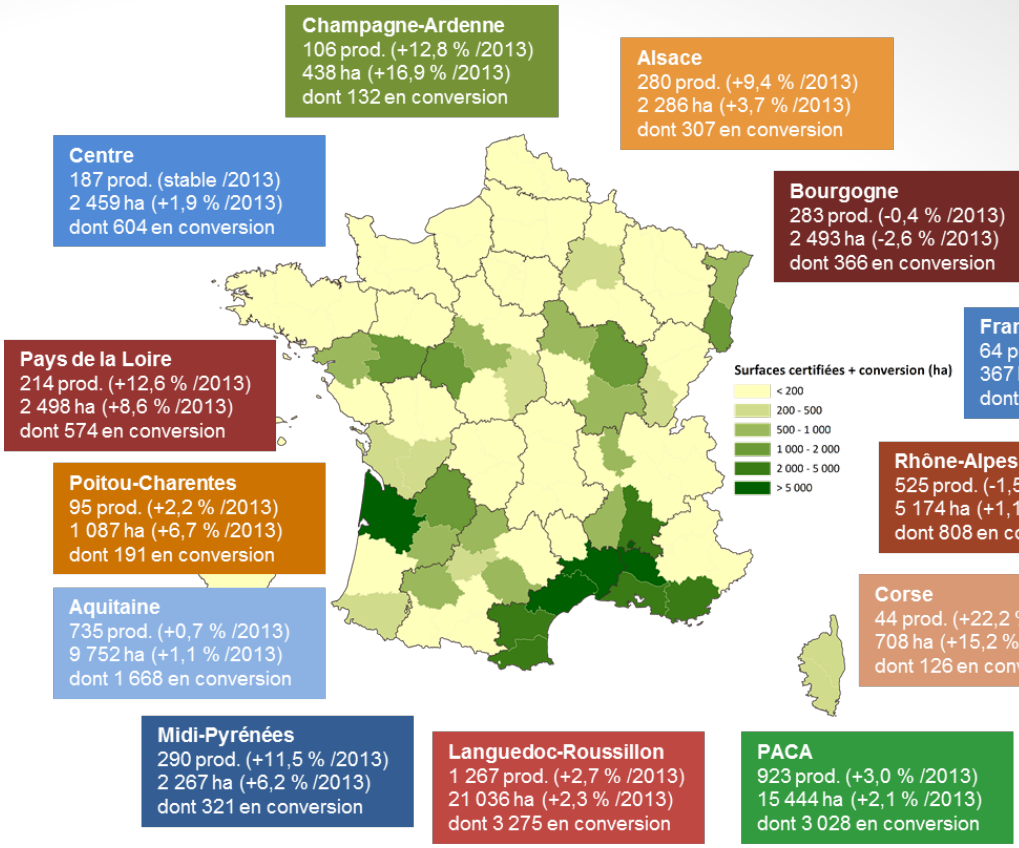

FIGURE 4: ORGANIC VITICULTURE BY REGION, FRANCE, 2014 (AGENCE BIO 2016)

Methodology

Our approach was primarily ethnographic, featuring an adapted form of collaborative event ethnography (CEE). Specifically, we attended and made observations at the Millésime Bio trade show in 2016 and 2017. In 2016, we participated in the three-day show at the Parc des Exposition in Montpellier from January 25-27. In 2017, we attended the three-day show at the Palais des Congrès et Des Expositions at the Parc Marseille Chanot in Marseille from January 30 to February 1.

CEE is a method emphasizing intensive and qualitative primary observation by a team of researchers at important meetings or gatherings, including policy workshops, stakeholder meetings, annual business meetings, or, as in our case, trade shows. Brosius and Campbell (2010) explain that the method was developed in advance of the Fourth World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in 2008. The primary goal was to better understand how powerful actors collectively define a discernable trajectory of international conservation policy in a setting "… where the roles of a broad suite of non-local actors in informing conservation policy and negotiating trade-offs become visible to researchers in an ethnographic context." (p. 247).

CEE facilitates examination of focal moments where policy directions are established or re-directed and, at the same time, where dominant narratives are rehearsed, consolidated, overturned, refined, performed, or some combination of all of these. The method relies on the notion that social projects (be they policy

regimes, or in our case, emerging markets) cannot be simply “read-off” of the various interests of the institutional and individual actors involved, but rather emerge from and the social engagements and negotiations between those actors in real time (MacDonald 2010). Observation at key meetings or events makes it possible to understand the chaotic and contradictory social processes involved, including significant diversity and even divergences expressed as these inform compromises or the hybridization of narratives in ways that post-facto analyses and deconstructions of outcomes – garnered through key informant interviews for example – may fail to capture.

CEE is collaborative in the sense that multiple researchers work together to plan, gather and analyse direct observations and insights. CEE is not unique as an ethnographic research method deployed at professional meetings (see e.g. Tsing 2004, Sunder Rajan). In fact, the approach draws on an older call for ethnographers to “study up”, that is, to observe relatively more powerful, professional actors and institutions (Nader 1972). However, the size and complexity of large meetings, particularly those featuring parallel sessions or workshops, can present challenges to conventional ethnographic approaches. Individual researchers working alone are likely to be challenged in gathering enough information over the space of a few short days to be able to make inferences with any confidence. These logistical problems can be mitigated by collaboration among multiple researchers conducting what is in some sense a multi-sited ethnography within the same event (Brosius and Campbell 2010). Collaboration may be even more important in cases where the researchers lack relevant expertise (e.g., in the technical and agronomic specificities of making wine).

