

The Field of Natural Wine Fairs in Italy

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Abstract

Based on wider research on the wine field in Italy, conducted with a multiple set of research technics (in-depth interviews, online ethnography, enactive ethnography, qualitative analysis of websites, surveys), the article 1) sketches a history of the natural wine fairs in Italy, considering mainly winegrowers and organizers; 2) analyze some interesting features that can distinguish one fair from another, using Bourdieu's field theory framework to reconstruct the relationship between the field structure and the position-taking of agents.

Keywords: wine fairs, Natural wine, ethnography, social fields.

1 Introduction

In the last ten years, wine fairs in Italy - as well as in the rest of Europe - have increased both in number and winemakers involved, assuming several forms like tasting days, wine shows, business fairs, and peasant markets. Of course, under the large umbrella term "fair", we find events with different characteristics: wine festivals only for wine enthusiasts, which are part of the broader mosaic of wine tourism (Howley and van Westering, 2008; Yuan et al., 2005); wine shows, which are often connected to specific competition (Allen and Germov, 2011) and serve as a strong marketing tool (Dalitz, 2009); peasant markets, or big professional fairs such as Vinexpo and Prowein. Every wine event of this type therefore has its own conformation, in terms of participating winemakers, organization of space, attendees, communication rhetoric, narrative framework, mood, and accepted behaviours. Within the wine business, one of the fastest growing segments is the (variegated) one of natural wine. Although it still is a niche product (in Italy it constitutes around 5% of the wine exported, according to UIV), it has given rise to a large number of new exhibitions that contribute significantly to the cultural legitimacy of the concept of natural wine and to the commercial affirmation of a typology whose social construction is the result of the work of wine producers, importers, journalists, distributors and consumers.

As Rachel Black says, "while organic and biodynamic wines have certifications and agreed upon practices, the category of natural wine remains open to discussion and out of the reach of consensus" (2013: 281) This is not the place to discuss the history and status of natural wine, or the boundary work (Lamont and Molnar, 2002) around the concept of "natural" that historically stands between symbolic order, business and health (Stanziani 2008). We can briefly say, for our sake, that while the natural wine movement has emerged in France over the past 25 years, it has its roots in post-war France and is linked in many ways to the ecological movements of the twentieth century (Cohen 2013), while it has taken place in Italy since the early 2000s, as we will see below. From a practical point of view, there is a convergence around certain practices of vine-growing and winemaking principles, in particular the rejection of chemical products in the vineyard, the practice of harvesting by hand-picking, fermentation with "indigenous" yeasts, only adding low or zero sulphites, no additives, no clarifying and filtering processes. In my view¹, following Bourdieu and his field theory (1993; 1996; 2019), the concept of «naturalness» of wine is an «enjeu» (stake), that results from field dynamics, relationships and conflicts, inside the field and between the field and other fields (the wider wine field, the scientific field, the political field, etc.).

So, the «naturalness» materialises in and is constructed by production, communication and consumption practices –that create an aesthetic regime (Smith Maguire, 2015; 2018) –always subjected to disputability in a semantic space (Hannan et al., 2019) that is builded alongside and against the domains of organic and biodynamic wines².

¹ I will develop this analysis of the field of natural wines in Italy in a forthcoming article.

² Almost all scholars juxtapose in their analysis organic, biodynamic and natural wines, thinking about them as part of the same domain, the one where producers, critics and consumers look for a "taste for the particular" (Smith Maguire, 2016), *terroir* and authenticity (Marrone, 2016). So you can read surveys (i.e. the – otherwise, interesting – led by Castellini, 2014) including in the same sample the three categories, just when the agents inside the field emphasise strongly the

After this premise, my analysis of natural wine fairs, instead of moving from a predetermined sample of fairs deciding *a priori* which is a “real” natural wine fair and which is not, includes the fairs emerging by the field itself, namely the ones considered part of the field of natural wines by wine producers, journalists, wine enthusiasts, wine sellers.

The purpose of the article, then, is to develop 1) a short history of the field of natural wine fairs in Italy; 2) a typology of natural wine fairs nowadays in Italy, in terms of organizers, participant winemakers, purposes, symbolic capital in the wine field, attendees.

