1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to discuss and analyse the various issues associated with regions with respect to the establishment of region-specific products, and the legal protection of these products and regions. From a sustainability standpoint, this paper presents a case where the traditional goals of the sustainability agenda – being environmental protection and the preservation of the well-being of the people are aligned in the pursuit of a mutual goal – that of the preservation of France's national identity through the sustainability of Champagne, and the Champagne region itself.

In presenting this case, this paper firstly sets out to define the concept of a region. In order to do this, several perspectives are examined due to the complexity of defining the concept. This paper then goes on to analyse why regions are important and indeed, why they matter in establishing recognition and protection of locally made products. In order for these products to be protected, the regions themselves that they originate from need to be identified. Related to this is the concept of territory, and, as such, this will be mentioned also.

A major section of this paper will analyse issues with respect to the importance of a country's traditions behind their local products. France has developed a strong local product system, and has consistently placed high importance on these products being protected appropriately. The French government has played a crucial role in establishing laws in order to provide legal protection to culturally significant products that are tied to specific geographical regions. This has been done primarily through the AOC, which requires that a product's historical significance be proven in order for

certification to be granted. Product labelling plays a crucial role in the success of a unique product such as Champagne. The development of geographical indications has seen the protection of regional-specific products such as Champagne being strengthened on an international scale. However, Champagne can (rightfully so) be seen as being a luxury good. Therefore, one may question the need for a product such as Champagne, given the current economic climate. After all, isn't Champagne merely an extravagance, and therefore, not necessary? This paper will argue that there is much more to Champagne – that Champagne plays a crucial role to France's national identity, therefore justifying the legal protection afforded to the region and the need to ensure the sustainability of the region for future generations, despite Champagne being a luxury good.

2. FRANCE AND ITS' NATIONAL IDENTITY

France is one of the oldest established states in the world, and her self-image as a unique and exemplary nation has drawn more on universalist discourse than on narrow definitions of common ethnicity (Jenkins, in Blowen, Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 13-14). French national identity has traditionally been highly politicised, for at least three major reasons (Jenkins, in Blowen, Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 14-15):

First, because of the key historical role of the state in building national consciousness; a process which began under the absolute monarchy, was accelerated by the Revolution and Napoleon, and 'completed' under successive Republics since 1870 through the gradual integration of different regions, social classes and ethnic

minorities into the national community. Champagne was integral in this – it was a drink to be seen in possession of, favoured by the wealthy, as well as the Monarchy themselves.

Second, because this deep interdependence of state and nation has ever since the Revolution made national identity a politically divisive concept; rival ideological movements seeking to control the state have claimed to be the true representatives of authentic 'national' traditions and aspirations.

Finally, ever since the Revolution, the French state, especially in its democratic form as la Republique, has promoted the idea of France as an exemplary nation with a universal vocation, a world power with a mission civilisatrice, a country whose values were those to which the rest of humanity aspired, and whose duty it was to disseminate these values, not least in the colonial territories where it had direct influence. However strong these links are, in recent times, "globalisation has brought cultural threats to France from both outside and inside" (Reynolds, in Blowen, Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 25).

3. DEFINING A REGION

The concept of 'region' is conceptually arbitrary and problematic (Grigg, 1969; Urry, 1981b) Urry p. 84). The concept has been defined from various perspectives. Firstly, Van Ittersum and Meulenberg define a region "as an area, situated within one or more countries, which forms an entity based on local, regional characteristics such as traditions, culture and scenery" (Van Ittersum and Meulenberg p. 2). Van Ittersum

and Meulenberg add to this by stating that by using a regional indication, marketers are able to exploit existing associations consumers have with the region and provide their product with an image. Together with their specific product qualities, this regional image can create a unique identity for these regional products and in this way add value to them. With these two points in mind, Van Ittersum and Meulenberg provide an additional definition, that of regional product: A regional product is defined as “a product whose quality and/or fame can be attributed to its region of origin and which is marketed using the name of the region of origin” (Van Ittersum and Meulenberg p. 2). The term ‘region’ has also been defined by Keating as follows:

“an economic definition of a region would focus on common production patterns, interdependencies and market linkages, and labour markets. A broader functional definition would add patterns of social interaction, including leisure, recreation and travel patterns. Such functional regions are discernible in metropolitan areas, focused on large cities or conurbations but they may also be drawn more widely, on a provincial scale” (Keating p. 9).