CEE is best complemented by research undertaken to situate key institutional and individual actors, to frame issues, and to situate the meetings historically, geographically, politically, culturally and otherwise. As Büscher (2014) notes, CEE research should include examination of power relations and power inequalities among various actors as a crucial step in contextualizing observations at meetings. One of us (MacDonald) was a part of the 2008 CEE initiative (and again in 2010) and has provided methodological commentary Campbell, 2014 #2708; Corson, 2014 #2707;MacDonald, 2010 #2706}

While we drew on past deployments of CEE, it is important to understand that the approach we developed is an adapted form in three significant ways. First, we are two. Although we coordinated and collaborated in the research plan, its execution and the comparison and analysis of our respective observations, our team is obviously quite a bit smaller than, for instance, the teams organized for the 2008 and 2010 international conservation meetings. Second, neither of us has been involved in any ethnographic work on wine production and marketing to this point. However, we have engaged in complementary mixed method research activities spread over several years and targeting viticulture and viniculture in the Languedoc region as part of a larger ongoing research initiative.

Third, our adapted CEE approach was deployed at two iterations of the trade show Millésime Bio 2016 and 2017. Our primary goals in attending these trade shows were: (i) to facilitate observation of a dense network of key actors who would otherwise be geographically dispersed (Bathelt, Golfetto et al. 2014); and (ii) interrogate some of the social processes involved in the creation and

consolidation of a relatively new market niche (organic wine) at two iterations of a trade show that has been and continues to be uniquely formative in this respect.

Our approach to generating observations was broadly consistent across both the 2016 and the 2017 shows, with some adjustments and two significant differences. At both shows, we moved throughout the exhibit space during the three days, focusing primarily on conversations with exhibitors. We conferred in advance on a loose order in which we would approach exhibitors, though we also embraced more serendipitous interactions with exhibitors who were un-occupied as we walked by, or based on introductions facilitated by exhibitors or other contacts (essentially "snowballing"). We privileged co-operative producers and producers from the Languedoc region whenever possible. Some of the conversations were undertaken in tandem and some independently in order to balance comparability of our observations (particularly since for both of us French is a second language and most conversations were conduction in French) with a desire to speak to a higher number of contacts than either of us could accomplish alone. Simultaneously we were able to track emergent phenomenon as the trade fair proceeded and we compared insights and observations.

Our approach for the 2017 show was refined from that of the 2016 show in three important ways. First, in the Montpellier show, exhibitors were split across three halls, making specific, targeted conversations less efficient since that frequently required walking from one hall to the other. In Marseille, all of the exhibitors were in the same hall (see **Figure 6**), greatly facilitating a strict adherence to our plan for convening conversations. Second, the 2017 show also included in the registration materials a database listing all of the exhibitors along with some important information about them, including: the year of initial organic certification; size of organic vineyard holdings; and annual production of organic wine; the primary wine appellation; the region from which they originated; and precise address and contact information. This allowed us to undertake some basic quantitative analysis (including, e.g., estimating average yields), but it facilitated searches and sorts of the list. We sorted exhibitors by ascending size of land-holdings and targeted independent vignerons with 10 ha of land or less from the Languedoc-Roussillon region. Our focus is on small scale vignerons from this region and their role within the organic wine market. The threshold of 10 ha was chosen based on two considerations. First, the database revealed that the average size of landholding among the smallest 20 percent of the Languedoc-Rousillon exhibitors in 2017 was 9.3 ha, while the cutoff between the smallest 20 percent of landholders and the next highest quintile is 12 ha.[7] Second, Loubere (1990, p 68), in his analysis of trends in French wine production during the 20th century, drawing from the work of Rémy Pech, notes that 10 ha is generally the upper limit of the size of independent vignerons who rely exclusively on non-waged or family labour.

[7] For reference, the overall average size of holdings was 75.4 ha and the median 23 ha. Landowners in the lowest 20 percent of the ranking in aggregate own 2.9 percent of the total while those in the highest 20 percent own 77 percent of the total.

FIGURE 5: THE MAIN EXHIBIT HALL AT MILLÉSIME BIO 2017 IN MARSEILLE (PHOTO FROM SUDVINBIO, WWW.MILLESIME-BIO.COM)

Our approach to conversations took the form of semi-structured interviews involving a loose script. Semi-structured interviews with key informants allow for some consistency across interviews, but also allow for an organic, real-time adaptation of the "script" based on the specific profile of the interviewee(s) and the flow of the conversation. Most of our conversations were short, lasting on the order of 10 minutes or less. While not ideal, we felt obligated to respect that the producers were at the show to sell wine. This is one reason why we plan more in-depth follow-up interviews with a subset of those with whom we spoke at the shows. We also aimed to speak with a relatively broad cross-section of exhibitors and other show participants. Core elements of our conversations with exhibitors included the following topics and issues:

- how long the producers had been certified as organic (an issue we were able to check against the 2017 database);
- what precipitated the decision to make the conversion;
- the specifics of the enterprise (family business, independent, estate, etc., some historical trajectory);
- the role, if any, of formal education in oenology among those involved in the enterprise;
- main markets, including export markets;
- the importance of Milléseme Bio to their operation and their main reasons for attending; and
- how they would describe their vineyards (how many parcels, where in relation to the town or village where they are based, type of grapes grown) and their terroir).