Material and methods

The present article is based on a wide-ranging research project that looked at craft and artisanal wine field in Italy. It has been ongoing for over five years and includes 73 in depth interviews with wine producers, 8 with importers and distributors, 14 with wine promoters, 12 with journalists and bloggers, and hundreds of visits to wineries, as well as ethnographies during wine fairs in Italy. I attended the same fairs every year since 2013, visiting a number of fairs between 12 and 20 per year (not all of them are born in the same years). The originality of the method is that I conducted, to quote Wacquant (2015), an “enactive ethnography” consisting of an observant participation, rather than a participant observation. After a long period of apprenticeship as a sommelier, and as a passionate participant in wine fairs and tasting days, in 2013 I started tasting and selecting wines on behalf of a wine distribution and importation company in Italy, becoming an “armed [by sociology] native”, submitted to the forces of the field, with the aim of better understanding the processes involved in the wine field. Moreover, in 2016 I was part of the judging panel of the Marche region, for the leading Italian wine guide *Gambero Rosso*. In this study, therefore, I rely on relevant material from the interviews transcriptions and field notes. I have also analysed the contents of fairs and associations websites, the main Italian wine-blogs and a dozen Facebook groups and a couple of Whatsapp chat where I am involved, specialized in wine and natural wine and attended by wine professionals and wine enthusiasts, and that I have used as a sample for surveys.

The fairs analysed here are: ViniVeri, VinNatur, Vi.Vi.T, Vignaioli Naturali a Roma, Vini di Vignaioli, Live Wine, Io bevo così, Naturale, Vinessum, Back to the Wine, La Terra Trema (Milan), Critical Wine (Genova), Vinissage, Sorgente del Vino, Vino naturalmente vino, Torino Beve Bene, Vino in-dipendente, Vignaioli Artigiani Naturali, Vinifera, Fuori Salone dei Vini conformi, Natural Wines OltrePo and Friends, Vini Corsari. Not all these fairs present themselves explicitly as “natural wine fairs”, but, as we will see in the following sections, they are considered part of the field of natural wines (and of course, of the subfield of natural wine fairs, that is the point of this article).

Natural Wine Fairs in Italy: a quite fragmented and complex history

To sketch a history of natural wine fairs means to identify the more relevant social agents in the field, either collective (associations, distributors, wine magazines) or individuals (producers, organizers, journalists). Sometimes, in a social field, we can also have positions with just one place that holds the structure (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992); in other words, if we do not consider the importance of exactly that person, we cannot understand the whole field. As we will see, this is the case for some protagonists of this field.

Vini di Vignaioli (Wines by Vine-growers) – a fair in Fornovo, a relatively isolated village on the hills near Parma – was the first event in Italy for artisanal producers involved in the natural wine movements. The fair was (and still is) organized by Christine Corgez Marzani, a French woman who previously owned an Italian restaurant in France. Having moved to Italy for her retirement, and thanks to the social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) accumulated in the wine field and outside, in 2002 she created a small festival, with a dozen of producers, that immediately gained a wide and positive reputation. By 2017, the fair had 161 producers amongst its participants and Christine is now a very important subject in the field. She also organizes Live Wine in Milan, a fair set up in 2015, with the cooperation of AIS (Association of Italian Sommeliers), after one edition of Vini di Vignaioli at Milan in 2014. Live Wine has quickly become a point of reference in the field.

In the same period that saw the birth of Vini di Vignaioli, we can find the origin of the main natural wines associations in Italy: ViniVeri (TrueWines) and VinNatur. As Giovanna Morganti – one of the most important producers of ViniVeri – says³,

“in the early 2000s, Fabrizio Niccolaini [from Massavecchia winery] sought contacts with wine producers who were like him “craftsmen”; some were already in an organic regime, others were in a process of changing, and all of them

necessity of not being confused with the organic labels (as a very representative example among many others, see the post of Corrado Dottori, a prominent natural wine producer, here: <http://ladistesablogspot.com/2016/07/fine-dellinsurrezione.html>)

³ From a missive published on the website of ViniVeri

refusing the rules of industrial oenology. He meets Stanko Radikon, Nico Bensa, Angiolino Maule, Dario Princic, Walter Mlecnik, Kante and starts a period of mutual exchange with them”.

After some time, these producers decided to join forces, participating together at Vinality, the main wine fair in Italy. During a dinner, they tasted a bottle of the Coulee de Serrant, discovering that Nicolas Joly, a winemaker from Loire Valley, had founded a movement, the Renaissance des Appellations [‘The Rebirth of the Designation of Origin’], assembling craft winemakers, almost all oriented towards biodynamic viticulture.

