

'Good' drinks: on flavour sublimes, spirits, and cocktails

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Enfin, as my grandma would say, enough chit chat, let's get to work! Reader, I hope you enjoy reading this thesis- Suzi, December 2021.

Abstract

Taste in food and drink reflects, shares, and recreates individual and shared identity. While taste in food has been much-researched, food sociological research on 'good' spirit and cocktail drinks was lacking. In this research I studied what makes a drink 'good', focusing on the views of 'flavour sublime' Spirit and Cocktail Professionals (SCPs). I rephrase 'taste' to 'goodness' to avoid connotations of structuralist distinction and elite 'good taste'.

Due to a lack of academic knowledge I chose to follow insiders' views on good drinks. I combined an ethnomethodological approach to data gathering, with a relational view on social constructs of taste to analyse and make sense of the data. I used an iterative, ethnomethodological data-collecting process: I gained background information and conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with SCPs. Fieldwork took place from August 2020 to January 2021, in the Netherlands and Copenhagen, Denmark, both on- and off-line due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

I describe SCPs as a community, their knowledge-ways, and their ideas on what makes a drink good.

The flavour sublime SCP community is connected by their belief that objective goodness exists and, for its capacity to make the drinker feel fully alive in the moment, should be pursued.

SCPs used a wide variety of heterogeneous information sources. They triangulated knowledge from various sources and combined technical/theoretical and experiential/embodied knowledge to arrive at a holistic view on drinks.

SCPs were found to understand drinks by how they fit into categories based on the ingredients and processes used in drinks production, as well as their geographical origin. SCPs both reproduced and subverted this categorisation, reducing the high knowledge barriers for understanding drinks categorisation by focusing instead on flavour. In a similar manner, SCPs both reproduced and rejected the dominance of large industrial alcohol companies.

I argued that what makes a drink good is the drinker's experience of it through the practice of drinking. This has two separate, intertwined aspects: the practice of tasting and enjoying. The practice of tasting is evaluative, knowledge-based and knowledge-creating. I applied Hennion and Teil's (2004) model of the practice of tasting: as occurring using artefacts, being processed through the body, done by individuals, who operate in social collectives. I found that SCPs use a wide array of indicators of goodness to judge whether a drink is good. Compared to Hennion and Teil's model (2004) SCPs diminish the individual element of tasting and emphasize the social/collective element. Enjoying, as a counter to the practice of tasting, is a letting-go of any judging on whether a drink is good, instead emphasising that a drink is good 'if it hits the spot'. Enjoying showcases the multiplicity, relationality and situationally of 'good' drinks and goodness; it argues that to SCPs good drinks are hedonistic, social, and not to be judged.

Lastly, I argue that underlying beliefs about 'what is goodness' determined what SCPs viewed as 'good' drinks and shaped SCP discourse on good drinks. I synthesized five such beliefs: apophatic goodness, Plato's drink, and capitalist, populist, and meritocratic goodness. These ideas can be held simultaneously, with SCPs fluidly moving between different ideas, showcasing the multiplicity of goodness.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
ABSTRACT	4
PREFACE	6
1 INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 FOOD, DRINKS, AND IDENTITY	7
1.2 PERFORMING IDENTITY THROUGH DRINK CHOICE	8
1.3 RESEARCH FOCUS AND DEFINITIONS	9
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	10
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	11
2.1 THEORIES ON TASTE	11
2.2 ETHNOMETHODOLOGY	14
2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	15
3 METHODOLOGY	18
3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN	18
3.2 GAINING BACKGROUND INFORMATION	18
3.3 INITIAL SCAN OF THE FIELD	19
3.4 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATION	20
3.5 DATA PROCESSING AND CODING	22
3.6 ETHICS, CONSENT, SAFETY AND POSITIONALITY	23
4 RESULTS	26
4.1 'FLAVOUR SUBLIME'; AN IMAGINARY COMMUNITY AND WHY I CHOSE TO STUDY IT	26
4.2 KNOWLEDGE	30
4.3 CATEGORISABILITY	34
4.4 WHAT MAKES A DRINK GOOD?	37
4.5 THE PRACTICE OF TASTING	39
4.6 ENJOYING: BEYOND THE GLASS	52
4.7 IDEAS ON GOODNESS	62
5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	65
5.1 RESEARCH PROCESS AND CHALLENGES	65
5.2 CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION	66
5.3 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS	68
5.4 CONCLUSIONS	70
6 REFERENCES	72
7 APPENDICES	76
7.1 APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE	76
7.2 APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM	77
7.3 APPENDIX 3: CODING AND DATA PROCESSING	78
7.4 APPENDIX 4: DETAILED RESULTS FOR CATEGORISABILITY	82
7.5 APPENDIX 5: DETAILED RESULTS FOR THE PRACTICE OF DRINKING	84