We spoke to approximately 100 producers in the two visits combined, with slightly more conversations in 2017, while also attending several short formal presentations by representatives from: Sudvinbio; Agence Bio; the French Ministry of Agriculture, Agrifood and Forestry; and the INAO.

Main Observations from Millésime Bio 2016 and 2017

General Observations

Sudvinbio expresses core principles of Millesime Bio by stating in the "Presentation" section of the trade show's website (https://www.millesime-bio.com/home/presentation) that "*[s]eul le vin fait la difference*". The organizers then elaborate: "*Chaque exposant dispose exactement du même matériel pour présenter ses vins...Il s'agit de juger et de comparer les vins, et non pas toutes les techniques d'exposition des vins ! Ici, tous les exposants sont sur un pied d'égalité pour présenter leurs produits*." These statements express two interlinked principles, the first that the wine speaks for itself, and that the role of the winemaker is to facilitate this expression (a notion of commodity fetishism if ever there was one), and the second that the exhibitors display their wines on an equal footing with one another (diminishing any impression of market dominance) and encouraging the notion that the wine should be judged specifically on its own. Sudvinbio's principles are put into practice in the way the trade show is organized in specific ways.

The first concerns the spatial arrangement of presenters within the exhibit hall(s). Participating vignerons are not grouped by nation, region, appellation, size of operation or type of business (cooperative, independent family business, corporate, etc.). Instead, producers were distributed more or less at random, paired at small tables allowing for tasting and relatively discrete, low key conversations (see **Figure 7**). The explicit idea here is to facilitate serendipity in moving through the space of the show, but this arrangement also has the effect of disrupting any focus on regions or appellations in moving from one stand to another.

Secondly, the material and aesthetic style of display is strictly prescribed by Sudvinbio. Each exhibitor is provided with an identical set of generic materials: a table and a white table cloth; two chairs; clean wine glasses; a small sign of a set design produced by the show organizers specifying the name of the producer, the primary regional of origin, and the primary wine appellation; and a spittoon.

FIGURE 6: THE GENERAL LOOK OF PRODUCER EXHIBITS AT MILLÉSIME BIO (PHOTO FROM SUDVINBIO, WWW.MILLESIME-BIO.COM)

This approach to producer exhibits suggests both the aforementioned commitment to wines being allowed to speak for themselves. In addition, as indicated by the phrasing "*tous les exposants sont sur un pied d'égalité*", it conveys a complementary commitment to egalitarianism in that producers are impeded from differentiating themselves from one another by means of elaborate displays (though we observed props of various kinds at some stands, including soil and rock samples, objects taken from vineyards, photos and even video displays running continuously on tablets).

While on its surface, the commitment to a generic set of material and aesthetic practices in presentation may seem a fair-minded notion. Yet interests of smaller independent vignerons are clearly privileged by the restrictions because they prevent larger and more affluent exhibitors from overwhelming with elaborate displays. In this respect, the "rules of the game" established by Sudvinbio echo longstanding political economic and cultural dynamics of the wine sector in Languedoc-Roussillon, including the aforementioned relative prominence of small-holders, and the strength of their collective political voice. This aspect of the show takes on added significance when one considers the mix of very small and very large vignerons at the trade show, including over 15 percent of the presenters reporting ownerships of 10 ha of vineyard or less.[8] Putting small-holders on an equal footing with larger estates comes as no surprise in this

[8] This calculation is based on the 861 presenters who provided information on the size of their landholdings.

context when one considers the roots of Millésime Bio and of Sudvinbio in the Languedoc-Roussillon region.

If historical continuity is reflected in the regulation of display practices, in other ways, Millésime Bio and the organic wine market more generally exists in a somewhat contradictory relation with the historical tradition of Midi "rouge", reflecting and reinforcing – indeed helping to produce - the dissolution of that tradition in recent decades. The annual competition "Challenge Millésime Bio" and the associated Oenothèque, in particular, reflect the growing emphasis on quality distinctions in wines produced in the Languedoc. Challenge Millésime Bio is an annual international competition open only to organic wines produced by Millésime Bio exhibitors. Hundreds of wines are tasted and evaluated by a panel of appointed judges. In 2017, the 10th annual edition, just over 1400 wines were entered, with 125 awarded gold medals, 201 silver medals, and 87 bronze. Winning a medal means that the producers of the winning wines are given license to display a Challenge Millésime Bio logo on the labels, packaging, and other marketing materials for the wine in question.