At this point of the story, we encounter two other people that have been very important for the natural wine movement. The first is Sandro Sangiorgi, a well-known journalist and founder of the wine magazine “Porthos”. Sangiorgi in those years was beginning to study natural wines closely, and invited Joly to a seminar with other winemakers, in order to build better links and connections between natural producers. Thereafter, some of those producers united to Renaissance des Appellations, which was organizing a separate pavilion at the Vinexpo fair in Bordeaux, inviting producers from all over Europe. Nicolas Joly recommended the establishment of an independent Italian association, and in 2004 ViniVeri was born. In 2018, there are 24 Italian producers involved in the association, and the association organise one of the most attended and well reputed fairs of natural wines.

At this point, a second person, not part of the winemakers movement, played an important role: Luca Gargano, owner of the leading liquor distribution “Velier”, saw the opportunity of developing the natural wine market, founding the brand “Triple A” (Agricoltori [farmers] Artisans Artists), and actively collaborating in the creation of an Italian wine event consecrated to natural wines. In 2004 ViniVeri organized an institutional event (La Favorita) antithetical to Vinality – the fair was intended to sign a discontinuity with the main commercial fair in Verona – but in the same days and quite close to Verona.

These producers were tired of "fairs" where the quality lied more in the set-up of the stands than in the wines proposed for tasting: so they had the idea of an exhibition where the minimalism of the furniture created a welcoming spirit equal to what they were used to create for people visiting their cellars. This new fair had more the features of a rural market than that of an anonymous pavilion in an industrial area, where Vinality use to take place.

The union between the social and ethical values of the natural wine movement and the productive and commercial nature of the winemakers' activity means that the history of the associations is strictly related to that of the fairs. The motivation for the birth of the various associations and fairs lies - in France as in Italy -, in the need to join forces and commons ideas on winemaking, in order to commercially differentiate and not be crushed by the market of industrial and conventional wines.

As one of the first protagonist tells:

"... we were all at Vinality, all scattered here and there among the pavilions, and then in 2004 we decided to go out and to participate to this sort of ‘off’ of the main fair, to make it clear that we were different from that bandwagon there in Vinality, where the wines tasted all the same, despite the different vintages, all standardized. All this process started by five or six friends who got together: first they made a small stand at Vinality, everything started from there, then they started making Villa Favorita, this fair, the one in Montebello, near Vicenza ... "(Monica, Winemaker)

Once the group of “natural” wine producers established itself as an agent in the market, then new reasons for differentiation come to life and led to disagreements:

"They got along for two years, then after that they split off. So ... the split was made because... "I'm better than you", because there were human relationships that do not were going well. The split happened because of the renewal of ViniVeri, the election did not go as someone wanted... When you're running for the role of new president, you think "I will be elected ", you have already prepared your court and then the vote goes to someone else, it's a problem..." (Christine Copez Marzani organizer of Vini di Vignaioli)

The group split, and Angiolino Maule, along with other producers, exited from ViniVeri to create the association VinNatur, and a new event in Villa Favorita. Since Maule was the holder of the rental contract, ViniVeri moved to Cerea, 30 km from Verona. VinNatur includes now 169 Italian associated, plus 47 from all over Europe. However, it is important to point out that if you want to participate in the Villa Favorita fair, you need to become an associate of VinNatur. By contrast, it is not necessary to become part of ViniVeri to go to the Cerea fair, and this is the explanation of the different size of the two main associations, despite the numbers of participant wine producers to the fairs is almost equal.

Over the years, the two wine fairs, at the same time contiguous and antithetical to Vinality, have attracted a growing number of producers, becoming institutional places and symbolic reference points for the diffusion of natural wine.

However, the one narrated above was not the only division inside the natural wine movement. A crucial moment was the return of many natural producers to Vinitaly within the ViViT (Vineyards, Vine-growers, Terroir) pavilion, in 2011 (now, the fair and the association behind that is call “Vi.Te” (Vine-growers, Terroir).

The reasons presented by wine producers for this return to the spaces of the main fair are varied. First of all, the desire to obtain greater visibility, and being able to compare with the conventional producers. Moreover, this choice was made after trying to unite the two main associations within a single joint event during the Vinitaly period: when the associations (ViniVeri and VinNatur) preferred to keep the fairs separate, all the Italian wine producers associated with ‘La Renaissance des Appellations’ moved to ViVit, which went on to gather numerous other participants (116 producers in 2018).

