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## **Aesthetic logics, *terroir* and the lamination of grower champagne**

Jennifer Smith Maguire and Steve Charters

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines how aesthetic institutional logics and objects shape markets. We focus on the champagne field, for which dominant category conventions include luxury, celebration and protected regional origin (exemplified by *grande marque* champagne). Our attention, however, is on more recent, alternative conventions, such as site-specific *terroir* and passionate artisanality (exemplified by 'grower champagne'). In analyzing how trade associations, small-scale producers and wine writers represent champagne, we offer an approach that is sensitive to both top-down and bottom-up dynamics of logics. Drawing on the concept of lamination to provide a processual bridge between category conventions and institutional objects (and thus logics), we find that representations from the three actor groups build up—layering and (at least partially) overlapping—such that both dominant and alternative frames come to shape the champagne field. We suggest how divergent representational practices may be directed at and by a common aesthetic institutional object.

### **Keywords**

aesthetic logics; *terroir*; category conventions; champagne; lamination; wine

### **Introduction**

Champagne production, which involves a complex network of winegrowers (i.e. grape farmers), cooperatives and champagne 'houses', and significant trade associations, is characterized by a dominant logic. That logic is exemplified by the *grandes marques* (literally, 'big brands') of the large houses, which are synonymous with luxury, celebration and the globally-enforced decree that 'Champagne only comes from Champagne, France.' These dominant associations have deep roots: champagne's connotations of luxury and celebration stem from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and its protected territorial designation of origin from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, from the 1950s, a number of winegrowers have focused on making and selling their own champagnes, and—since the 1970s—articulating their aesthetic qualities in terms of site-specific *terroir*, artisanal production and authenticity. These small-scale 'grower' champagnes expanded into mature export markets from the 1990s, and have become highly-prized both by wine aficionados and champagne drinkers in search of value-for-money alternatives to the big brands.

Given the long-established status and global esteem of the *grandes marques*, the emergence of grower champagne and its alternative aesthetic logic may be understood as a disruption of the field's 'hierarchy of legitimacies' (Bourdieu 1990, 95); but, that disruption is uneven. While houses and growers may position themselves in the market through different aesthetic logics (e.g. luxury versus authenticity), they are nevertheless all implicated and invested in reproducing the dominant category of champagne: a sparkling wine made from specific grape varieties grown in a designated region, using a specific fermentation process. Furthermore, while the category of grower champagne has slowly become durable, the scale of production (volume and number of producers) has declined since the end of the 1990s. The case of grower champagne thus poses a research puzzle. It does not fit neatly within the scenario of sudden, critic-driven category creation, nor that of

category emergence, whereby a new category, once consolidated, rapidly pulls in new entrants (Durand and Khaire 2017).

We address this puzzle by stepping back from the category of champagne per se, to examine how category conventions are communicatively constituted by three groups of actors: trade associations, small-scale champagne producers, and wine writers and critics. In producing, selling and writing about champagne, these actors occupy different positions vis-à-vis *grande marque* and grower champagne, and the conventions that properly constitute quality champagne. Yet, they also demonstrate an orientation to a shared aesthetic object: the ideal of *terroir* as the hallmark of quality winemaking. Utilizing the concept of lamination (Gray, Purdy and Ansari 2015), we analyze how actors' orientations towards *terroir* are expressed through different representations of what champagne is, and what counts as 'quality' champagne. These representations build up, or laminate, both as stacked layers and jagged overlaps of conventions, accreting as two framings of champagne—exemplified by *grande marque* and grower champagne. In this way, we suggest how seemingly competing aesthetic logics may in fact share a common institutional object, and how multiple, diverse and diffuse market actors may nevertheless converge in constituting both dominant and alternative category conventions.

We thus regard champagne as an opportunity for generating a better understanding of how aesthetics shape markets, by shifting the focus from institutional logics to their objects: the ideal cultural substances that organize activity by virtue of actors' beliefs or investments in them (Friedland 2018). In turn, this allows us to redress the lack of attention 'to the creation of norms, standards and institutions' (Warde 2014, 295) that underpin practices of taste, and to answer calls to move beyond treating logics and categories as if they are *a priori* tools that are simply 'pulled down' by actors (Gray, Purdy and Ansari 2015). As such, we develop an analysis that is sensitive to the duality of a process by which logics and categories are built up (through the lamination of conventions) and pulled down (through practices directed at and by beliefs in an ideal institutional object).

### **Aesthetic institutional logics and objects**

An institutional logics approach has been fruitful for investigating socio-cultural dimensions of markets. Logics are understood as overarching principles that shape action; they supply 'strategies or logics of action' as well as 'sources of legitimacy and provide a sense of order and ontological security' (Thornton and Ocasio 2008, 108). Multiple institutional logics shape markets, interacting with the commercial logic of 'accumulation and the commodification of human activity' (Friedland and Alford 1991, 248). Our focus is on aesthetic logics: principles that guide, on the one hand, appreciation and evaluation (Bourdieu 1990) and, on the other, the combination of elements into coherent styles (van der Laan and Kuipers 2016).

Research on aesthetic logics covers a range of fields and suggests potential tensions between aesthetic and other—often commercial—logics, such as in the fields of fashion (Dolbec and Fischer 2015; Holla 2016), publishing (Thornton 2002) and architecture (Thornton, Jones and Kury 2005). This research underscores the multiplicity of logics at play within and across markets as well as the plurality of aesthetic logics. For example, tensions between a rational aesthetic logic focused on virtuosity, and an innovative aesthetic logic of expressive risk-taking shape evaluations of classical music (Glynn and Lounsbury 2005); aesthetic logics of stylization, glamorous sexualization and engaging/withdrawn expression structure fashion photography (van der Laan and Kuipers 2016). Other research highlights

multiple aesthetic categories; for example, consumers draw from 'bold looks, edgy looks, and romantic, vintage, and minimalist styles' (Scaraboto and Fischer 2013, 1247) in creating social media fashion posts; the collective identities of wine producers coalesce around traditionalist and modernist categories (Negro, Hannan and Rao 2011).

However, we are mindful of a cluster of critiques directed at how institutional logics and categories are often treated in a 'pull down' (Gray, Purdy and Ansari 2015) fashion. For example, Voronov et al (2013, 1565) complain that logics and categories are treated as if 'fully formed and "waiting" to be activated' by actors, and Durand and Khaire (2017, 90) note that 'most studies that adopt the institutional view take categories and classifications as given.' Similarly, Mutch (2018, 256) cautions against treating logics and categories as tools that actors simply select from a menu and combine at will; rather, actors engage in practices 'without necessarily appreciating the ways they carry with them associated logics.' In turn, this pull down approach leads to a gap in our understanding of 'how bottom-up interactional processes may also challenge extant logics or lead to the emergence of new ones' (Gray, Purdy and Ansari 2015, 136). Thus, while productive for conceptualizing market dynamics as battles between different logics, the 'pull down' approach tends to ignore the emergence of and contingent accomplishment of logics, and risks flattening differences between the ways that various actors understand, invest in and perform logics, both within and beyond the realm of marketing and strategic brand management.

To address this gap, we devote attention to 'how diverse, local, and ephemeral instances of communication can create or constitute' institutional logics (Ocasio, Loewenstein and Nigam 2015, 28), and to how diverse actors, 'while likely uncoordinated, ultimately converge' to construct local logics (Mars and Shau 2017, 409). This requires shifting attention from logics as *a priori* tools, to logics as contingent outworkings of (in our case, representational) practices. In this, we draw on Friedland's conceptualization of institutional logics as anchored in and by institutional objects (2018; Friedland et al 2014). In a step back from the view of logics as reified structures that bring order, Friedland instead regards logics as 'observable grammars of practice' (2018, 1359), which are known through their contingent effects; they can only be 'inferred from the repeated constellations of practice directed at and by certain objects' (2018, 1375).

Institutional objects are 'unobservable, non-phenomenal' substances; they 'organize and animate our lives' (2018, 1371) because actors 'believe or act as if' they exist and are real (Friedland et al 2014, 366). Social relations may be oriented to different institutional objects, such that different operating logics may organize the same space. For example, marriage is configured quite differently if oriented to a belief in either romantic love or the transfer of property (Friedland et al 2014). Returning to our domain of interest: aesthetic institutional objects are thus understood as the underlying substances that are both pulled down (via actors' belief in those objects) and built up (via actors' repeated practices, oriented by those beliefs).<sup>1</sup>

Bringing together Friedland's insights with complementary work on categories, conventions and frames (Durand and Khaire 2017; Gray, Purdy and Ansari 2015; Ocasio, Loewenstein and Nigam 2015; Vergne and Wry 2014), we understand aesthetic institutional objects to be part of the durable, robust 'cultural registers' (Gray, Purdy and Ansari 2015, 118), or the 'real cultural structures...that are not directly observable...yet...exist in the real world independent of our ability to access them and represent them fully' (Ocasio, Loewenstein and Nigam 2015, 30). While 'unobservable,' aesthetic institutional objects are nevertheless known and knowable through their 'material instances' (Friedland et al 2014,

335), including recurrent category conventions, vocabularies and prototypes or exemplar members (Fitzmaurice 2017; Navis and Glynn 2010; Ocasio, Loewenstein and Nigam 2015).