In addition, regions may also be seen as institutional divisions, historically constituted, or created more recently, and varying from bodies established for the convenience of state administrators, to political institutions built by political action on the ground (Keating p. 9-10). Finally, regions always require some kind of boundaries, even if these do not need to be exclusive physical lines as has typically been the case with state territories (Paasi p. 16)

4. WHY REGIONS MATTER

Regions matter because they have become a key level in functional transformation, namely as a nexus of interdependencies. The transformation of the state has affected not only the relationship between government and civil society, but also the territorial expression of this (Keating p. 185). Governments have been more open to passing laws to protect locally made products from regions within their borders. Regions also matter politically, according to Keating, as they constitute a meeting place and an arena for negotiation of functional and territorial systems of action, in economics, society and politics. They provide, in many instances, a basis for identity, especially where they possess their own language, culture or strong historical traditions (Keating p. 185). The most specific power of the regions is undoubtedly that of economic development considered from a neo-Fordist perspective:

"regional intervention is often analysed as functional in an economy where the localisation of enterprises is more and more disputed for reasons relating to fiscal and employment resources, where information and communication are increasingly associated with production, where consequently the environment of firms increasingly determines their performance and where the activity of small and medium-sized enterprises is in a way the crucible of growth" (Balme, in Le Gales and Lequesne p. 189-190).

Balme's point emphasises that the identification, recognition and protection of locally made products from regions within a country's borders will assist in the development of a nation's economy.

5. THE CONCEPT OF TERRITORY

A region is constituted from a territory, whose significance is given by its functional and political content (Keating p. 79). Moreover, the origin of a product (which stems from its' region and territory) "is used strategically as a synthetic indicator of the quality of the typical product, in order to allow the exploitation of 'reputation rents' by the actors of the production system" (Pacciani, Belletti et al. p. 6). That is, premiums attached to the prices of goods produced in regions that are known to produce these particular goods to an exceptional standard. The opportunity of exploiting these territorial quality rents, which are tied to regions that are protected in particular "is strictly tied to the capacity of local actors to create institutional processes that can regulate the use of these free goods also letting people economically (and locally) benefit from the opportunities that come from them." (Pacciani, Belletti et al. p. 4) Examples include increased land values, increased sales of and demand for products, increased tourism to the region, and so on. Using our example of Champagne, it has been well established that this particular product and the region bearing its' name, are synonymous with the world's best quality sparkling wines, with prices and worldwide demand to match.

6. ROLE OF LOCAL PRODUCTS AND HERITAGE

Local agricultural products can be defined as natural goods and services produced or provided by different enterprises in rural areas with an established socio-economic identity (Mira and Pause p. 1). One of the characteristics of any local product is by definition its attachment to a particular place (Berard and Marcenay, in Blowen,

Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 160). These physical factors alone do not explain what creates the specificity of a product. It is human intervention, through technical knowledge and savoir-faire of this notion of a tie to a place, allowing these physical factors to express themselves (Berard and Marcenay, in Blowen, Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 160). This notion of identity is crucial to the transition of a product into a form of heritage. Indeed, vast numbers of products are now claimed to possess a value as 'heritage' under the pressure of many different social actors, but principally their producers. This dynamic process conjures up a link between time, whether past, present, or future, between men and women sharing images, stories, memories and space (Berard and Marcenay, in Blowen, Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 162).

Heritage, whether it be an object, monument, inherited skill or symbolic representation, must be considered as an identity marker and distinguishing feature of a social group (Bessiere p. 26) and is therefore necessary in our discussion. The concept of heritage leads us to a discussion of the continuity between past and present. Heritage provides historical depth and a permanent pattern in a perpetually changing world. As a temporal link, it is indistinguishable from tradition (Bessiere p. 26). In the words of Bessiere, "beyond that continuity, beyond that legacy which is passed on, heritage (along with traditional practices) is part of the present, and at the same time holds promises for the future." (Bessiere p. 26) This helps to ensure some degree of consistency and assurance for society because heritage and things associated with it will always be present in society and sought to be protected by governments and citizens of nations due to their significance. Bessire continues by stating that (Bessiere p. 26-27):

> "the problem of the past is a modern one. People have always known how to make up technical, socio-economic and symbolic solutions using heritage components. Heritage is therefore no longer considered solely as a link between past and present, but also as a reservoir of meaning necessary to understand the world: a resource in order to elaborate alterity and consequently identity. So, we may view heritage more as a social construction than something fossilised and unchanging that gets handed down as such. Heritage continuously builds up and changes. It is an evolving social product constantly under review and ever changing. The expression 'migrating memories' captures this dynamic feature".