With so many medal winners, it would seem obvious that one of the goals of the exercise is marketing, and more specifically, the commercial promotion of high quality organic wines. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the panel of judges in 2017 was chaired by Joris Snelton, CEO of Delta Wines, a large wine importer based in the Netherlands specializing in organic and other "sustainable wines" (also reflecting the growing importance of export markets for French wine in general, and Midi wine in particular). Numerous producers affirmed the promotional significance of the competition, emphasizing simply that "winning medals sells wine". Several buyers represented at the shows also stressed the importance of medals such as those awarded in Challenge Millésime Bio as selling points, particularly for international customers.

Medal-winning wines were also made available for participants in the shows to sample and to evaluate in an unstructured, self-guided environment. In 2017, the winning wines were on display and available for sampling within a larger space called "Oenothèque" providing opportunities for unstructured tasting and evaluation. Each time we checked, these areas enjoyed a steady traffic of patronage, including from exhibitors with whom we had conversed. We noted that the areas were particularly busy around the lunch hour and closer to the end of the day!

At one level, the fact that Millésime Bio features a competition designed to recognize and promote a broad cross-section of organic wines based on quality distinctions is unremarkable; Millésime Bio is a trade show after all. However, the competition reflects and reinforces the key role of Sudvinbio as an important institutional actor in the organic wine market. And more specifically, the competition, and the show more generally, emphasize marketing organic wine based on *quality distinctions*. At one level, this is also expected. For producers to market wine (or any commodity) by failing to emphasize quality, however defined, would seem odd. In this case, the emphasis on quality serves an obvious function in that organic wines, particularly during the earliest years of production, were marked in general terms with the stigma of being of inferior and unreliable quality. Challenge Millésime Bio, like the show more generally, represents a formal institutional effort to alter that narrative. Here too, though, the

competition and the show reinforce a longer term shift in the metabolism of viticulture in Languedoc, moving from productivism to post-productivism with an emphasis on geographically delimited, higher quality wines.

And yet, there are apparent tensions and contradictions suggested by the aspects of the shows, including the general arrangement of and presentation style prescribed for exhibitors, and the Challenge Millésime Bio competition and the Oenothèque. The first contradiction concerns the notion that with wine in general and organic wine in this instance, it is the *terroir* that determines the quality of wine and, as a corollary, as Sudvinbio puts it, that wine can and should "speak" for itself in the representation of its own quality (and thus value). The formal adjudication of quality wine and the signification of that judgement in a formal competition suggests that while quality distinctions in organic wine are indeed important from a marketing standpoint, the wines do not easily act as their own signifiers of value. More generally, the show embodies tensions associated with an historical political ecological and ecological transition in Midi wine production. Organized by an association of Midi-vignerons, emphasizing egalitarianism among exhibitors large and small, grounded in a region known historically for its strong tradition of collective production, high-yields, low costs and generic products, the show celebrates promotion based on quality distinctions of individual wines and (generally) the role of individual vignerons marketing their own wine is itself noteworthy. These are themes and tensions reflected in conversations with exhibitors, and it is to a summary account of those conversations we now turn.

The Producers

Our conversations with exhibitors resulted in a wide variety of representations. From these, we focus here on two overarching themes that emerged strongly in 2016 and 2017 that pertain to the role of small-scale, independent vignerons and the emergence of the organic wine sector (primarily in Languedoc-Rousillon): (i) terroir; and (ii) historical continuity, tradition and the household as enterprise.

In conversations with many exhibitors, the issue of terroir and its importance in producing (and demarcating) high quality wine was frequently emphasized, echoing the notion articulated by Sudvinbio that wine can and should "speak" for itself. The concept of terroir is not unique to France, but it is of course a French word and invokes a meaning that is strongly linked to the historical culture, political ecology, and social regulation of food and agricultural production in modern France. At its simplest and most apparent level of meaning, terroir is a notion that emphasizes the influence of geographically singular elements of localized biophysical environments as they are expressed in regionally distinct foods or varieties of food as well as in the differentiation of food products by quality distinctions. Terroir also refers to an approach to social regulation and marketing based on formal recognition and protection of placed-based distinctions through geographical indications or labels of origin (Barham 2003).

The concept of terroir underpins a French system of nomenclature that recognizes and, from a regulatory standpoint, protects ostensibly place-bound products and production processes. It is also a concept that has been adopted more widely within the EU and beyond to apply to agricultural and food products

of various kinds. In fact, terroir is something of a vogue notion in food regulation whose advocates argue that terroir and other regulations based on geographical indications provide a check on the homogenizing tendencies of globalization; protect and retain rural traditions, livelihoods and rural agricultural production regimes; and allow consumers to identify quality products associated with specific places of origin and processes of production (Barham 2003).