We utilize the concept of lamination (proposed by Goffman [1974]; elaborated by Gray et al [2015]) to contribute a better understanding of *how* aesthetic category conventions, vocabularies and exemplars may build up to become durable cultural structures. Lamination refers to the layering and overlapping of frames at the micro-interactional level. Lamination provides a conceptual, processual bridge between category conventions and institutional objects (and thus logics). It offers a non-deterministic account of how micro-level interactions within and between firms and their stakeholders accrete or ‘stack up’ as higher-order consequences (Gray, Purdy and Ansari 2015, 115), acknowledging the role of cultural structures in shaping those interactions without recourse to a hyper-agent (individual or organization) directing change. Gray et al thus suggest that lamination is especially well-suited to overcoming conceptual divides between build-up and pull-down approaches, noting that it can ‘encompass multiple levels of analysis—that is, interactions among individuals, groups, organizations, or fields’ (2015, 117 n.2). From this perspective, interactants respond to previous framings of situations, layering their interpretation on top; successive layers may neatly align or there may be complementary transformations (‘keyings’), disagreements and disruptions (Gray, Purdy and Ansari 2015; see also Silva 2013). These ideal types of lamination are usefully captured through metaphor: on the one hand, the laminated identity badge; on the other, jagged overlays (Lemon 2009, 853). Our analysis of lamination is thus a response to calls to move away from treating logics as *a priori* tools to instead explore their communicative constitution through the layering of representations.

Finally, let us outline the aesthetic institutional logic and object of particular relevance to our investigation. We focus on the aesthetic logic of fine winemaking (Beverland 2005; Charters, Spielmann and Babin 2017; Hills, Voronov and Hinings 2013; Vaudour 2002; Verdier 2013; Voronov, De Clercq and Hinings 2013; Zhao 2005). In the case of French winemaking (and for winemakers who hold French winemaking as their primary quality referent), that logic is closely anchored to the aesthetic object of *terroir*: the idea of an essential, objective link between a wine’s quality and both the physical environment of production (soil, climate, topography) and the cultural environment of production (heritage, skill, *savoir faire*). The aesthetic logic of fine winemaking is oriented to a belief in *terroir*, and thus a wide variety of practices are directed by that belief: winemakers aim to give the purest expression of their place and culture of production; classification systems and laws emerge to define and defend demarcations of *terroir*; grape varieties are selected to best reflect the *terroir*; critics render their evaluations of quality legible and credible through reference to *terroir* (Voronov, De Clercq and Hinings 2013; Zhao 2005). This then sets parameters within which a range of elements (e.g. soil, grape variety, regional heritage, winemaking ethos) are combined, appreciated and evaluated as a meaningful form recognized as ‘fine wine.’

At the same time, belief in the aesthetic object of *terroir* also underpins a commercial logic of winemaking. In France, *terroir* was strategically constructed and articulated as part of ‘ruralist and protectionist’ discourses (Guy 2003, 189) that responded to economic imperatives (such as non-local competitors) by deploying geographical and cultural capital (e.g. regional borders, local traditions and personalities) to secure exclusive control over the production of and judgements about quality products. That is, the belief in *terroir* is not simply directed at aesthetic ends; it is also the animating force of commercial efforts to

secure competitive advantage and monopoly rents (Fourcade 2002; Harvey 2002)—in part, by legally monopolizing the production of a specific good, and by leveraging audiences' beliefs that *terroir* signifies quality. As such, while traditionally associated with 'Old World,' and especially French wine production, the idea of *terroir* has been widely seized upon as a tool for generating competitive advantage in the field of wine production. Quality claims based on provenance—anchored by references to *terroir* and, more broadly, how, when, where and by whom a product was made—are now common for wines from emergent and 'New World' producers (Hills, Voronov and Hinings 2013; Smith Maguire 2018).

Thus, we understand the aesthetic institutional logic of fine wine to be anchored in and by *terroir* as an aesthetic institutional object, which is knowable through category conventions, vocabularies and exemplars. To explore how *terroir*—and the operating logics that derive thereof—shapes the champagne field, we examine the practices of various actors who share a stake in the field and a belief in the aesthetic object of fine wine. We focus on communicative practices, exploring how the lamination of category conventions, exemplars and vocabularies may accrete as durable frames.

## Research process

### Context

The Champagne region has been producing sparkling wines for over 350 years (Charters 2012; Guy 2003; Leszczyńska 2016). Champagne, the product, has been associated with luxury, prestige and celebration from at least the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the well-documented tastes of Louis XIV (Rokka 2015), and inextricably linked to its place of origin from the late 19<sup>th</sup>. That link was formalized between 1911 and 1936 via the region's *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (AOC) status (Protected Designation of Origin for wines), which stipulates that only sparkling wines made from specified grapes grown in Champagne and using the *méthode champenoise* process (secondary fermentation in the bottle) may be called champagne (Charters 2012). Thus, the champagne field has been shaped by the aesthetic institutional logic of fine wine, which identifies an indissoluble link between the quality of the wine and the unique place and *savoir faire* of its production. However, while there are quality classifications of villages within the AOC, Champagne has pursued and promoted a *regional* designation of quality quite different from the smaller-scale, more localized designations that developed at a similar time for other wine regions, most notably Burgundy (Charters and Spielmann 2014; Guy 2003). The region enjoys a monopoly on the production of champagne, and Champagne is promoted as an entire region.

The key actors in Champagne are the *négociants*, the *vignerons*, and the cooperatives. *Négociants*, or wine merchants, buy grapes in order to produce champagne; they are often referred to as *maisons* or 'houses' and have capital for ageing wines and marketing them internationally. *Vignerons*<sup>2</sup> are grape growers, many of whom also make and sell wine. Cooperatives unite a number of growers and sell the wine made from their fruit to *négociants* or direct to consumers.

There are 320 houses, which account for roughly 73% of the approximately 300 million bottles produced per year.<sup>3</sup> The houses own only 10% of vineyard land and are therefore reliant on the *vignerons*: approximately 16,000 small land holders, each with an average of two hectares of vineyard, who supply grapes either directly to the houses or via a co-operative. The period up to the end of the Second World War was a history of disputes between the houses and growers, resolved by the creation of a unifying structure in 1941: the Interprofessional Committee for the Wines of Champagne (CIVC, recently renamed the

*Comité Champagne*). The CIVC is controlled by the *vignerons* and the *négociants* equally (each working through their respective Unions). The CIVC came to dominate the region's organization, image and development, effectively operating as a brand manager for the 'territorial brand' of champagne (Charters and Spielmann 2014).

Most production comes from 25 or so large houses who are responsible for the best-known champagnes—the *grandes marques*.<sup>4</sup> The *grandes marques* are closely associated with luxury and celebration and with a house style that remains consistent from year to year (for non-vintage champagne). From the 1950s, capitalizing on rising domestic sales, many growers began making champagne (Leszczyńska 2016).<sup>5</sup> Whereas houses can buy unlimited amounts of grapes on the open market to produce champagne, growers can buy in no more than 10% of their grape needs. As such, many growers became *négociants* at this time, in order to increase their scale of production. Even today, most of the 320 houses are no more than growers who have the license to buy grapes above the legal limit (Charters 2012, 2019).

In the 1950s, grower champagnes were framed as an affordable sparkling wine for local clients. However, in the 1970s, a quality-driven approach focused on local distinctiveness was championed by a few *vignerons*, including Anselme Selosse, of Champagne Jacques Selosse (Walters 2016) and the *Club Trésors*, an association of small producers formed in 1971. Nevertheless, it was not until the 1990s that this approach gained traction (Verdier 2013). For example, a 1991 article in the monthly professional journal of the *vignerons* encouraged the use of *terroir* to market wine (Verdier 2013). More *vignerons* began explicitly referencing their *terroir*, sub-regions, villages and/or vineyards to differentiate themselves from *grande marque* and cheap supermarket champagnes, against whose scale and renown, or price point (respectively) the growers could not compete (Charters 2019; Verdier 2013; Walters 2016).