Finally, heritage must be legitimised in order to be genuine: this means giving the consumer a maximum guarantee of the historical content, origins and roots, which are the most important conditions for a successful heritage market (Bessiere p. 28).

7. THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADITIONS BEHIND PRODUCTS

Personal identities are certainly expressed through consumption, but enjoyment of a 'commodity' only partly results from its physical consumption (living, visiting or working in rural areas). It also arises from what this consumption says about the consumer (Hoggart, Buller and Black p. 26). Prior to purchase, during and after consumption of goods such as Champagne, the consumer can experience emotions associated with being seen with Champagne, and the accompanying social class implications that come with it.

Moreover, the strength and adaptability of genuine traditions is not to be confused with the ‘invention of tradition’. Where the old ways are alive, traditions need to be neither revived nor invented (Hogsbawm, in Hogsbawm and Ranger p. 8). This is due to the fact that they play an integral part in the function of the society/region/nation in question. Finally, according to Hogsbawm “it may be suggested that where they are invented, it is often not because old ways are no longer available or viable, but because they are deliberately not used or adapted” (Hogsbawm, in Hogsbawm and Ranger p. 8).

8. REGION QUALITY

As discussed “local producers need to be able to distinguish their product in the eyes of consumers from generic, sometimes cheaper competitors” (Sautier and van de Kop, in van de Kop, Sautier and Gerz (Edts.) p. 17) and also to guard against forgeries. Also, “the more global the market, the more important are the cheaper competitors. The more global the market, the more important are the criteria used in this distinction”, according to Sautier and van de Kop (Sautier and van de Kop, in van de Kop, Sautier and Gerz (Edts.) p. 17). When considering a region and its’ products, Sautier and van de Kop argue further that “people from a particular region or ethnic group tend to look for foods they are familiar with back home” (Sautier and van de Kop, in van de Kop, Sautier and Gerz (Edts.) p. 17).

Region of origin is certainly relevant when consumers compare and select wines for personal consumption. However, previous research is equivocal regarding its relative salience, with some studies indicating that region is less important than price,

colour/variety, and brand name, and others reporting that it is the most important attribute affecting choice (Areni p. 359). This is particularly important to keep in mind because products such as Champagne command premium prices on the basis that they are originating from the Champagne region. This supposedly makes them a superior product, therefore, compared to those sparkling wines that originate from outside the region. This is supported by Areni, who claims that French wines enjoy a prestige that is unmatched by any other wine producing country, and there is little doubt that the region equity of France is central to the success of French wineries entering foreign markets. Although French prestige may foster perceptions of higher prices, French wines, nonetheless, fare well when consumers compare and select wines on the basis of region (Areni p. 359-360), therefore demonstrating the significance of regions when considering wines.

Furthermore, Areni's research suggests that lesser known regions would be well advised to highlight attributes on which they are likely to compare favourably (e.g. value for the money, performance in competitions, emphasis on a specific variety, etc.) rather than focusing solely on the production region. On the other hand, wineries located in regions having strong reputations are likely to benefit from cooperative promotions focusing on the region, and would be well advised to manipulate the in-store environment (i.e. via labelling, signage, special displays, etc.) to maximise the salience of the region attribute (Areni p. 363). We can once again use Champagne as an example here. Champagne uses its regional qualities to justify the premium prices it commands. Growers outside the Champagne region command much less money for what they would argue is very close to their product's much more expensive cousin.

