

# **Biodynamics: re-inventing wine branding**

**Weinakademiker 2009**

**Unit 7, Diploma in Wine & Spirits**

**Student:**

**Olle G. Swets**

**Nieuwe Prinsengracht 10-III**

**1018 XH Amsterdam**

**The Netherlands**

**e-mail: [olle@swetswinemanagement.com](mailto:olle@swetswinemanagement.com)**

**tel: 0031-(0)6-180 964 60**

## Abstract

The subject is very interesting because of the extremity between the opposition and the followers of Biodynamics. The current state of our planet calls for integrated and sustainable agriculture and the public has reacted on the situation. We see an ever increasing trend for sustainable and nature friendly products. The impact of viticulture on the environment is enormous. Viticulture is a monoculture, so in order to keep the soil fertile it needs constant care by humans. Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century an entire industry has emerged, completely focused on viticulture. This industry has developed an enormous range of chemical and artificial viticultural treatments. Apart from the chemical interventions, the mechanisation in the vineyards has created even more exhaustion of the soils, damaged the natural equilibrium and destroyed life, both human and animals.

Biodynamic wine is one of the viticultural practises that is very involved in environmentally and sustainable agriculture. Rudolf Steiner has developed this movement in the 1920's, it is an agricultural practise that is now practiced worldwide. It has a holistic perspective on the environment of a farm and involves all the natural elements, the soil, the producer and the cosmos. Biodynamics can be a very supportive method because of its holistic approach to agriculture. This holistic approach is exactly the reason why scientists and Biodynamics clash. This paper though, will focus not on the discussion about the objective and qualitative criteria of Biodynamics but on the positive character of the movement, which is the increasing awareness of producers for their entire environment. Following from this awareness is an increase in consciousness for a product (wine) of higher quality, which is clean and pure. Next to the awareness of increasing quality it can also affect the whole chain because also the clients become more aware of what product they choose to drink. There is a challenge though; Biodynamics has a very bad image that needs to be changed. Biodynamics need serious rebranding in order to develop, become effective and reach the public.

In order to get a better idea of how the actors of Biodynamics cope with the bad image, a number of conventional and unconventional producers from around Europe are interviewed. The interviews show that a large amount of them experiments with Biodynamic preparations, lunar positions, keeping livestock on the farm etcetera. The first argument the producers give is that they do not specifically want to follow the Biodynamic movement but the elements involved are improving their own health, the health of their customers and the natural environment. Even though a lot of the elements of Biodynamics seem to work very few of them chooses to be certified. Nobody uses Biodynamics as a way to brand his or her product as being the most natural there is.

So the discussion on qualitative criteria is paramount. In order to move away from the discussion, the proposal is to use Biodynamics as a branding technique. By introducing the technique of Relational branding the awareness of the whole chain needs to be increased. In order to do this we need to redefine the relationship between nature-product-producer and client. The brand Biodynamic is all about this relationship and the involvement of all the players and elements in the chain. Biodynamics need to be approached in this new and "dynamic" perspective. Only then is it possible to discuss the pros and cons of the practice as a branding debate, instead of continuing the discussion about the qualitative characteristics of Biodynamics.