By the 2000s, the artisanal champagne approach had more fully crystallized. Further voluntary associations emerged, promoting the passion and artisanal skill with which their members expressed their vineyards' *terroirs*. Grower champagnes had also become highly prized: six bottles of Jacques Selosse fetched US \$15,925 at auction in 2017 (Millar 2017); the champagne list of the acclaimed restaurant Noma is entirely focused on grower champagnes. Despite such success, however, the production of grower champagne has neither rapidly nor steadily increased. Rather, the number of growers selling champagne, and the volume of wine they export, have declined since their peak at the end of the 1990s (Cumbertafond 2018). In 2018, growers accounted for 18.2% of all champagne shipments by volume, down from 25.5% in 2009.<sup>6</sup> This, then, forms the context for our research.

## **Methods**

*Terroir*, as an aesthetic institutional object, is not a material entity but is known through its material instances. Our research objective was thus to capture how different actors express their orientation to (or belief in) *terroir* through their representations of champagne, and identify points of disjuncture or convergence in those representations as indicators of a cumulative process of lamination of category conventions. We focused on trade associations, small-scale producers and wine writers as three groups of actors distributed though the institutional field of champagne that operate from different positions and with different stakes in the field and its dominant logic. These choices reflected research on the dynamics of category reinterpretation, emergence and differentiation—for champagne and wine and food more broadly—that point to the significance of multiple stakeholders both

internal and external to production (Wheaton and Carroll 2017), including brand managers (Rokka 2015; Charters and Spielmann 2014), wine producers (Negro, Hannan and Rao 2011), and journalists and critics (Fitzmaurice 2017). Data collection focused on these three groups; this comprised a range of primary and secondary data, as detailed in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

First, we focused on trade associations, which are centrally involved in the collective representation and promotion of wine regions' identities and—particularly in France—the protection and enforcement of appellation regulations (Charters and Spielmann 2014). We sought to understand how the industry collectively understood and framed champagne through external-facing representations. This aim directed us to the three main professional associations: the interprofessional CIVC and the two formal unions for houses and growers: the *Union des Maisons de Champagne* (UMC) and the *Syndicat Général des Vignerons de la Champagne* (SGV). In addition, we identified some of the most prominent winegrower associations: *Club Trésors* (28 members, formed 1971), *Terres et Vins de Champagne* (20 members, formed 2009); *Les Artisans du Champagne* (16, 2011) and *Trait-d-Union* (six of the best-known *terroir*-led, *vigneron* producers, including Selosse and Larmandier-Bernier, formed 2012). We gathered 20 discrete web pages from these seven associations, including their home pages/Facebook profile, and information pages focused on explaining champagne (product), Champagne (region), or mission/role of the association. The data was supplemented with a convenience sample of 17 CIVC internal reports and promotional brochures, and 7 Mintel market research reports on the British champagne and sparkling wine market reports (much as Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) utilized press coverage to explore industry-level understandings in the context of fashion). In addition, we drew from personal research archives (a range of promotional and educational material, such as hard copy brochures aimed at domestic and British markets, and field notes from past research encounters); this material was not included in the analysis but helped to sensitize us to the background context when interpreting the primary data.

Second, we focused on small-scale champagne producers, reflecting previous research demonstrating how a logic of fine winemaking shapes producers' identities, aspirations and practices (Hills, Voronov and Hinings 2013; Voronov, De Clercq and Hinings 2013; Negro, Hannan and Rao 2011). We constructed a purposive sample of ten producers who explicitly differentiated themselves (e.g. on their websites) from the *grandes marques* and aligned themselves with a smaller-scale, artisanal approach. Being led by producers' self-identification (rather than by a strict definition of grower producers), we sought to avoid drawing a false *vigneron/négociant* or small/large divide with regard to producer methods (Charters 2019). Our respondents (detailed in Table 2) include both those designated as *récoltant-manipulant* (RM), who produce wines from their own grapes, and as *négociant-manipulant* (NM), who buy in some grapes (typically from the same village and from growers who follow the same quality approach to viticulture). Our sample also crosses scales of production; for example, Philippe (NM), whose house has an unusually large area of family-owned vineyards, produces approximately 1.6 million bottles per year; Alain (RM), a second-generation organic *vigneron*, produces just 10,000. Semi-structured interviews (conducted by the first author) focused on their perceptions of champagne (their own and the industry more generally), their experience of making champagne, and motivations for their approach to production.

[Table 2 about here]



Third, we focused on British newspaper wine writers. This follows previous work that positions critics and journalists as a ‘key audience’ (Fitzmaurice 2017, 3) for wine and food, who are implicated as cultural intermediaries in shaping producers’ and consumers’ orientations (Smith Maguire 2013), and potentially driving or supporting innovation (Rao and Durand 2005; Glynn and Lounsbury 2005; Voronov, De Clercq and Hinings 2013; Wheaton and Carroll 2017; Zhao 2005). British wine writers arguably occupy an especially influential position within the global cadre of critics shaping the champagne field because of the UK’s status as champagne’s largest export market (both by volume and value) for nearly every year since the end of the Second World War (Thompson 2015).<sup>7</sup> We sampled six ‘quality’<sup>8</sup> newspapers, for which the relatively affluent readership reflects champagne’s primary market (Mintel 2018). We used the key phrase ‘grower champagne’ as our sampling device to purposively focus on changes within the discourse about champagne. The resulting sample of 67 articles was predominantly by well-known British wine writers and critics, including Tim Atkin, Anthony Rose, Kathryn McWhirter and Fiona Beckett. Two of the ‘most influential’ (Drinks Retailing 2018) UK wine intermediaries authored 46% of the sample: Jancis Robinson (wine writer for the *Financial Times*; 19 articles spanning 1993-2018) and Victoria Moore (wine writer for *The Daily Telegraph*, formerly *The Guardian*; 12 articles spanning 2007-2018).

We undertook a thematic analysis (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006), which involved an initial phase of familiarization by reading across the three sets of the data, informed by our knowledge of the empirical context (the developments within the champagne market that we noted through prior research). This was followed by an iterative process of deductive and inductive coding. We deductively coded the data to two nodes: framings of product definition (i.e. what is champagne?); and framings of quality claims (e.g. soil, landscape, winemaking technique, regional heritage, winemaker ethos). These nodes reflect our conceptual concern with category conventions. Product definitions constitute a key discursive moment in constructions of and contestations over the meaning of a category. Similarly, our focus on quality claims reflects the recurrent geographical and cultural referents for the category of *terroir* wines (Charters, Spielmann and Babin 2017; Smith Maguire 2018; Vaudour 2002).

This was followed by a phase of inductive pattern recognition, sensitized through attention to commercial and aesthetic logics, which we knew to be central to the role of *terroir* in the broader cultural field of wine (e.g. Harvey 2002; Vaudour 2002). Through this phase, we identified two recurrent framings of champagne that cut across all three groups of actors: one broadly associated with luxury, celebration and appellation; the other with artisanality, passion and site-specific *terroir*. This allowed us to inductively identify overlaps or points of alignment between the different organizational actors (rather than assuming one group of actors was implicated in laminating one frame or the other). Finally, we deductively coded the media sample for those two frames, as well as a commercial value frame that had emerged through the inductive analysis. This yielded frequency counts to support our primary focus on inductively identifying exemplars of how category conventions were framed, and on preserving local nuance and meaning (Reay and Jones 2016, 443).

## **Findings**

### ***Trade associations***

Champagne’s regional designation of quality is reflected by the CIVC, the industry’s primary interprofessional trade association. The CIVC’s mandate includes the protection and

promotion of Champagne's AOC. Delivering on this priority involves seeking legal protection of the designation such that it does not become a generic term for all sparkling wine. This overt role is clearly signalled on the CIVC webpages, the top banner of which proclaims, 'Champagne only comes from Champagne, France.'<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the CIVC is an association of both champagne houses and growers, equally; this duality gives rise to different inflections of how the constituents are presented (and it also means that the organization has the implicit role of minimizing internal political friction, often by focusing on external threats). The CIVC homepage for houses prominently states: 'Champagne wines owe their worldwide renown to the talent and expertise of the Champagne Houses.'<sup>10</sup> The page characterizes houses as sharing 'a single professional focus: the making of Champagne,' and being 'fiercely committed to protecting their appellation.' In contrast, the CIVC homepage for growers declares them 'passionate about terroir and vineyard':

For generations now, Champagne growers have been crafting wines with as many expressions as there are vineyard sites. Their aim is to bring out the personality of each terroir, based on traditional growing techniques that promote quality and help protect the environment.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the CIVC's representations include two different framings for the product definition and quality claims for champagne: a well-established frame focusing on esteem and the appellation as a whole, aligned with the houses, and one focused on passion and the specificity of vineyards, aligned with the growers.