Also, as people earn more, they consume a wider range of products: they are less concerned with quantity and more with quality (Van de Kop and Sautier, in van de Kop, Sautier and Gerz (Edts.) p. 24). This is true to a point. It could also be argued that quantity remains in fact an equal concern for the wealthy in that they desire more of the higher-priced, higher quality products, such as Champagne.

Small and medium enterprises do not have to build regional food reputations from scratch. The Champagne area in France, for instance, was historically poor and depressed. Local wine growers struggled against the climatic limitations to create wine, eventually developing the expertise that gives the region today its worldwide fame and economic success (INAO, 2005) Van de Kop and Sautier, in van de Kop, Sautier and Gerz (Edts.) p. 27). This demonstrates that over time it is possible for products that are of high quality and/or possess a strong cultural or regional association can be produced just about anywhere, whether it be a developed or developing country. All that is needed is time, and the work to make it happen.

9. REGIONAL IDENTIFICATION

Keating claims that “it is easy to note that regional identity is a key element in the construction of regions as social and political spaces and systems of action. It is more difficult to define just what this identity consists of, or how it affects collective action and politics.” (Keating p. 85) Like regions themselves, “regional identity may be rooted in historical traditions and myths but, in its contemporary form, it is a social construction, forged in a specific context under the influence of social, economic and political pressures.” (Keating p. 87)

Local identities, such as those within France, which predominate in many parts of Europe, are typically based on personal experience, individual contact and events of everyday life. “Regional identity is another matter, since it requires citizens to relate to people whom they only know at second hand, through the media, political parties or broader social institutions. Like national identities, therefore, it rests upon ‘imagined communities’ rather than lived experience” (Keating p. 87).

Using Champagne as an example, it has received regional protection, as well as protection on a global scale thanks to international agreements. This has occurred as a result of the significance of Champagne in French history and the development of French culture. However, it is likely that only a small number of the Champagne’s supporters actually assist in its’ production – most of them are the actual consumers of the wine who are all around the world.

10. REGIONAL LABELLING

Van Ittersum and Meulenberg argue that:

> “the success of regulations protecting regional products largely depends on consumers’ appreciation of regional certification labels that inform them that the name of the regional product is protected and that the authentic regional product, and not an imitator version, is for sale. However, consumers’ appreciation of regional certification labels has been studied with little consideration for the image of, the associations with, and beliefs about these labels as a separate construct”. (Van Ittersum and Meulenberg p. 3)

Regional certification labels signal authenticity and genuineness – they warrant that the protected product is the authentic product actually produced in the region denoted by the name of the product. While the name of the region of origin provides consumers with information about the quality level of the product, a regional certification label warrants that the product the consumer buys is the authentic product with that specific quality level (Van Ittersum and Meulenberg p. 4). This assists consumers in choosing a product that suits their needs while also allowing producers to command higher prices once they have been certified. Additionally, Van Ittersum and Meulenberg point out that:

Consumer's relative attitude towards the protected regional product is defined as a learned predisposition to respond to the protected regional product in a consistently more favourable or unfavourable way than to other products that are not protected (Van Ittersum and Meulenberg p. 5).

These above points help to explain why protection for regional products is desired by producers, because consumers are influenced by them when purchasing products.

Finally, consumers' appreciation of regional certification labels may provide opportunities to increase consumer demand by marketing the protected regional product with a regional certification label (Van Ittersum and Meulenberg p. 17). As mentioned, this occurs because the label provides consumers with the assurance that they are purchasing the authentic product from the specified region. Evidence of the economic benefits that regional labelling can bring and the close associations between

region of origin and consumer perceptions of quality, is demonstrated by the premium prices that these products often command (Parrott, Wilson and Murdoch p. 247-248).

11. ROLE OF FRENCH LEGISLATION IN THE PROTECTION OF REGIONS AND TRADITIONS: AOCs

The current French legislation with respect to obtaining regional protection requires producers "to prove a historical link and geographical basis as well as a 'traditional' dimension to the production process" (Berard and Marcenay, in Blowen, Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 165). As producers who happen to fall outside the proposed zone of protection may suffer serious economic consequences, often in the range of millions of dollars, as they:

"may no longer be able to use the name and notoriety of a product to market their produce, it is vital for those submitting a case for geographical protection to do so with the utmost thoroughness" (Berard and Marcenay, in Blowen, Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 165).

