

## **Uneven cultural seeding and infusion in the Pacific Northwest wine industry**

Organizational culture shapes everyday beliefs and actions within an organizational context by providing informal social rules of “how things are done around here” (Martin, 2002; Smircich, 1983). Recent work in organizational culture demonstrates that organizations flexibly exchange cultural beliefs and values with external groups, in a dyadic exchange across organizational boundaries (Canato, Ravasi, & Phillips, 2013; Harrison & Corley, 2011; Rindova, Dalpiaz, & Ravasi, 2011). At the organizational level, called ‘cultural cultivation’ (Harrison & Corley, 2011), this exchange process describes organizational culture as being more fluid and open to external cultural groups than had been previously conceptualized (Weber & Dacin, 2011). A bidirectional process, cultural cultivation involves the transfer of organizational cultural beliefs and practices to an external group, or ‘cultural seeding,’ as well as the transfer of cultural beliefs and practices from the external group into the organizational culture, or ‘cultural infusion’ (Harrison & Corley, 2011).

This novel conceptualization of organizational culture has important implications for how we understand everyday organizational life (Weber & Dacin, 2011). Once thought to be primarily shaped by interactions occurring within organizational boundaries, we now view everyday organizational actions as being substantially shaped by external beliefs and practices (Weber & Dacin, 2011). Over time, the bidirectional exchange processes of seeding and infusion shape greater alignment between the cultures of an organization and an external group, by increasing mutual understanding surrounding beliefs and practices exchanged (Harrison & Corley, 2011). These concepts have important implications for our understanding of why and how patterns of everyday organizational actions emerge in organizations, both at the organization- and industry-levels (Weber & Dacin, 2011).

However, we lack insight into industry-level implications of organizations engaging in cultural cultivation, as prior literature in management has only examined cultural cultivation in the context of single-organization case studies (Canato et al., 2013; Harrison & Corley, 2011; Rindova et al., 2011). What happens when multiple organizations engage in the cultural cultivation of the same industry-level group? Do organizations participate in the mechanisms of cultural seeding and cultural infusion similarly or differently? Do organizations and the industry-level group become aligned in their beliefs and practices, as has occurred between one organization and an external group?

In this study, I examine how multiple organizations engage in cultural seeding and cultural infusion with regard to a set of popular, industry-level environmental certified management standards (ECMS). Business sustainability, the challenge for organizations to improve social welfare and reduce their ecological impact while ensuring the effective achievement of organizational objectives (Sharma, 2003), is a salient issue to organizations in this industry, and a popular response to this issue has been for organizations to develop and adopt ECMS (Marshall, Cordano, & Silverman, 2005). In this study, I draw on interview data to inductively analyze aspects of cultural cultivation that are occurring across multiple vineyard organizations in the Pacific Northwest with respect to the adoption of practices related to the ECMS.

In this paper, I find that vineyard organizations engage unevenly in cultural seeding and cultural infusion with an external group, as some firms have more opportunity to transfer their own cultural beliefs and practices with the external group than do other organizations. First, I identify the mechanisms involved in the exchange of cultural meanings and practices between

the organizations and the ECMS regarding sustainability issues. Second, I find that these mechanisms underpin two developments in the overarching industry-level culture: increased agreement regarding the meaning and practice of 'sustainability' among organizations, and the emergence of a 'culture of certification adoption' at the industry level. The model that emerges from this paper describes cultural cultivation as being a more uneven process at the industry-level than has previously been conceptualized at the organizational level.

This study makes a key contribution to our understanding of organizational culture as a dynamic, embedded system, in that we see that organizations share strong consensus surrounding the meaning and practice of 'sustainability,' primarily stemming from the substantive adoption of ECMS practices. These findings suggest that when multiple organizations engage simultaneously in cultural cultivation with a shared external group, their cultural beliefs and practices surrounding a salient issue can become more similar through the shaping of and adaptation to the external group. In this way, substantive adoption of new meanings and practices could be a way for industry groups to instigate large-scale cultural changes across multiple organizations in an industry.