A focus on esteem and appellation was repeatedly foregrounded, particularly in relation to the region and/or houses. For example, Champagne's bid for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage list (granted in 2015) suggests that the 'landscape of Champagne forms a homogeneous, coherent and unique terroir', and characterizes champagne as a 'brilliant ambassador of French know-how and prestige, the world's most famous wine.'<sup>12</sup> A promotional brochure, aimed at those 'seduced by the bubbles that dance in your glass or fascinated by the reputation of these legendary wines,' refers to a singular 'very special terroir'<sup>13</sup>—a combination of soil, chalky sub-soil, climate (including harsh winters), and grape varieties—with variation resulting in four main regions. Similarly, the UMC (houses' union) summarizes the AOC area as 34,000 hectares spread 'across 319 *crus* (villages or communes) in four main growing areas.'<sup>14</sup> Defining champagne houses, the UMC declares:

The Champagne Houses are the cornerstone of the success of Champagne wines, building an international reputation that has given Champagne legendary status. Their special talent lies in the crafting of *cuvées* that perpetuate the characteristic style of each brand.<sup>15</sup>

Although the UMC acknowledges the sub-regions, a specific and localized *terroir* is not mentioned, and the focus throughout is regional.

The counterpart to the UMC is the SGV, the growers' union, which represents the *vignerons* in discussions about the sale of grapes to the houses, and particularly the price paid per kilo. The SGV has a very specific role in the protection of the *terroir* of Champagne. Under French law, the protector of an appellation in any part of the country is not the interprofessional body which unites growers and *négociants* (i.e. not the CIVC), but the growers' union. They are therefore charged with managing the Champagne appellation (as the legal outworking of the idea of the region's *terroir*), and they are responsible for suggesting changes and developments to the AOC.

Consequently, the SGV website notes that their actions ‘bear as much on the *terroir*, on the name of the appellation, as on the product.’<sup>16</sup> Their framing of *terroir* dovetails with that offered by the CIVC and UMC. The SGV note that they regularly act on a number of issues, ‘about the defense of *terroir*, to protect the land classed as *appellation contrôlée*, and the image of the appellation.’ *Terroir* is framed as equivalent to the entire appellation as a single unit and its image (rather than the appellation being constituted by a diversity of specific *terroirs*). Thus, despite being focused on growers, who are individually linked to specific sites, the SGV reaffirms the appellation framing of champagne; this reflects the economic logic of the organization, as growers are collectively stronger without emphasizing a regional hierarchy of quality *terroirs*, given that their collective focus is on selling grapes to the houses.

In the 1990s, as an increasing number of growers began to sell wine, the SGV became involved in how those wines were presented. This included involvement in the introduction of mandatory labelling, adopted in 1992, to differentiate between champagnes made from a growers’ own grapes (RM: *récoltant-manipulant*) versus those produced by co-operatives (RC) or *négociants* (NM). Such labels allowed growers to consistently signal their difference in export markets. By 1994, the SGV had launched a formal campaign emphasizing *terroir* and linking it to authenticity (Verdier 2013). In 2001, the SGV created ‘*Champagne de Vignerons*’ as a collective umbrella brand to better defend and promote growers’ collective interests.<sup>17</sup> Growers could produce and market their own wines, now with the endorsement of the collective label and the benefits of SGV resources devoted to marketing the collective brand. Where the SGV’s website talks about these wines, it refers both to *terroir* and, at times, ‘*terroirs*’, noting, for instance that different grapes respond better in different environments.

The *Champagne de Vignerons* logo is said to ‘evoke the multiple parcels of the vineyard and the four major regions of AOC Champagne,’ and the webpage characterizes winegrowers who make champagne as follows:

Each one develops with passion their own champagne, a reflection of a unique *terroir*, their know-how passed down from generation to generation in accordance with the specifications of the Champagne *Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée*.<sup>18</sup>

The SGV representations thus span the two framings. On the one hand, they reaffirm the dominant view of regional *terroir*: its members follow the logic of the AOC, fall within the region’s four areas and trade on the name ‘champagne,’ thus benefitting from the strength of the territorial brand and its regional definition of *terroir*. On the other, through the sub-brand of *Champagne de Vignerons*, they represent *terroir* as site-specific and unique, conveyed through passionately crafted champagne.

Moving beyond the major trade associations, champagne is also collectively represented by voluntary associations of like-minded small-scale winemakers, which operate without the remit of working for all winegrowers (as in the case of the SGV). Their representations tend to frame champagne in terms of passion and site-specific *terroir*. For example, *Club Trésors*, the oldest of these groups, declares its mission ‘to preserve the essence of their various *terroirs* and to promote the exceptional character of their wines.’<sup>19</sup> The *Terres et Vins de Champagne*’s website notes their:

desire to share our taste for authentic Champagne wines. Champagne *terroirs* are subtle and sometimes difficult to analyze when you taste the wine with its bubbles. ... We are 20 winemakers animated by the same passion, convinced of the quality and the diversity of our *Terroirs Champenois*.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, members' profiles outline their philosophy, prompted by questions such as 'What makes a great winemaker?' (*Club Trésors*) or 'What makes you an artisan?' (*Les Artisans du Champagne*).<sup>21</sup> These prompts elicit recurrent vocabulary. For example, 17 of the 26 *Club Trésors* answers refer to passion and/or being respectful or expressive of one's *terroir*. However, the repeated framing of champagne as a wine from diverse *terroirs*, made by passionate artisans, did not preclude reiterations of the well-established framing of champagne. In response to the question 'For you, what is champagne?'—which clearly signals that the meaning of champagne is up for (re)interpretation—*Club Trésors* members only make four mentions of *terroir*; the most common references are to celebration, sharing, pleasure, and elegance.

In summary, the main interprofessional unions (CIVC, UMC and SGV) all share an orientation to or belief in the aesthetic logic of fine wine; however, this was expressed in different ways. All emphasize the dominant framing of champagne—the *terroir* of the regional appellation, the cultural *savoir faire* of the region's history and the product's renown—as might be expected of organizations charged with the collective defense and promotion of region-wide memberships. Yet, there are also references to specific *terroirs* and passionate small-scale producers (by the CIVC and SGV, and predominantly by the winegrower associations). Even so, the winegrower associations echo the dominant framing through explicit references to a drink of celebration, and implicit acknowledgment that the unique *terroirs* of individual winegrowers are within and regulated by the appellation.

### **Producers**

Our interview respondents understand themselves as fundamentally different to the large *négociants*. They all juxtapose the meaning of their champagnes with that of the large *négociants* and particularly the *grandes marques*. For example, Charles is technically a *négociant*, but he rejects the term, referring to his wife's family's house as a 'big small grower' because they produce most of their own grapes and buy the rest from immediate neighbors. He notes that 'every champagne house has to have a story':

When you sell a bottle of champagne...people need to really have a dream in order to justify 60 euros, or 120 or 200 euros. ...When you sell champagne at a normal price, like we do...the myth is important, but you've got to sell a product with a style, with a difference. ...The story which we like to talk about is a family business...situated in a particular valley, in particular geographic circumstances, where our grapes come from this particular valley.

Philippe (NM) similarly positions his house style of champagne as 'very different from the commercial category that you find worldwide... Because champagne is really a discotheque product, but this is...different. Champagne *can be* from grapes, from a grower.' Here, the alternative framing of champagne is both about what small-scale champagne is (e.g. personal: this family or grower; particular: this valley) and what it is not (the myth, 'discotheque' image).

In different ways, all of the respondents frame the meaning of their product through reference to wine. For Antoine (RM), this explicitly entails framing most champagne as not-wine. He asserts:

I don't sell champagne. I sell *wine* from Champagne. *C'est différent*. Champagne is a drink that is fresh, it's drunk in small glasses, it has a lot of bubbles. If you drink it at ambient temperature, you will not like it. A *wine* of Champagne, you can drink it fresh, or not fresh, it has delicate bubbles. It's got a lot of potential.

Similarly, for Genevieve (RM): 'Champagne is a wine. It's got a lot to it. When you drink it, you can taste it as well. You've got, like any other wine, aromas, balance, length...*it's a wine.*' This alternative framing is reliant on a negative juxtaposition with the large-scale product (a fizzy drink). It also reinterprets champagne's social relations of consumption, by insisting that it be experienced and assessed through the terms associated with fine wine (à la rosé wine, as in the case of Fitzmaurice's [2017] research).