Regional products that are guaranteed to come from a specific area and are made in a particular way are one way to restore trust among consumers (Van de Kop and Sautier, in van de Kop, Sautier and Gerz (Edts.) p. 25). This can be done through the establishment of intellectual property protection mechanisms such as Appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC)s.

In order for an AOC to be granted, a product must have a historical significance and be tied to the region it is claimed to originate from. Champagne, being AOC-certified, thus satisfies the above requirements of heritage. The protection of a product and the restriction of its zone of production to a specific geographical area, obliges the producers to define just what is unique about their product and to provide adequate historical proofs to legitimise their claims (Berard and Marcenay, in Blowen, Demossier and Picard (Edts.) p. 164). Boosting local products by promoting their quality involves a collective effort to identify and differentiate between products on a regional basis(Mira and Pause p. 2). This involves a three-step process (Mira and Pause p. 2-3) :

Firstly, identification enables a link to be forged between the product and a region's landscape and culture.

Secondly, protecting them sometimes means that a culinary heritage, contributing to regional identity, can be preserved.

Lastly, encouraging a partnership approach to local products can, through synergies, have a highly positive impact on their promotion.

Certainly, this has been achieved in the Champagne region.

As of January 1, 2007, all of the collective organisations of AOC producers must be recognised by the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine (INAO), which ensures that each group has a clearly-defined mission and respects the essential principles of

“representivity” and “democracy” in the structure of the organisation (INAO 2007), in Trubek and Brown p. 25). By rooting production in a particular place, usually a region, AOC labels are seen as a source of resistance against the homogenising effects of ‘placeless’ food systems. As:

“the AOC system has potential benefits for both producers and consumers. By providing information on the place, as well as the process, of production, AOCs provide a guarantee of quality for consumers. By preserving traditional agricultural practices and ensuring that the bulk of activities associated with the production and sales of a particular product stay within the region, AOC labels can also contribute to rural development and the maintenance of small farms and artisanal production methods” (Trubek and Brown p. 24).

AOCs therefore play a fundamental role in the protection of specific regional products, and provide producers with the ability to receive income for their products far in excess of the income they would receive if they originated from outside the AOC-protected area.

The second key characteristic of the French AOC system is that it recognises only products with a clearly defined link to the terroir of a very specific region. Traditional production methods and the presence of an organised cooperative of winemakers in a region may create the initial impetus for deeming a certain area a ‘controlled appellation,’ but this is not enough. The INAO also insists on determining accurate boundaries (either administrative, or preferably, natural) that define a unique geographic area. So, for example, the AOC Faugères region is known for a soil

dominated by schist, while the AOC Pauillac region is known for its deep, gravelly soil. Given the complex relationships between environmental, agricultural, and culinary practices that play out in the evolution of product, a diverse group of actors (including geologists, geographers, soil scientists, plant scientists, food scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians) is often involved in the delimitation of an AOC boundary (Trubek and Brown p. 25). The boundaries of AOC-protected areas can be changed, as previously mentioned. Of course, this has implications for those growers close to the revised boundaries with respect to who will benefit from the AOC protection and who will miss out.

12. ROLE OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

Geographical indications are much more than the indication of a product with a place. As a type of intellectual property that is attached to territory they are means for the social and industrial groups with rights to them to protect and distinguish their products (Moran p. 264). Very few arguments can be made against the use of geographical indications that guarantee only that the product comes from a specified territory. It is both the customers' right to know where the product originates and a protection to producers in the specific area that the name of their locality, region or country is being used legitimately (Moran at 266-267). GIs assist in this information being conveyed to consumers. At more local scales, individual states have their own mixture of laws which protect geographical names.

13. CONSUMPTION

The classical sociology of Marx, Weber and Simmel considered consumption a function of production, and consumption patterns a corollary of class position. Consumption was an expression of a central social hierarchy, inequalities of resource being turned into tools of class and status group struggle (Wade p. 7). Also, the consumption of regional food and drink may also indicate a nostalgia for life near nature, as enjoyed in the past, for the place where the consumer was born and raised, or for the place where he spends his holidays or has his country home. Thus, the consumption of regionally denominated food and drink feeds the urban consumer's dreams and imagination and reminds him of his origins, an enjoyable holiday resort (Skuras and Dimara p. 804). However, the most sophisticated exponent of the theoretical view that consumption behaviour is an expression of class position is Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu (1994), in Wade p. 9):

"taste, knowledge and the desire for particular commodities are necessary elements in the process of class formation and class reproduction. Classes can be identified by their consumption patterns; and consumer behaviour can be explained in terms of the role of display and social judgment in the formation of class identities".