Formal state embrace and protection of terroir is not unique to wine and, in France, dates to 15th century recognition conferred on Roquefort cheese, including the stipulation that the label Rquefort can only be applied to cheese aged in the caves of Roquefort-sur-Soulzon. However, terroir is strongly associated with French wine, and underpins the immediate name recognition of Champagne or Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines. As a formal regulatory system, terroir in French wine dates in part to the 1855 Universal Exposition in Paris where, as Rabinow (1989) notes, important elements of French culture were selectively enshrined and thus "invented" as characteristic national traditions. One specific outcome was a hierarchy of wines from the Bordeaux region. As Ulin (1996) stresses, though these wines were characterized primarily by grapes grown on old vines and aged in cellars (distinctly social practices afforded to larger and more affluent estates), the criteria had the effect of reifying these qualities as essentially "natural" properties, stripped of their essentially class foundations. Important legislation in the 1920s and 1930s, with important subsequent refinements, drew on the earlier Bordeaux precedent in creating a national, state-sanctioned and enforced system of quality designations in which the top tier of wines were geographically delimited: the appellation d'origine controlée (AOC) system. Administered within France by the INAO, the AOC classification system (effectively subsumed by the EU appellation d'origine protegée or AOP designation in recent years) remains an approach to the social regulation of wine that has been described by (Gade 2004, p. 849) as the transformation of environmental space (terroir) into jurisdictional space (territoire).[9]It is also in essence a form of "defensive localism" (Winter 2003) that has been and continues to be used as a way to demarcate quality and authenticity, but also to both promote products (including on the international market) as well as to protect them from market competition (MacDonald 2014).

The environmental elements of terroir most commonly associated with wine are soil type, climate (including temperature and moisture regimes as well as prevailing winds), and elevation (both in absolute terms but also in terms of localized relief). However, other influences frequently cited include hydrological regimes (e.g., depth of groundwater, frequency of flooding), variation between daytime and nighttime temperatures, local plant communities, and aspect. An exhaustive and definitive list of what constitutes the substantive ecological content of terroir is elusive, however, since the concept is in its essence plural and malleable.

Of central importance to us are two aspects of terroir. The first of these is the deployment of placed-based classifications that while appearing as protections of long established production techniques are also interventions in

[9] The AOC system of regulation incorporates not only terroir, but also for instance, allowable grape blends. However, in as much as regionally distinct grape blends are seen as expressions of terroir, the importance of terroir should not be under-stated.

the market to actively facilitate and promote particular social practices at the expense of others. The second, related to the first, is the way in which terroir as a concept and as an approach to regulation underpins the symbolic dimensions of the metabolism of wine production. More specifically, terroir involves the formal and informal circulation of knowledge about the agronomic basis of grape cultivation, relying on the *reification* of ostensibly "natural" or ecological determinants of quality, set largely apart from human influences such as pruning techniques, ploughing and weeding regimes, vinification processes, etc. Terroir is in this sense a profoundly dualistic notion, though, as with most dualisms, the more one examines the duality, the more relational and fluid the poles of the dualism become.

Terroir was invoked directly by many exhibitors as a distinctive influence on the character of their wines. Moreover, in many instances, terroir was represented as something that existed effectively independently of human labour processes. The role of the latter is then important as a means by which an underlying and separate terroir is expressed. We frequently encountered the more specific claim that organic production as an innovation allows for the "real", genuine or full expression of terroir in the wine.

Testimonials to this effect are easily found on websites belonging to vignerons, including those who participated in Millésime Bio in one or both years in which we visited. For instance, the website for a relatively small (16 ha) independent and family-operated Domaine des Pradels Quartironi located in the village of Cessenon-sur-Orb, northwest of Béziers, includes the following:

> "We are now growing 16 hectares of vines, on schist slopes, with south south-east exposure. This stony arid terroir allows only low yieldings (20 to 40 hl/ha) and produces beautiful wines featuring concentration, elegance, freshness and silky tannins. Our Domaine is located at 300 metres above sea level, perched on a sunny hill and protected from any outside pollution. The northern wind often blows here, refreshing the grapes at night and protecting them from humidity and illnesses. Our vines are planted on schist soils surrounded by evergreen oaks, strawberry trees, pines, a few chestnuts, heather, cistus, cade, juniper, thyme and other wild aromatic plants. Our grapes and our wines enjoy all these perfect conditions to develop rich attractive bouquets." (https://vins-quartironi.plugwine.com/?lg=en).

Another relatively small (28 ha) independent and family-operated vigneron by the name of Domain le Peche d'Andre located in the Minervois region has the following statement about terroir and its influence on the wines produced at the domaine:

> "According to *geomorphology*, vine varieties were chosen to search for *the best expression of the terroir*. *Each plot, according to its character, delivers the force of this land*. *It gives us fruits that speak mostly of the air*: Cers, the cold, dry and often so violent northwest wind that dominates, while

> Marin, the Mediterranean wind, brings the humidity of shorelines that helps the Mourvèdre to mature so well…" (http://www.lepechdandre.com/wine-estate/vineyard-terroir.php, emphasis added).

A third example, explicit in invoking the notion of a "true" underlying terroir, comes from the website for Le Domaine du Roc des Anges, located near Perpignan, includes the following passage:

> "The soils, superficial and [well drained], encourage deep root penetration into the schist. In this sense, the *work undertaken in the vineyard aims to achieve the true expression of our terroir*. Working the land from a *terroir-driven perspective* means respecting its nature and seeking its most sincere expression." (http://www.rocdesanges.com/en/vignoble.html, emphasis added).

These statements are broadly representative of sentiments expressed by numerous vignerons. Moreover, the decision to convert to organic viticulture was often expressed as being motivated by a desire, using the language from Le Domaine du Roc des Anges, to "achieve the true expression of…terroir".