Respondents' framing of champagne as a wine is further reinforced through the bases on which they make quality claims for their wines. This includes a smaller scale of geographic reference than the region itself, as with Charles' mention of their specific valley, or—for those at the smallest scale of production—mention of particular villages and vineyards. Quality claims are also couched in fine winemaking's aesthetic language of expressing *terroir*. For example, Jerome (NM) says: 'The goal, the first goal is to keep the aromas of the *terroir* in our wines.' In the same way, Guillaume (RM) explains:

When you show respect to the soil, you have the possibility to give the special taste...of the soil to the vines, and to the grapes, and to the bottle. My work is to give the perfect representation of my place. ...I want to give...the result of the year. In Champagne, mostly champagnes are blending champagne, blending the vintages. But for me, it's always [a single] vintage. Like in other places in France, in Burgundy, Alsace, Loire it's always one vintage.

This philosophy of single site, single vintage has been championed locally since the mid 1970s by Selosse (Walters 2016), but it also reflects the culture of fine winemaking that many of the respondents cite as their point of reference. Antoine, for example, complains of the previous generation's dominant approach: 'In Champagne, we don't have a prize money for quality, prize money for good growers,' and admits that he had 'not a very good image' of Champagne in his mind when studying, in comparison to the approach taken in Burgundy. Indeed, Burgundy was a common referent among respondents, reinforcing their framing of champagne as a wine expressive of *terroir*.

As a guiding belief, giving expression to one's *terroir* leads respondents not just to different product definitions but also departures from conventional approaches to production. For example, Maurice (NM) reflects on the process by which he and his brother (the winemaker) developed their approach. Many years earlier they had discarded a first blend of their non-vintage champagne because it was too great a deviation from the house style (a standard house style, unchanging annually, is the orthodox approach to non-vintage champagnes). That was despite the fact that both had judged it to be a superior wine. Ruing their decision to sacrifice quality to orthodoxy, the brothers decided to work differently:

What we are doing today is completely different than what we were doing before my brother and I took control of [the house]. And our wines are vastly superior... We work from a white sheet of paper and we try to make the best wine possible.

Doing so has involved abandoning the standard non-vintage approach that prioritizes consistency, adopting sustainable methods in the vineyard, and continually *reducing* their scale of production so that they can exercise maximum control over the grape supply and quality (which, running counter to a typical commercial logic of increasing scale in pursuit of profit, had been the focus of many arguments between the brothers and their father).

All of the respondents are multi-generation producers. Yves and Antoine took leadership of their family vineyards in the 2000s, Genevieve, Alain, Jerome and Guillaume in the 1990s, Maurice and Jean-Pierre in the 1980s, and Philippe and Charles in the 1970s. Many, such as Maurice, refer to significant family tensions created by the consequences of their decisions

to focus on *terroir*-led, quality winemaking, such as foregoing the guaranteed income of selling grapes to houses, and changing the style and increasing the cost relative to the champagnes their parents had made—thus losing (in Jerome’s case, entirely) their parents’ established client lists. Decisions about how to grow grapes were also contentious: all of the respondents work in a manner markedly different from the preceding generation, eschewing some or all aspects of industrial agriculture, such as fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, mechanization. Jean-Pierre (RM and biodynamic) notes that this change in approach involved family arguments:

[My father] said I was mad. He was both a farmer and a winegrower. They used to starve; they had to work a lot to earn not much, so it was the chemical fertilizers and chemical phytosanitary products that made it possible for them to earn a living and a good living. They didn’t know about the problems with chemical products, but now we do so now we have to try not to use them.

For some of the respondents, the rejection of the industrial approach to winegrowing and winemaking is explicit and all-pervasive, as it was for the organic (Alain, Yves) and biodynamic (Guillaume, Jean-Pierre) producers. As Yves (RM), an organic producer, says, ‘There will be no comeback to chemicals.’ For others, it is a secondary consideration to, and outcome of, a quality-led concern with expressing the *terroir* of their vineyards.

In most cases, respondents observe that their alternative approach to production requires more, and different, kinds of work: more intensive manual labor than would be required for orthodox approaches to cultivation, harvesting and pruning. This requires training staff in forgotten techniques and *savoir faire* that pre-date the agri-chemical revolution and involves additional costs of sufficient vineyard workers given the emphasis on manual rather than mechanized work. However, the additional expense and effort are felt to be worth it. For example, Antoine (RM) states, ‘Now it’s completely different work. But for the brain it’s better. More reflection.’ Likewise, Genevieve remarks on what she considers to be the greater intellectual engagement afforded by a *terroir*-driven approach:

I think a winemaker in a big house, you use everything that you learned at school... but then it’s probably a bit more that you have to be a robot of the style of the big house. But for a small house, we have to change...It’s much more about being a small vineyard, letting the *terroir* talk, and you know there’s much more interest in the vintage.

Echoing Genevieve’s juxtaposition with a metaphorical ‘robot,’ several link their *terroir*-driven approach to artistic autonomy, intellectual stimulation and intrinsic rewards.

In summary, the respondents repeatedly associate their champagne, production approach and quality frame of reference with the field of fine wine. Many also articulate their vision of champagne in part through a juxtaposition (often negative) with the production methods and marketing associations of the champagnes of big houses. On the one hand, this could suggest a commercial logic for small-scale producers to actively reproduce the normative ideal type (*grande marque* champagne ‘is like this’), against which to better differentiate their artisanal champagne. Respondents also acknowledge that their routes to market are paved by the global esteem and recognition that ‘champagne’ enjoys by virtue of the AOC and the marketing efforts of the *grandes marques* (thereby reproducing the dominant frame). On the other hand however, the accounts of intergenerational struggles suggest a strongly held belief in the aesthetic ideal of fine wine, and a commitment to making the best possible expression of *terroir*, in spite of related economic and personal costs.

### **Wine writers**

Our analysis of British wine writers' accounts of champagne from the 1990s onwards suggests that they have played a long-standing role in disrupting the established framing of *grande marque* champagne. For example, wine writer Anthony Rose notes in 1992:

The notion that champagne is a unique product, whose prestige and glamour cannot be matched outside the Champagne region, has taken a double knock: there are too many cheap champagnes of poor quality, and much new world fizz offers superior value for money. (*Independent*, December 5, 1992)

Wine writer Victoria Moore is even more starkly critical in 2007:

Champagne is routinely made by houses who buy in their grapes from wherever they can lay their hands on them (provided they're grown within the delimited area). It is even legal for one person to make the wine, bottle it, then sell it on to someone else who can slap his own label on and market it under his brand name. (*Guardian*, December 8, 2007).

More recently in 2018, wine writer Jancis Robinson writes:

Let me tell you how champagne used to be. It used to be a dream, a luxurious notion of superiority. Something to serve your friends knowing that they knew it was magically and automatically better than any other sparkling wine ...That was then but this is now...The big champagne houses with their huge promotional budgets, which did so much to build the drink's reputation, are being challenged by a new wave of producers. (*Financial Times*, June 23, 2018).

Such reports form part of the media's role as a legitimating institution that wields cultural authority in consecrating particular cultural forms as worthy of attention and discerning consumption (Fitzmaurice 2017; Johnston and Baumann 2007). This role also entails an explicit delegitimizing function. For over 25 years, wine writers have problematized the orthodox 'hierarchy of legitimacies' (Bourdieu 1990, 95) in which *grande marque* champagne is necessarily 'the best,' by repeatedly calling into question the quality claims of the *grandes marques* and in so doing, challenging the dominant associations with glamour, luxury and prestige.

This is not to suggest that wine writers are merely critical or entirely iconoclastic. In just over 61% of the media sample, wine writers reproduce the dominant product framing by aligning champagne with the celebration of prestigious events, or the prestige of celebration itself. This is accomplished through regular references to toasting, parties and special occasions. Articles repeatedly coincide with the winter holiday season and the summer 'social season' of weddings, graduations and so forth. Words such as luxury, deluxe, opulent, sumptuous, glamour, wealth and mystique are largely reserved for *grande marque* champagnes at the super premium end of price points, whereas the prestige of grower champagnes is predominantly constructed through the use of 'fashion' as a frame. For example, Moore describes grower champagne as 'increasingly fashionable' (*Daily Telegraph*, December 18, 2008), 'trendy' (*Daily Telegraph*, October 25, 2014) and 'trendier than big brands' (*Daily Telegraph*, August 19, 2017). Similarly, she notes that Jacques Selosse produces 'cult champagne' (*Daily Telegraph*, March 12, 2014), the fan of which is either a 'tiresome groupie show-off' or a 'serious wine aficionado with excellent taste' (*Daily Telegraph*, April 6, 2018). Our media sample suggests that even when positively affirming the dominant frame of luxury, prestige and celebration, wine writers also contribute to calling forth and concretizing grower champagnes as a legible, legitimate category of

champagne: an alternative to the *grandes marques* that nevertheless satisfies established consumer expectations of prestige.