“An earthquake happened because a hundred and thirty companies that were splattered out there left these two organizations [VinNatur and ViniVeri] and came into Vinitaly, ... I was one of those pushing for this solution, because we were all in Verona in those satellite fairs, but there was no collaboration between us... Small producers asked to reunite the two fairs - they did not want to identify themselves with the fairs but to associate in a very visible fair... So we try to deal with one association, to deal with the other, talk with one, talk to the other, it was impossible to make a unique event... So, then it happened that at some point I suggested... together with the group of Renaissance, ‘why do not we go to see if we can do this within the Vinitaly pavilion, maintaining a very recognizable identity but profiting of all the wine professionals gathered there?’ After all, we were here around Verona because of Vinitaly, so let's go inside the Vinitaly, right? And I asked Verona Fiere [the institution organizing Vinitaly] and...we got a red carpet!”(Fabrizio, winemaker participating in ViViT)”

“In our view, it became a bit hypocritical to be forty miles from Vinitaly, in the same days, to attract the same people. So we said, we do not compromise on how we produce wines, let’s make a compromise on how to propose wines to them. So we said, let's go back to Vinitaly, where probably there will be a greater circle of people, and we can attract even those who are little wary of natural wines, who think that natural wine is a strange stuff. And so it was, we came back, we set the rules, we have a space all together. But it is complicated, it is difficult, because since then we are criticized by our colleagues, the ones who are more fundamentalist...”(Monica, Winemaker participating in ViViT)

Backing to the beginning of the natural wine movement in Italy, we have to take in consideration another cluster of relevant agents in the field, different from the one of wine producers. In 2003, one year after the first edition of Vini di Vignaioli and one year before the first edition of Villa Favorita, it was created the network “Land and Freedom/Critical Wine”. This initiative arose from the meeting between Luigi Veronelli – a very famous food and wine journalist in Italy – and the network of Centri Sociali⁴, those movements sensitive to the problems of the Earth, the environment, and agriculture. The result of this meeting was the birth of a project that united producers and consumers against extensive and industrial agriculture, struggling for the enhancement of native vines and artisanal winemaking, aiming to foster transparency on prices and on the mark-up of the distribution chain. The first initiative inspired by the Land and Freedom/Critical Wine program was held in 2003 in a series of Italian Social Centres, with the organization of: La Chimica, Verona, C.sa Intifada, Empoli, Festa Radio Onda d’Urto Brescia. In December of the same year, the Leoncavallo social centre in Milan hosted the "Fiera dei Particolari / Critical Wine" with 170 producers, invited by Luigi Veronelli to send samples of their wine in order to participate in a rather unusual food and wine fair organized without sponsors or patrons. Since 2007, the fair is named La Terra Trema (The Earth is Shaking) and is organized in cooperation by Leoncavallo and Folletto 25603, another social centre near Milano.

Thanks to the pioneering work of this agents – the wine producers and the political cluster grouped around the Critical Wine movement – natural wine fairs became not only a new way of presenting wine but a profitable product in themselves.

In 2009, two other important fairs were created. Sorgente del Vino Live is a fair organized by Paolo Rusconi and Barbara Pulliero, the main animators of the project Sorgente del Vino, which produces communication and information about craft wine and sells online natural wines. The event took place in Agazzano, before moving to several sites in Piacenza and Reggio. It has now taken up residence in a bigger space, at the Fiera di Piacenza.

We will see in the next section the distinctive features of this fair, in comparison to others. The second natural wine event born in 2009 is “Vini naturali” in Rome, which was later renamed “Vignaioli naturali”. The fair is organized by a wine promoter, Tiziana Gallo, and is both an opportunity to present the producers she holds in her commercial portfolio and to spread knowledge of natural wines in a city where these have been noticeably present.

⁴Spaces and buildings occupied by squatters with a leftist/anarchicpoliticalview. They are hubs of cultural production in many sectors as music, theatre, and also food and wine.