These sentiments were sometimes coupled with other related ones. One notion expressed in conversations includes the articulation of concerns that decades of synthetic herbicide, pesticide and fertilizer use had left the land "tired" and in need of recovery. For some, this legacy of systemic and repeated synthetic chemical use had compromised the ultimate quality of the wine that could be produced from their lands. Numerous people with whom we spoke thus made the related claimed that, all other things being equal, organic wine is of a higher quality because of the absence of synthetic chemical use. In doing so, some also embraced a broader ecological worldview, emphasizing that the cessation of synthetic chemical use had allowed for more complex ecological communities (including both plants and animals) to flourish in and around their vineyards, which they in turn linked to a superior terroir for wine-making. Notably, some of these vignerons drew explicitly on the ideas that inform biodynamic wine-making (and agriculture more generally); numerous exhibitors at both the 2016 and 2017 shows were certified as biodynamic producers.

While yields from organic viticulture are generally acknowledged as reduced, in the Languedoc, producers at the show claimed that the yield penalty for converting to organic is generally less significant than in other regional settings to be less than 10 percent because of the aridity. Most producers from the Languedoc with whom we spoke seemed unconcerned about the drop in yield, with some claiming that the economic returns of producing higher quality wine offset lower yields. Others emphasized that, in the end, converting to organic production is just the (inherently) "correct" thing to do out of respect for the land but also the wine.

Indeed, for many vignerons with whom we spoke, the conversion to organic production was wrapped up in their accounts of their own identities as wine-makers. For them, not only does organic production keep faith with terroir, but keeping faith with terroir helps to define them as wine-makers and as stewards of land. Organic viticulture and viniculture for these vignerons entails a commitment to ethically sound environmental practices as well as an entire way of life organized around making wine, including living amongst their vines. In many instances, we also heard these sentiments explicitly linked to strongly expressed affinities with the historical tradition of wine-making in the Languedoc-Rousillon region.

For some, strong linkages among vigneron subjectivities, terroir, and organic production were also forged through labour, including manual harvesting ("vendange manuelle") that has been adopted by many vignerons in tandem with converting to organic cultivation. To be clear, organic certification for wine-making in France and the EU does not require manual grape harvesting. However, manual harvesting is generally associated with higher quality wine production (though some dispute this linkage), and for some of the vignerons with whom we spoke, organic cultivation, quality wine-making, and manual harvesting are seen as being linked. Moreover, organic viticulture does involve some substitution of labour for capital even without embrace of manual harvesting in order to offset foregone chemical use with tasks such as manual weeding. Some vignerons we spoke with invoked embrace of an increase in their own labour time in the vineyard (including manual harvesting) as an expression of their strong ethical commitment to and intimate relation with their lands, the latter often coupled with an historical connection between family and vineyards. Encapsulating some of these sentiments, the website of Domaine Marion Pla (located in the AOP Saint Chinian appellation) says of the patron of the family business: "Jean-pierre Pla...et ses vignes, les deux sont indissociables." (http://www.marionpla.fr/histoire%20de%20famille.htm).

Importantly, sentiments of strong attachment to land as a motivator in converting to organic viticulture were expressed by some vignerons who are relatively new to the sector and/or to the region. We heard several versions of familiar "back to the land" narratives in which obtaining a small parcel of vineyard, engaging in organic viticulture, and bottling and marketing wine under a unique estate label represented an important life change. In several instances, entry into the wine making business was coupled with a move from professional careers in more urbanized centres, including specifically Paris, Lyon, and Montpellier, but also London. We spoke with former hoteliers, sports coaches, teachers, computer scientists and engineers. In these instances, commitment to organic cultivation was expressed as part of a spiritual and deeply romantic pull to farming, to living on and drawing a livelihood from the land, to manual labour, and to the romanticism of wine and the south of France. Taking up viticulture in these instances expresses a metabolic process of inhabiting new identities through the performance of specific agronomic practices. Deployment of strikingly similar ideas about terroir, about care for the land, and about the tradition of viticulture in Languedoc by these individuals, however, points strongly to the role of tradition in narratives whose function is not only to convey continuity with the past (including pasts that have not been directly experienced) but also to actively secure it.

It is also important to note parallels in some of the kinds of narratives about terroir, vigneron subjectivity, and organic wine in conversations we had with representatives of vinicultural cooperatives, including some of the vignerons at the shows who are cooperative members.[10] Specifically, we heard accounts of efforts to push cooperatives to bottle and sell organic wine informed by a desire on the part of some cooperative members (as well as staff) to better express the terroir of the various members. One representative from a vinicultural cooperative with just over 20 members and 200 ha of land recounted how half of the members (representing a little more than half of the land base) had made the conversion and become certified organic growers. This individual, one of the larger landowners and more active members in his coop, claimed that he continues to make concerted efforts to organize the rest of the members to convert, including by conducting blind taste tests with fellow co-op members to convince them that organic wine is of superior quality. While he reported that his fellow cooperative members tend to agree on the quality issue, he also relayed that many are reluctant to switch to organic cultivation specifically *because* of the increased manual labour requirements, a view he attributed more to younger vignerons who do not wish to work in the fields as much.