The wine writers further contribute to eroding the *grandes marques* as the only, and necessarily best type of champagne by assessing the quality of champagne in terms of the aesthetic logic of fine winemaking (also in 61% of the sample). Here, the vocabulary is of craftsmanship, authenticity, pedigree, transparency, *terroir*, expressiveness and taste. Such positive quality attributes are almost entirely exclusive to grower champagne. For example, grower champagnes ‘offer real individuality for those who like to get particular’ (*Guardian*, December 8, 2007), are ‘the true *terroir*-driven wines of the *appellation*’ (*Financial Times*, November 9, 2012), and their ‘traceability and ability to express a particular vintage, village or even vineyard—rather than being blended into a consistent house style—chimes with the *zeitgeist*’ (*Financial Times*, June 12, 2015). Also heralded as a mark of quality are growers who—unlike most *négociants*—provide maximum information about the context of production on their bottles (e.g. the years of the base wines of non-vintage champagnes, dates of disgorgement). Grower champagnes are thus positioned as ‘ideal for those who appreciate champagne as a wine, not just a label’ (*Guardian*, December 29, 2012) and ‘are without a shadow of a doubt wines—each one eloquently individual, the expression of particular growing seasons, personal winemaking philosophies and techniques, different villages and even different plots’ (*Financial Times*, May 31, 2013). In these ways, the aesthetic logic (and cultural cachet) of fine wine not only consecrates grower champagnes, but also disparages champagnes that cannot compete on these terms because of scale of production and grape sourcing, and/or emphasis on consistent house style.

Moreover, breaking with the dominant ‘luxury’ framing is the wine writers’ repeated use of a commercial lens through which to assess quality. This could be regarded as reaffirming the dominant positioning of champagne: for example, the relative expense of champagne is clearly linked to associations with prestige, and the most expensive champagnes coincide with those framed as the highest quality, reified through tiered lists that rate champagnes and culminate with the best/most expensive. However, the discourse has an implicitly critical orientation to champagne’s cost, evidenced by references (found in 75% of the sample) to value-for-money, good deals and bargains. As Robinson quips: ‘Never mind the quality; enjoy the price’ (*Financial Times*, May 28, 2005). This framing is in part a function of the genre of journalism: writers attempt to justify their occupational existence by providing readers with access to little known champagnes and ‘insider tips’ on value-for-money. However, it also highlights the paradox of champagne’s status as a luxury item that is nonetheless sold in supermarkets (Rokka 2015, 276).

In the case of grower champagnes, the relationship between price and quality is not represented as linear (i.e. low price does not necessarily denote poor quality). Rather, grower and *grande marque* champagnes are juxtaposed: grower champagnes ‘represent true value’ (*Guardian*, October 20, 1990), ‘remain (relatively) good-value’ (*Observer*, December 14, 2014), and ‘consistently offer so much better value than the heavily marketed *grandes marques*’ (*Financial Times*, May 31, 2013). A grower champagne is described as ‘a proper wine that happens to be fizzy, and impressively good value’ (*Telegraph*, December 14, 2012). Over the historical arc of the media sample, these frames vary. For example, the emphasis on value-for-money declines (as fashionability leads to rising prices for grower champagnes). However, the positive representation of grower champagnes as ‘good value’ does not substantially contribute to an alternative framing of champagne. Rather, by applying the same criteria (value-for-money) to all champagne—as with references to



fashion/trendiness extending the criteria of prestige to all—the writers reference and reproduce the dominant framing of champagne: grower and *grande marque* are represented as commensurable.

In summary, commercial and aesthetic logics are both in evidence in the wine writers' representations of grower champagne. Writers reproduce the dominant framing of champagne while opening it up to grower champagnes, by expanding the criteria of prestige (via notions of fashion and trendiness) to grower champagnes, and disrupting the dominant luxury framing of champagne by evaluating both *grande marque* and grower champagnes in terms of value-for-money. Over the timeframe of the media sample, writers repeatedly and consistently frame grower champagne in terms of the conventions of fine wine. These overlapping laminations suggest how, cumulatively, the authenticity of grower champagne becomes a referent unto itself. For example: in her remarks on the decline of the big houses' monopoly on quality (quoted above), Robinson goes on to complement Roederer, a *grande marque* house founded in 1776: 'Despite its size, Louis Roederer earns the respect of the most demanding of champagne connoisseurs because it is effectively a grower' (*Financial Times*, June 23, 2018). Thus, grower champagne—as a category and not only the product per se—is framed in terms of quality, *terroir* and fine winemaking.

### **Laminations of champagne**

Our analysis suggests how an alternative framing of champagne, focused on authenticity, *terroir* and the hallmarks of fine winemaking, has been generated through a long-term lamination process involving trade associations', producers' and wine writers' representations. This has proceeded through actors' shared orientation to *terroir* and the hallmarks of fine winemaking, in the absence of top-down coordination by a hyper actor (e.g. the CIVC or the *grandes marques*), and despite actors' potentially conflicting agendas and market positions. These findings underpin our intended contribution, with regard to furthering our understanding of how local, ephemeral communicative events are both shaped by and build up to higher order cultural registers.

We suggest that champagne's dominant and alternative framings are dually-structured (Friedland 2008); that is, they accrue as an alignment between layers of organizational actors who 'pull down' on beliefs in a shared cultural object, and whose practices contribute to the communicative constitution of those beliefs from the 'ground up,' through acting on and representing those beliefs in locally specific ways. Representations converge and laminate despite local differences and potential conflict (or, indeed, consonance) between their communicators' specific agendas and orientations. Lamination occurs independent of central coordination, and accretes as discernible, durable patterns, with *grande marque* and grower as the exemplars of two recognizable, legitimate categories of champagne. Reading across the main representational themes from the different groups of actors (summarized in Table 3), we wish to highlight three insights that arise from our analysis of laminations of champagne.

[Table 3 about here]

First: all of the actors share a belief in the aesthetic institutional object of *terroir*. The representational (and material) practices linking objects to logics may diverge (into different market positions) because beliefs are anchored to different objects, as Negro et al (2011) observe with regard to different visions of authenticity, and Zhao (2005) notes in terms of different beliefs (in science; in soil) as anchors for wine classification systems. In the case of our research, however, different market positions emerge from beliefs in *terroir*, which are

enacted or represented in divergent ways. Thus, *terroir* is not a static object; it takes on different guises relative to the beliefs held by different actors, and to the intended effect of their representational efforts—such as, to promote their region (e.g. CIVC), their members (e.g. SGV, *Club Trésors*), their particular champagne (e.g. the producers), or their particular access to and knowledge of different champagnes (e.g. the writers).

Our associated contribution is a reminder to not elide logics and objects. Actors may express the same logic through an orientation to or belief in different objects; they may be guided by belief in the same object or pursuit of the same goal, but in markedly different ways; they may express potentially contradictory beliefs, or beliefs with nuanced differences, at the same time. This offers a distinctive perspective on the mutability of *terroir*; not just that it is a social construct that is real in its consequences (it is real because actors believe it is real) but that actors' different beliefs in *terroir* enable and constrain different winemaking and market making practices.

Second: laminations can be neatly stacked, as in the metaphor of the identity badge. This is most clearly the case for the AOC category convention, referenced and represented by all of the actor groups. There are no contradictory rekeyings or frame breaks in the lamination of this category convention. It is drawn upon and built up by trade associations, small-scale producers and wine writers, and forms the fundamental basis of the category. To refer to 'champagne' is to refer to a sparkling wine made in the Champagne region of France, using grapes from a prescribed list of varieties and following a prescribed method of fermentation. Similarly, this fundamental category convention is keyed by partial stacks of other conventions. For *grande marque* champagne: geographic embeddedness (references to the appellation as the entire region) is layered with cultural embeddedness (the region's heritage) and complementary product connotations (including the renown and heritage of the houses). For grower champagne: a parallel partial stack of layers references specific villages or vineyards, an artisanal expression of site-specific *terroir* and connotations of individual passion.