The field of natural wine fairs also encompasses other events, with less national resonance but which are important for producers, distributors, promoters, sommeliers and consumers. Within those smaller events, the oldest (since 2006) is Vinissage, that take place in Asti, a small wine town in Piedmont, and that is a very interesting case to show how the semantic space of natural wines is constructed not only in opposition to conventional wines but also to organic wines, because this kind of labels can be easily be just a “make-up” for industrial wines. In fact, until 2018, the fair was organized by the local municipality and by *Officina Enoica*, a cultural association that emerged from the humus of Critical wine. Though, the willing of municipality to widen the attendees and to attract sponsors, in 2019 led to eliminate the reference to natural wines, leaving in the name only that to organic and biodynamic wines. This provoked the sudden reaction of *Officina Enoica* – who wrote a very sharp public letter taking distances from the fair – and the cancellation from several natural wine producers who used to participate, even if they had the organic label.

We should also mention *Io Bevo Così*, which is another interesting case: born in 2014 in a small village beside Como Lake, and opened to wine enthusiasts as well to professionals, it became an only-for-professionals event, with a strong focus on the luxury component of the location. Another recent event is “*Naturale*”, in Abruzzo, organized by the cultural association *Dinamiche Bio* since 2014, and open to everybody.

During the last 5 years, an interesting figure of relevance to our discussion is *Andrea Marchetti*. *Marchetti* is a wine enthusiast who, thanks to his passion and a series of fortunate events, has created two fairs that have gained a lot of attention within the field: *Vinessum*, in 2014, and *Back to the Wine*, in 2016, both held in the north-east of Italy. As he says:

“The organizational thing is a consequence of my passion... Having frequented wine environments ... tasted ... I had always dreams related to wine ... making a wine ... organizing ... You have to encounter the right situation... the right person ... In 2014 a person who collaborated with *Castelguelfo* municipality at a festival of wine and piadine ... he said ‘why we do not do something more dedicated to wine?’ And not being in the wine field he did not know how to do it ... so he asked me to cooperate to build a festival?’ ... It happened all by chance... there was not a willingness ... it was a long and complex thing ...And the first edition of *Vinessum* had a good response ... the following year we tripled the number of winemakers... I had no experience but I started to contact the producers my friends ... I contacted those I knew best ...”

Last but not least, in early 2016 it was the turn of a new winemakers association *V.A.N* (Vine-growers Artisanal Naturals) – composed also by vine-growers who were already associated to others associations – to create a wine fair in Rome. As we will see in the next section, this association is also one of the leading actors pushing for common criteria of wine selection for natural fairs.

Discussion

Having sketched a brief history of natural wine fairs in Italy, we can now try to summarize some features.

First of all, we have to give some number, in order to understand the dimensions of the events we are talking about: in 2018 *VinNatur* had 216 producers (including some food producers), *Sorgente del Vino* 187, *Live Wine* 163, *Vini di Vignaioli* 161, *ViniVeri* 153 (including some food producers), *La Terra Trema* 122 (including some food producers), *ViViT* 116 producers, *Vignaioli naturali a Roma* 109, *Io Bevo Così* 95, *Vinessum* 88, *Naturale* 53, *Vinissage* 67, *Vignaioli Artigiani Naturali* 45. We see from this list that the oldest fairs, being better known by wine professionals, have more appeal and resources to attract winemakers. As one organizer says, “after all, a producer come back to a fair if he/she has good commercial feedback”.

A second aspect is that we are facing different kinds of organizational agents in the field: some fairs are organized by winemakers associations (*ViViT/Vi.Te*, *ViniVeri*, *VinNatur*, *VAN*), some by cultural associations and institutional projects (*La Terra Trema*, *Naturale*, *Vinissage*), some by individuals, either wine enthusiasts (who are becoming or have already become professional organizers) like *Vinessum* or *Vini di Vignaioli*, or wine professionals (*Io Bevo Così*, *Vignaioli Naturali a Roma*, or *Wine Revolution* and *Torino Beve Bene*). If we relate this feature to the number of participants, we can say that the success of a fair is not completely linked to the type of organizer, even if the eight largest fairs are not organized by wine sellers/promoters. In the field, symbolic capital is very important:

"this year, being part of the fair is something that one can really consider to be an honour, because there are many producers who are asking to enter the fair, and the allowed posts are limited, so we have a waiting list... however, be part of it is an honour and a burden, you go there to represent well a certain typology of wines ... " (*Federico*, winemaker)

Beside to symbolic capital, social capital is another vector that can explain the choice of a wine producer for attending one particular fair instead of another:

“This year I will not have enough wine, so I’ve decided to not attend any fairs, apart from La Terra Trema: that was the first fair I attended, the first bottles I sold outside the cellar, so I like to be there, it’s a feast, I have a lot of friends there”

A third feature that distinguishes fairs is their orientation towards professionals (wine sellers, distributors, importers, restaurants owners, etc.): while all fairs are attended by wine professionals, not all of them devote the same attention to their needs, for instance by allowing free entrance or reserving dedicated tasting spaces. ViniVeri reserves free entrance for journalists and bloggers, importers, and applies a special fee for sommeliers and restaurants, but the public is mixed during the event. Vini di Vignaioli reserves one of the two tasting days to wine professionals; Live Wine gives free entrance to journalists, bloggers and wine importers, and the other professionals have a discount on tickets. VinNatur has a mixed public, but gives free entrance to journalists, bloggers and international importers. More importantly, these categories have a dedicated and restricted tasting area where all the producers leave one or more wines of their selection, for free tasting, in a very comfortable setting, compared to the crowded and noisy stands of the fairs.

“Entering the tasting room is like moving to another world: a second before you were shoving to gain the right to taste and speak to the winemaker, competing with already drunk enthusiasts. When the attendant leaves, you enter the room, you find yourself in a quiet place, where everybody takes tasting notes and speaks in whispers” (field note, 22/03/2015) Sorgente del Vino favours the press and restaurants owners with free entrance, but does not extend concession fees to distributors and importers. La Terra Trema, in line with its political stance on favour of disintermediation and the reduction of mark ups, does not provide free entrance to any professional: the price is the same for everybody. Vinissage does likewise, both because of the background of Officina Enoica (as mentioned before, the members come from Critical Wine), and because the other partner is the municipality of Asti, which is understandably interested more in wine enthusiasts and wine tourists than professionals. Vignaioli Naturali a Roma, at least officially, does not provide any special entrance fee, and VAN acts the same way, even if the ticket price is very low. Naturale gives free entrance both to the press and wine professionals. At the opposite side of the spectrum, we find a fair like Io Bevo Così, open only to wine professionals (and press, of course).

Different kinds of attitudes toward professionals are recognizable also when is at stake the other side of the possible involvement of professionals, as exhibitors. More and more distributors want to participate in natural wine fairs, in order to present a panel of wines and producers instead of a single one producer for each stand. As mentioned in the previous section, the first event at Villa Favorita saw the participation and active organizational contribution of Velier, with the brand Triple A. Over the years – as I experienced also in my role as a wine selector – some fairs have had a contradictory attitude toward distributors, officially not indicating their participation, but actually allowing, instead of the presence of winemakers, that of distribution commercial directors or owners. The most “ideological” fairs – such as La Terra Trema and Vinissage – as well as some of the oldest fairs – such as Vini di Vignaioli and Sorgente del Vino – are the ones that have notably refused completely or discouraged the participation of distributors. The two main fairs – Villa Favorita and ViniVeri – officially don’t mention wine distributors as exhibitors, but one can see behind the stands the participation of natural wine distributors such as Vite, Venti10 and That’s Wine. In other cases, such as Live Wine, Naturale, Vinissum, etc., distributors are shown clearly on the fairs websites and brochures and don’t present any problem to the organizers.

The last two relevant features to examine are connected: one is how all this fairs and organizers decide which winemakers hosting, and the other is how much they emphasises on websites, brochure and also in the name of the event, the concept of “naturalness”.

As we said, VinNatur links the participation in the fair Villa Favorita to becoming part of the association. In doing so, the winemakers accept to submit their wines either to a panel of tasters either to chemical analysis. Though, I have collected many statements from winemakers refused by the fair without an explanation, and then admitted some years later, without any change in winemaking; or, producers perfectly respondent to chemical criteria and producing protocols, but with wine reputed too much “perfect”, and so not accepted by the association. ViniVeri has rules about the processes in vineyard and in cellar, also a tasting panel, but it also seems not having completely transparent criteria of selection.