Several others associated with vinicultural cooperatives noted that the issue of making the conversion to organic cultivation had been a divisive issue within their organizations. Without question, there are logistical challenges and costs associated with organic certification and cultivation that are somewhat unique to cooperatives, challenges that tend to be exacerbated if only a portion of the membership converts. One reason is that a condition of certification in wine production requires that harvesting and processing of organic and conventional grapes must be strictly partitioned. This introduces organizational and capital costs that not all cooperative members may wish to embrace. In addition, certification requirements disadvantage small-holders. Certification of parcels of land require maintenance of a "buffer" strip separating organic crops from adjoining conventional crops. Grapes harvested from the buffer strip are not considered formally organic, imposing the burden of chemical drift on organic rather than conventional growers. Since the buffer strip is of a fixed width, the size of the perimeter in relation to the area will generally increase as a function of decreasing parcel area, working against small-holders.[11] This is significant for cooperatives, in general terms, since the organizational form originated, in large part, to make viniculture viable and more efficient for small-holders, occupying a significant place in the historical and contemporary political economy of wine-making in the Midi (Marres 1939, Ulin 1996, Knox 1998, Simpson 2005)}.

Despite obvious material and organizational challenges organic viticulture and viniculture present to cooperatives, several observers nevertheless attributed resistance to conversion within cooperatives to a combination of:

[10] A number of the cooperatives were represented at the show primarily by staff who are generally not themselves owners of vineyards.

[11] This effect can easily be demonstrated by considering the perimeter to area ratio of a square as a function of the length of the sides of the square. In the case of a square of 10m x 10m parcel, the ratio of perimeter to area is 40:100 (1:2.5). In the case of a 100m by 100m square, it is 400:10,000 (1:25). Generally, the perimeter to area ratio of a square is 4:N where N is the length of the sides of the square (in m or cm etc.). So, increasing the length of the sides of the square by a factor of ten decreases the ratio of the perimeter to the area by ten, making it much more efficient to certify the larger square parcel.

(i) an inherent conservatism of cooperatives in the sense of the collective organizational mentality being "stuck in the past" but also in the sense described by Ulin (1996) that the need for coordination among many members makes change difficult to achieve;
(ii) a lack of pride in the products of labour on the part of cooperative members;
(iii) the absence of an entrepreneurial spirit within cooperatives; and
(iv) deficits in initiative, creativity, and progressive environmental ethics on the part of cooperative members.

While clearly overblown and in many cases simply unjustifiable as generalizations, what is remarkable about these characterizations is how frequently they were offered to us by a spectrum of participants in and visitors to Millésime Bio. Numerous small scale independent vignerons, perhaps unsurprisingly, voiced these views, as did wine merchants and independent wine experts. Most surprisingly, current and recent members of cooperatives themselves also echoed some of these sentiments. The aforementioned cooperative member who has been urging his colleagues to convert suggested that many of them are simply not interested in any kind of change. One older vigneron working about 12 ha in the Herault along with his wife, described with great emotion their recent exodus from the local cooperative after decades of membership. He described initiating the conversion to organic cultivation in 2007, and bottling under their own label for the first time in 2015. The reasons he gave for converting to organic and for leaving the cooperative echoed many of the themes we have identified, both positive and negative: a desire to embrace a different environmental ethic toward the land, a desire to produce higher quality wine, a desire to eschew synthetic chemicals, a desire to more faithfully express their terroir, and a frustration with the lack of support for such sentiments within the cooperative more generally.

In parallel fashion, another independent vigneron with about 20 ha of land located northwest of Beziers described a decision to begin organic conversion in 2008. Upon certification three years later, the family left the local coop after decades of membership. The decision was generational, coinciding with children from a longstanding wine-making family coming of age and convincing their parents to produce, bottle and sell their own wine. This initiative in turn was attributed to ideas about the family, tradition, the land and the terroir, about manual harvesting and craft production, and an ethos of wine-making they no longer shared with the members of the local vinicultural cooperative.

This basic narrative structure, involving small-scale independent vignerons deciding to eschew the local cooperative in favour of bottling and selling their own wine – often coinciding with a next generation of family vignerons coming of age and making themselves available to contribute direction and labour – was repeated to us too many times to ignore. Directly or indirectly, it is linked to its mirror image, that of the innovative artisanal independent producers (often organized around a nuclear or immediate family grouping) making and bottling their own wines. Core values attributed to the artisanal, family-based production model include:

(i) hard-working individualism and creative entrepreneurialism;
(ii) artisanal, craft production organized within a family or household enterprise strongly tied to a commitment to family tradition;
(iii) commitment to high quality wine;
(iv) pride in the products of one's own labour and a more specific commitment to the direct commodification of those products (rather than see them subsumed with collective processes);
(v) a strong commitment to place expressed institutionally through private ownership of relatively small (typically less than 20 ha) areas of commercial vineyard; and
(vi) organic agronomy.

Discussion and Conclusion: The Politics of Quality

Our observations at the Millésime Bio organic wine trade fairs in 2016 and 2017, complemented by supporting research activities, comprise a snapshot of sorts capturing substantive processes of "market making" for organic wine. We focused on processes of signification that confer meaning on organic wine and that provide a basis for its qualitative distinction.