Third: laminations (notably, of the alternative frame) also form as jagged layers, akin to LEGO bricks that overlap without entirely aligning. The dominant and alternative framings of champagne singularize particular points of attachment for different organizational actors (calling forth and concretizing the studs and tubes on the metaphorical LEGO bricks) such that different bricks can connect, even without necessarily substantially or consistently overlapping, and stacked bricks can acquire solidity and durability (what LEGO refers to as bricks' clutch power). Thus, in Table 3 we can (metaphorically) trace the representational layers moving back and forth between the two frames. References to the unique *terroirs* of *vignerons* are reinforced through an overlapping critique of houses sourcing grapes from all over. The consistent house style of *grande marque* non-vintage champagne is rekeyed as unreflective 'robot' work, connecting (clutching) with the alternative framing of small-scale producers' craftsmanship. Emphatic representations of champagne as 'a wine' not only anchor the alternative frame, but also overlap with critiques of *grande marque* champagne as a fizzy, discotheque drink. Relatedly, our analysis underlines that exemplars are category conventions, not the categories themselves. Hence, 'grower champagne' can serve as a referent that can be layered on to representations of large-scale producers (as in Robinson's reference to Roederer).

Taken together, the second and third insights contribute a modifying perspective on the institutional isomorphism of firms attempting to compete in dominant logic markets (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015). New entrant firms (*vignerons*, but also New World

sparkling producers more generally) do not align, in toto, with the dominant champagne logic. Isomorphism is instead observed as but one part (one type of bricks) in the jagged overlapping of representations that builds up a new set of category conventions. In thinking through the implications of this insight for other markets, it should be noted that convention isomorphism (i.e. the dominant type of bricks) need not necessarily be related to the AOC (or equivalent) designation, as was the case for grower champagne. For example, in Spain, a small group of sparkling producers have quit the Cava Designated Origin, but are hewing closely to *terroir* conventions of place-specific production, in an effort to laminate 'corpinnat' as an alternative sparkling wine category (Woodard 2019).

These findings also contribute to understanding how category conventions may clutch across adjacent fields. This provides a way to potentially draw together insights on how notions of *terroir* are articulated as category conventions for various artisanal goods, such as foie gras, tequila, cheese and salt (DeSoucey 2016; Bowen 2015; Paxson 2010; Singer 2018). The lamination of a *terroir*- or artisan-focused frame might also usefully complement resource partitioning explanations for the emergence of aestheticized niches within mature markets, which may foreground the issue of identity but tend not to engage with the way in which aesthetic logics, beliefs and cultural structures shape actions (e.g. Carroll and Swaminathan 2000).

Alongside these findings and insights, we are mindful of several limitations of our research. We have confined our investigation to a narrow range of organizational actors and, while sensitive to the longer-term development of grower champagne, our historical data has been largely limited to how British wine writers' representations have changed over time. Further research (be it longitudinal or, more likely with regard to practicalities, via reflective, life history interviews) would be welcome on the lived experience of practicing aesthetic logics—that is, on the process of following and enacting beliefs (following Friedland's (2018) formulation). Such an approach might challenge the presumed primacy of an instrumental rationality underpinning market actors' decisions. Research could examine how the practicing of beliefs in *terroir* and fine wine differs across a range of market actors, including producers of wines and sparkling wines beyond Champagne, marketers and consumers of grower and *grande marque* champagnes, and wine writers, retailers and distributors situated in less mature or globally diverse markets. It would also be important to explore if and how the two frames we identified for champagne manifest in the wider sparkling wine market, particularly as champagne's export markets are increasingly challenged by other sparkling wines (such as Italian prosecco and English sparkling wine), some of which are gaining credibility as luxury goods.

We have also had to bracket off questions of consumers' roles in the lamination of dominant and alternative frames. This is clearly a rich seam for further investigation, particularly if combined with the potential for cross-cultural comparison between an established market (such as the UK) and an emerging one (such as China, where grower champagne accounted for 4.6% of champagne imports in 2016, up from 1.5% in 2007<sup>22</sup>). In addition, we have had to set aside attention to the much wider array of efforts at market orchestration that undoubtedly amplifies (if not also explicitly seeks to manipulate) the alignments of organizational actors. Further research is needed to fully map the intended actions and unintended outcomes, strategic mechanisms and tactical devices through which the market dynamics of category laminations unfold. In the case of champagne, that would include attention to (among other factors) the efforts on the part of the CIVC and unions, *grande marque* marketing teams and growers to solicit the attention of critics, the diffuse

soft power activities of French consulates worldwide in representing French culture through featuring (particular types of) champagne at cultural and political events, and the symbolic and material connections between champagne (big brand and grower) and adjacent cultural fields, from gastronomy to fashion to sport.

### **Conclusion**

The champagne field dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Rokka 2015; Leszczyńska 2016) and has a long-established dominant logic that defines and promotes the product through reference to the appellation's territorial distinctiveness and notions of luxury, prestige and celebration. Since the 1990s, however, the established legitimacy of the *grandes marques* and their dominant product meanings and quality claims have been challenged. Using grower champagne as our empirical entry point, we examined trade associations, small-scale producers and wine writers as market actors involved in making the contemporary champagne market. We explored how these different organizational actors interact through their representations of champagne—what it means, and its quality claims—and, in the process, reinforce dominant product definitions and quality claims while also giving rise to new ones. In doing so, we have suggested how trade associations, champagne producers and wine writers have intentionally and unintentionally—through consonant and conflicting positions and beliefs—disrupted the established hierarchy of status within a mature market, giving shape, substance and solidity to an alternative constellation of practices: different quality conventions and promotional devices (e.g. RM labelling; the *SGV Champagne de Vignerons* sub-brand and logo), different viticultural practices (e.g. decreasing yields, eschewing chemicals), and different evaluative language (e.g. assessments of complexity associated with fine, still wine).

Our contribution has been to demonstrate how an aesthetic logic of fine winemaking is anchored in an ideal *terroir* object, which itself has multiple anchors that cluster around locally-specific physical conditions and locally-specific tradition and technique. As the case of champagne highlights, these anchors are neither singular nor fixed: different scales of 'local' are laminated (the appellation; village- or vineyard-specific locations), as are different connotations of the culture of production (luxury, celebration, consistent quality; passion, authenticity, artisanality). We thus find that the space of the champagne field is organized by two operating logics, each anchored to a different constellation of (beliefs in and representations of) category conventions, exemplars and vocabularies, which nevertheless are oriented to the shared aesthetic object of *terroir*.

This contribution has involved stepping back from aesthetic institutional logics as *a priori* tools, in order to explore the contingent lamination of category conventions by multiple—aligned as well ostensibly competing—actors expressing beliefs or investments in *terroir*. Both the dominant conventions of appellation and the heritage of the house, and the alternatives of village- or vineyard-specific *terroir* and the passion of the producer, provide geographically and culturally embedded referents for the creation, experience and evaluation of champagnes, while the ideal objects to which they refer (e.g. a myth of luxury from the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century; the legally protected Champagne regional appellation and the institutionalized *terroir* of Burgundy from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) have sufficient perdurance to offer cognitive legitimacy.

While it has not been our focus, our examination of the representational outworkings of aesthetic logics nevertheless casts light on the relationship between aesthetic and commercial logics. The realization of economic value for champagnes—as in the case of the consecration of fine wine and cultural goods more generally (Bourdieu 1984,

1993)—is not only contingent on an adherence to an aesthetic logic (be it of *terroir* or luxury) but also often entails a putative disparaging of the commercial logic. Both the dominant and alternative logics constitute a commercial/aesthetic cosmology within which competitive advantage is articulated, defended and extracted, and commercial imperatives are cast as secondary to aesthetic ideals. Commercial considerations (of the producer if not the consumer) are thus rhetorically eclipsed, either by the winegrower's or small-scale producer's artisanal sensibility and authentic commitment to expressing *terroir*, or by the longevity and reputation of the *grande marque* as a steward of the appellation and the region's heritage. All champagnes are thus potentially consecrated as more than just a fizzy drink.

