

Using proximity theory to understand actor engagement in the French Wine Industry

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Abstract:

◦*Purpose:* This project aims to identify the influence of geographic, organised and social proximity on the engagement of actors in the French wine industry. Further, we identify the relational connections and the behavioural processes of resource integration, knowledge sharing and learning that depict engagement.

◦*Design/methodology/approach:* 23 in-depth interviews were conducted with a series of wine growers, producers, and industry experts from the wine industry in Alsace, France. The interviews were analysed by thematic coding of the transcripts.

◦*Findings:* The results reveal that geographic proximity in the Alsace wine region is currently counter-productive to actor engagement. While wine industry bodies based on traditional organised proximity are ineffectual, those that have organically emerged from strong social proximity are encouraging engagement, information sharing and innovation.

◦*Practical implications:* Engagement among actors in the same industry leads to beneficial outcomes, including the co-creation of activities such as innovation and destination marketing. Understanding the influence of geographic, organised and social proximity on the engagement among actors will allow for strategies to enhance the relational connections in the Alsace wine region. Thus, this research will provide a framework to enable these connections and associated skills to be developed among participants in the wine sector.

Key words: engagement, proximity, co-creation, wine, actor engagement