Thus, overall, Bourdieu maintains that consumption behaviour, broadly conceived, is a means whereby social classes display their 'cultural capital' and their place in a hierarchical system of social distraction. Consumption practices are generated by the habitus, a learned set of dispositions that underpin and generate social and cultural judgments in both familiar and novel social situations. Taste is deeply socially

embedded in affective class cultures and is normatively highly regulated (Wade p. 10). Using the example of the French and the Champagne region, we can see that the people in France desire Champagne due to its' cultural roots in French society, as well as the status that comes with it. This, as stated previously, connects Champagne to a certain (high) social class.

The predicament, a problem of modernity and post-modernity, is the requirement that individuals construct their own selves. No longer are people placed in society by way of their lineage, caste or class, but each must invent and consciously create a personal identity. In this process, consumption is considered central, for commodities are principal channels for the communication of self-identity. People define themselves through the messages they transmit to others by the goods and practices they possess and display. Thus, whether they have personally exercised choice or not, they will be judged to have done so (Wade p. 10-11). In our case, the human factor in the production process "is embedded in the 'tradition and cultural heritage element of the regional image, representing, among others, the expertise and skills present in the region and the inherited craftsmanship." (Skuras and Dimara p. 803) The environment factor in the production process "is embedded in the 'natural resources' element of the regional image, representing, among others, the natural and climatic suitability of a region for making a product" (Skuras and Dimara p. 804).

Sustainable consumption is based on a decision-making process that takes the consumer's social responsibility into account in addition to individual needs and wants (Meulenberg, 2003, in Vermeir and Verbeke p. 170). However, Evans (p. 551) points out that despite the prevalence of 'sustainable consumption' on popular,

political and academic agendas, there remains a good deal of ambiguity and uncertainty as to what it means and what it entails. Hinton and Goodman offer the following:

‘sustainable consumption criss-crosses and works through a multitude of consumption-related behaviours and scales; this is particularly true given the rather ‘slippery’ and open nature of what has counted as ‘sustainability’ over time. (Hinton and Goodman, p. 246)’

Evans (p. 551) argues further that sustainable consumption is a matter of consuming differently by consuming less, both in terms of the quantities of goods and services consumed (volume) and the environmental impacts of that which is consumed (composition). Consuming less in order to reduce environmental impacts incorporates an ethical dimension insofar as it can be seen as an effort to do ‘good’ or ‘right’ by future generations, and the environment itself. From the perspective of the wine industry, this has given rise to the search for and implementation of sustainable winemaking practices, however further discussion on this issue is a matter for another paper.

For our purposes, Koos (p. 137) offers one of the more interesting views, arguing that from an economic perspective, sustainability is assumed to be a costly good. Hence, the willingness to invest in the environment competes with other needs such as further material acquisition or entertainment. In this perspective, sustainability becomes a ‘luxury good’. Considering this, sustainability may be seen as something only to be pursued when circumstances permit. In light of the fact that Champagne is, generally

speaking, seen as a luxury good, this presents an interesting scenario. This paper has shown that Champagne has become central to the national identity of the French people as it has played an integral role in the nation's history, and this continues to this day as the French people go about their daily lives, seeking to be seen anywhere Champagne is being consumed. Acknowledgement of the role Champagne plays in France's national identity has resulted in the development of the stringent legal regime (AOC) that the French have set up to protect Champagne, the Champagne region, among other products that are unique to specific geographical regions. Therefore, despite the fact that Champagne is itself a luxury good, when we consider the sustainability of the Champagne region example illustrated throughout this paper, and its relationship to France's national identity, sustainability of the Champagne region and the beverage bearing its name cannot be can regarded as being a luxury. It is a necessity, one that the very well-being of French society and the French people themselves depend upon.

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