Taking the institutional dimensions of aesthetics seriously requires moving beyond a focus solely on aesthetics as individual expressions of taste, identity and discernment; nonetheless, our findings suggest how the individual and institutional aspects of taste are intertwined. The dominant and alternative operating logics of champagne can both be keyed to the aesthetic logic of discerning consumption, and the exercise of 'aesthetic distance' in the performance of good taste (Bourdieu 1984, 35, *passim*). In both cases, champagnes may be appreciated and evaluated in terms of a disinterested style of evaluation, divorced from purely hedonic qualities (e.g. appreciation of the intrinsic, ineffable authenticity of place and the passionate producer, or the exclusive prestige of a *grande marque*; discernment between champagnes and their sparkling rivals, or between champagnes on the basis of their *terroir*). The dominant champagne logic links to luxury and heritage (e.g. distance from necessity); the alternative logic, to fine winemaking and notions of the hand-crafted and artisanal (e.g. distance from the convention of big brand champagnes). Thus, the producers and writers telling stories of *terroir*-focused or luxury-focused champagnes—and the consumers choosing such champagnes—have the potential to affirm their own aesthetic sensibilities. As such, the case of champagne suggests how a local disruption to a hierarchy of legitimacies (e.g. *grande marque* champagne losing its status monopoly and being replaced by grower champagne—at least for some—as a marker of good taste) nevertheless reproduces global processes of distinction and differentiation.

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**Table 1 Summary of data sources**

| Source Type  | Sources  | Data Set  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Primary</b>   |  |   |
| Websites of producer associations                          | <i>Comité Champagne (CIVC); Union des Maisons de Champagne (UMC); Syndicat Général des Vignerons de la Champagne (SGV); Club Trésors; Terre et Vins de Champagne; Les Artisans du Champagne; Trait-d-Union</i> (note: Trait-d-Union had no webpage only from Facebook)                         | 20 webpages from 7 association websites/Facebook profile  |
| Interviews with producers                                  | Purposive sample of producers who self-define in contrast to the <i>grandes marques</i> . See Table 2 for details.   | 10 interviews   |
| British newspaper coverage of grower champagne             | <i>The Daily Telegraph, The Times</i> (London), <i>The Independent, The Financial Times, The Guardian, The Observer</i>  | 67 articles via Nexis database. All articles with keyword ‘grower champagne’ from every second year, January 1990-September 2018. |
| <b>Secondary</b>   |  |   |
| Champagne industry annual reports and promotional material | CIVC annual reports (e.g. ‘ <i>Les Expéditions de Vins de Champagne</i> ’; ‘ <i>Rapport d’Activité</i> ’) and promotional material (e.g. ‘Champagne: From Terroir to Wine’ [brochure, 2013]; ‘Champagne Slopes, Houses And Cellars’ [Champagne Region UNESCO World Heritage Press Kit, 2015]). | 17 (from 2003 to 2018)  |
| Champagne/sparkling wine market reports                    | Mintel (global market research firm) reports ‘Alcoholic Drinks Review,’ ‘Champagne—UK,’ ‘Champagne and Sparkling Wine—UK’  | 7 (from 2002 to 2018)   |
| Grower champagne promotional material                      | Websites and marketing brochures for grower champagne brands to help identify interview sample, followed by purposive sample of 10 respondents’ brands’ materials  | 10 brands   |
| Personal research archives                                 | Champagne producers’ promotional material (e.g.: ‘Turning Nature into Art’ (Moët & Chandon brochure, 2005).<br><br>Fieldnotes from interviews, meetings, tastings, or other engagements beyond the primary interviews for this project   | 46 items (from 1997 to 2018)<br><br>Notes from 109 past interactions (1 <sup>st</sup> author: 13; 2 <sup>nd</sup> author: 96)     |

**Table 2 Summary of Interview Respondents**

| Respondent (pseudonym) | Annual production (bottles);<br>Designation | Respondent (pseudonym) | Annual production (bottles);<br>Designation |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|---|
| Alain                  | 10,000; RM                                  | Antoine                | 85,000; RM                                  |
| Guillaume              | 15,000; RM                                  | Charles                | 250,000; NM                                 |
| Jerome                 | 50,000; NM                                  | Maurice                | 300,000; NM                                 |
| Jean-Pierre            | 60,000; RM                                  | Yves                   | 300,000; RM                                 |
| Genevieve              | 80,000; RM                                  | Philippe               | 1,600,000; NM                               |

Designation:

RM *récoltant-manipulant* (produces wine from own grapes; regulations permit up to 10% bought-in grapes)

NM *négociant-manipulant* (buys in some grapes, typically from the same village or growers with same quality approach)



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Friedland (2018) explores the complementarity between his approach and that of practice theory, relating Schatzki's (e.g. 2002) teleoaffective regime with the concept of institutional logic, and teleoaffective structure with that of institutional substance (Friedland 2018, 1368-9). With regard to aesthetics, the parallel for our examination of champagne would be Arsel and Bean's (2012) practice theory-led analysis of a home décor 'taste regime;' however, we would regard the décor taste regime as an institutional logic, and the categories of soft modernism and craft as the institutional objects.

<sup>2</sup> The term *viticulteurs* (used in the rest of France to denote a grower who does not sell wine) is not used widely in Champagne.

<sup>3</sup> *Comité Champagne* website, 'Les expéditions de vins de Champagne en 2018' <https://www.champagne.fr/fr/economie/expeditions-de-vins-de-champagne>, Accessed November 2019.

<sup>4</sup> 2016 production volumes for the top five groups: LVMH 63 million bottles (of which Moët et Chandon are estimated to have over 30 million and Veuve Clicquot around 19 million); Vranken-Pommery 19 million bottles; Lanson-BCC 17M bottles; Pernod-Ricard 13M bottles; Laurent-Perrier 12M bottles. Together these groups account for 23 different brands. The next five groups produce around 25 million bottles (Cumbertafond 2018).

<sup>5</sup> The first grower champagne appeared in the late 1880s, but this was an isolated example (Charters 2019).

<sup>6</sup> *Comité Champagne*, <https://www.champagne.fr/fr/economie/expeditions-de-vins-de-champagne>, *Bulletin d'Expéditions* 2018, Accessed May 2019.

<sup>7</sup> British wine writers also have a markedly different stance vis-à-vis the dominant framing of champagne than French wine writers who are more likely to be invested in the 'national myth' of champagne (Rokka 2015), given the degree to which champagne is entangled with national identity (Guy 2003; Spielmann, Smith Maguire and Charters 2018). Given our other two actor groups were French, we felt that a focus on British wine writers would be useful for highlighting instances of lamination across dispersed actors.

<sup>8</sup> The 'quality press' is a British term designating newspapers with national circulation that deal with 'serious' issues, and aligns with the traditional term of 'broadsheets' (which is largely obsolete, since the move to compact hard copy size and digital platforms).

<sup>9</sup> *Comité Champagne*, <https://www.champagne.fr/en>, Accessed May 2019.

<sup>10</sup> *Comité Champagne*, <https://www.champagne.fr/en/comite-champagne/champagne-growers-and-houses/champagne-houses>, Accessed May 2019.

<sup>11</sup> *Comité Champagne*, <https://www.champagne.fr/en/comite-champagne/champagne-growers-and-houses/champagne-growers>, Accessed May 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Association Paysages du Champagne. 2008. *Candidature au Patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco au titre des paysages culturels viticoles*. Reims: Agence d'Urbanisme et de Développement de la Région de Reims.

<sup>13</sup> Vignerons et Maisons de Champagne. 2006. *Champagne: From Lifestyle to Wine Styles*. Reims: Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne.

<sup>14</sup> *Union des Maisons de Champagne*, <https://maisons-champagne.com/en/appellation/geographical-area/>, Accessed May 2019.

<sup>15</sup> *Union des Maisons de Champagne*, <https://maisons-champagne.com/en/houses/the-champagne-houses/>, Accessed May 2019.

<sup>16</sup> *Syndicat Général des Vignerons de la Champagne*, [https://www.sgv-champagne.fr/?page\\_id=1490](https://www.sgv-champagne.fr/?page_id=1490), Accessed May 2019. Authors' translation.

<sup>17</sup> *Champagne de Vigneron*, <http://www.champagnedevignerons.fr/Les-champagnes-de-vignerons/Une-marque-collective.html>, Accessed May 2019.

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<sup>18</sup> *Champagne de Vigneron*, <http://www.champagnevignerons.fr/Les-champagnes-de-vignerons/Une-marque-collective.html>, Accessed November 2019.

<sup>19</sup> *Club Trésors*, <http://www.clubtresorsdechampagne.com/en/home>, Accessed May 2019.

<sup>20</sup> *Terres et Vins de Champagne*, <https://www.terresetvinsdechampagne.com/>, Accessed November 2019.

<sup>21</sup> *Club Trésors*, <https://www.clubtresorsdechampagne.com/en/member>, Accessed November 2019; *Les Artisans du Champagne*, <http://lesartisansduchampagne.com/artisans>, Accessed October 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Comité Champagne. 2017. *Les Expéditions de Vins de Champagne en 2016*. Epernay: Comité Champagne.