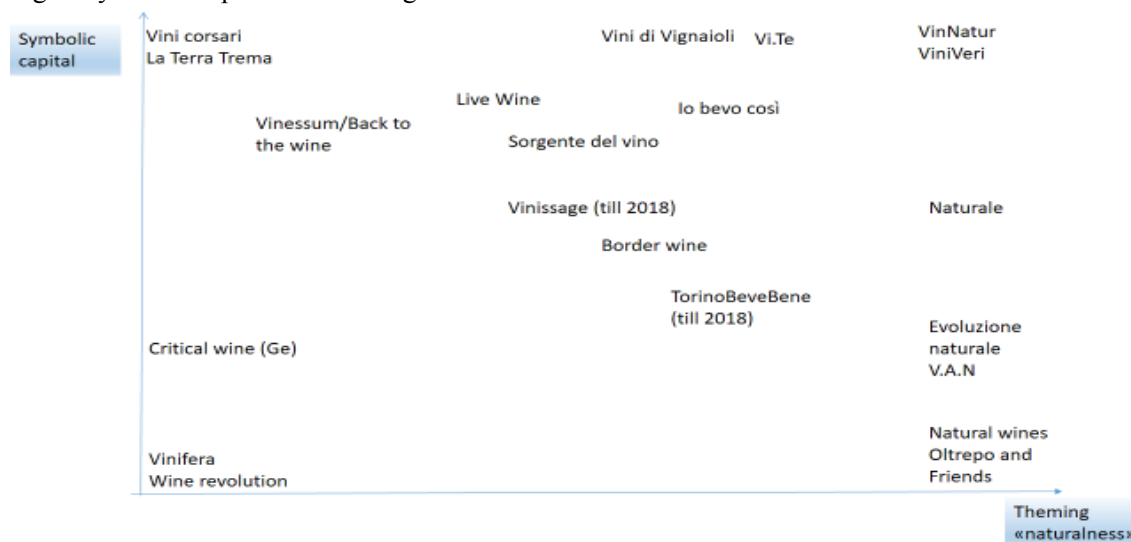
A step toward the uniformization of rules of selection by natural wine fairs was made by the organisers of Vini di Vignaioli/LiveWine, ViViT and V.A.N.: since the end of 2017, the process of selection to these fairs is uniformized, and so are the forms that winemakers have to fill, granting their naturality. Every year, a sample of wines will be analysed to search sulphites and chemical residues.

In other fairs, the orienting criteria are left to the preferences of the organisers: the organisers of Sorgente del Vino, for instance, admit how it would be impossible for them to check effectively all the producers, and say that sometimes they made some mistake of evaluation

The concept of “naturalness” is strongly emphasised by VinNatur, ViniVeri, Naturale, Natural Wines OltrePo and Friends, Vino naturalmente vino. Other fairs prefer to mix some other issues to the theming of naturalness, like Sorgente del vino defining itself as “Fair of natural, traditional and *terroir* wines”, or Live wine as “Fair of craft wines produced by natural methods”. The more political fairs, like La Terra Trema and Critical Wine don’t refer at all to the issue of naturalness, but they insist on disintermediation and sustainability.

We can try to represent the field of natural wine fairs in a two dimensional space: drawing data from a survey that I submitted in FB and Wa groups mentioned above, asking professionals, wine producers and wine enthusiast to name and rank the most important natural wine fairs they deem relevant to mention, I managed to create an index of symbolic capital; it is possible to situate the mentioned fairs in a scatter diagram with symbolic capital on Y axe and in fig. 1 the degree of thematized naturalness (resulting from the analysis of website and official brochures), and in fig. 2 the focus on wine professionals.

Fig. 1 Symbolic capital and theming “naturalness”



As we can see here, there is very few relation between the degree of theming naturalness and the symbolic capital of a natural wine fair. Instead, in some way the oldest fairs, structuring the field from the beginning, accumulated symbolic capital both among professionals and wine enthusiasts.

Fig. 2 Symbolic capital and focus on wine professionals



Here we can see how, with the exception of the high politicized fair La Terra Trema and the relatively new fair Vini Corsari, organised with the cooperation by one of the most iconic craft and natural wine producers in Italy, a high symbolic capital is associated with a major degree of focusing on wine professionals.

Conclusions

This article intended to give an historical and typological sketch of natural wine fairs in Italy. As we have seen, these is a field in constant motion, where new social agents – if possessing a good social capital, specific cultural capital and symbolic capital in the field – are still able to leave a mark and transform the field itself. We see also a general trend to multiply the association behind the fairs, softening by a recent attempt to create some convergence.

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