Our observations point to a set of central interlinked representational narratives, agronomic practices, and political economic trajectories underpinning the emergence and consolidation of the organic wine market, particularly with regard to smaller scale vignerons in Languedoc-Rousillon. These include:

- The production of organic wine with an emphasis on quality, both in general terms, but also as expressed through emphasis on the production of geographically delimited appellation wines (primarily AOP and IGP) as opposed to more generic wines (i.e., Vin de Table), reflecting and reinforcing a regulatory system of distinction in French wine.
- A perspective on terroir as foundational to quality distinctions in wine, and thus, a tendency to fetishize wine specifically by means of reifying the influence of ostensibly non-human aspects of the environment (e.g., soil, climate, elevation, drainage, etc.); organic viticultural practices (including labour practices) in this narrative structure are placed in a position subordinate to and independent of terroir, facilitating or enabling its true expression in quality wine; and
- A coupling of the production of organic wine with issues of tradition and family in the context of artisanal, independent entrepreneurial household enterprises.

In some respects, these themes are unsurprising in as much as they echo longstanding themes within the French wine sector, including its cultural politics and its political economy. As Ulin (1996) notes, for instance, the fetishization of wines of distinction in France via abstraction from the specific social relations, practices and institutions underpinning their production dates at least to the 1855

Universal Exposition in Paris when elite estate producers from Bordeaux were first able to enshrine their own products as standard bearers. In general terms, a logic of fetishism circulates with French wine based on dualistic conceptions of nature and society in which the reified natural elements of terroir are seen as independent of the social practices involved in wine production. Terroir is essentially taken out of the domain of social history and political economy, and placed in the a-social and a-historical category “nature”.

These dynamics are not unique to Millésime Bio or to organic wine. However, the narratives we have observed concerning the influence of terroir in the production of organic wine point to a specific and somewhat contradictory re-articulation in which the fundamentally social choices and practices that define organic agronomy (including viticulture) and that shape the evolution of terroir (including via recovery from past chemical treatments), are re-scripted as existing outside of and in the service of a “true” terroir.

Our observations also link organic wine production in the Languedoc with the reproduction of a small-holding vigneron class in the region in conjoined economic, political, and cultural terms. Among many people with whom we spoke, considerable emphasis was placed on the central role of families and households as viticultural and vinicultural enterprises. This includes intergenerational renewal through the recruitment of labour and oenological expertise from children of vignerons and their siblings as means of ensuring tradition and continuity for petty commodity producing independent, artisanal vignerons making and marketing their own wine from small plots of land they own and work themselves, relying primarily on non-waged labour. Without questioning their veracity, these narratives tend to obscure as much as they reveal. Reliance on waged labour in the vineyards of smaller scale independent vignerons, for instance, was almost never mentioned unless we specifically asked about it. Only family members involved in the viticultural enterprise were fronted. While by definition artisanal, small-scale independent and petty commodity producing family enterprises rely significantly on non-waged labour recruited from within households, it is also clear that waged labour is retained and is important for at least some of these vignerons at key moments. These moments include the harvest, which tends to occur during a very short window of time in the early autumn for all vignerons and during which an acute shortage of available labour can be experienced, whether waged or otherwise. Moreover, some skill is required in the work. Sharing labour between separate vigneron households is one strategy for dealing with this peak labour demand, as has been reported in the literature and as was relayed to us in some instances.

However, the issue of labour sharing among smaller independent vignerons in turn speaks to the role of vinicultural cooperatives in the production of organic wine and in the reproduction of the small-holding vigneron class within the Languedoc. Clearly the sample bias at Millésime Bio is toward those smaller scale vignerons who *have* elected to operate somewhat or entirely outside of cooperatives. As several relayed to us, many smaller vignerons have decided to leave cooperatives of which they were formerly members to take up wine-making on an independent basis, and to do so in concert with a decision to produce organic wine. We cannot say, on the basis of this study alone, the degree to which organic wine production in the Languedoc is a means by which the predominant insertion of small-holding vignerons into the sector is shifting from cooperative

institutions to the family enterprise model, though aggregate date do indeed suggest that this has been the trend. Cooperatives are responding (Mercier 2016), but the articulation of production relations for small-holders in the organic wine sector, and the role of cooperatives in organic wine production, at least in Languedoc, are live questions.

It is clear that organic wine production and marketing in the Languedoc echo contested process of "modernization" that have been underway in the Midi wine sector since at least the 1960s, accelerated by government-sponsored vineyard area reductions, shifts toward lower yielding and more prestigious grape varieties, integration into liberalized European markets, and declining support for cooperatives. Social friction surrounding these processes in the Languedoc has been referred to as the "politics of quality". While those politics were not expressed explicitly to us at the trade shows, situating Millésime Bio and the emergence of organic wine production in the Languedoc places organic conversion within these broader trajectories of political economic and political ecological transformation. In fact, there is reason to believe that the emergence of the organic wine sector in the Midi not only reflects broader processes of modernization and the shift to "quality", but also intensifies and accelerates them. This in turn means that organic wine production in the Languedoc not only entails a shift in agronomic practices, but also the architecture of economic and social reproduction for Midi small-holders.

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