Preface

Vignette:

“Just like Opi Jan” my grandmother Nita sighed “Hij was ook zo’n lekkerbek. Zelf kookte hij niet, maar hij had hele precieze ideeën over hoe Babi pangang klaargemaakt moest worden!” / “He was also such a lekkerbek (epicurean). He didn’t cook, but he had very precise ideas of how Babi pangang (crispy pork belly) should be prepared!” She laughed, transitioning into a story over how she and her siblings had always been disgusted by their father’s breakfast of choice; bubur (rice porridge). “Zo vies! Elke ochtend weer die rijstepap, het leek net behanglijm!” / “So gross! Every morning again that rice porridge, it seemed exactly like glue paste!” My Opi (great-grandfather) Jan and I do not look much alike. Our lives have been very dissimilar. On the surface we share little, aside from not being very tall compared to Dutch people and having dark eyes; he was a Chinese man, born around the start of the 20th century, who married an Indonesian woman and was repatriated to the Netherlands after the Indonesian Independence war. What we do have in common is a love of delicious food; we are “lekkerbekken” which literally translates to delicious mouths, but would be known as epicures, gastronomes or ‘foodies’ in English. I like the foods he liked- my mother, brother, and to a lesser extent my grandmother are grossed out by them. Think rice porridge for breakfast (bubur), fish cheeks and crispy pork belly (babi pangang) ... above all we are specific in how and that the food must be prepared for optimal deliciousness. Our tastes are aligned. Nobody in my family is sure how it happened but everyone agrees, four generations later, a child was produced who, the family says, surely got her love of food and her taste straight from Opi Jan.

The above vignette* shows how entwined food and identity are. This includes not only what you eat, but also everything around it- why you eat it, where, when, with who, in what manner, *et cetera*. Who I am- where I come from, who I have become, and who I am becoming- is performed through my practices. To me a main practice for sharing care and showing identity, as is the case for my family, is food and drink. These social, sharing aspects were what inspired me to conduct this research.

*A vignette is a short story used to introduce or illustrate the main text (Cisneros, n.d.). I am the author of all vignettes in this thesis.

1 Introduction

1.1 Food, drinks, and identity

Vignette:

Think back to the last dinner with loved ones you had. What do you feel? What are your emotions? How does your body react? Tell me the story, the stories, behind your meal with loved ones. Who was eating with you and where? What did you eat, drink, did you talk and about what? If I asked you only for the menu, would your words carry the same weight? (Adapted from a conversation with my brother)

Food shapes, communicates, and carries identity. Food is more than flavour and nourishment; it can be a carrier of culture. It carries tensions over social status and belonging in the form of taste, taboos, memories, and emotions (Abarca, 2017; Bourdieu, 1984; Johnston and Baumann, 2014; Massoth, 2017).

Food is not limited to the solid things we eat. Drinks are grouped under food according to EU law (Regulation (EC) No 178/2002, Article 2). However, the social norms around drinks and food are not necessarily the same. This is demonstrated by Mary Douglas, who distinguished ‘meals’ and ‘drinks’ as separate in her essay ‘Deciphering a meal’ (1972). She noted that though both meals and drinks are social events in Western culture, sharing a meal connotes a higher level of intimacy than sharing drinks such as tea or cocktails. She also describes meals as being quite formally structured by socially constructed rules, while drinks are subject to fewer rules. The social constructs around food and drinks thus cannot be assumed to be the same. Yet while social constructs around food have been extensively studied, comparatively little research has been done on drinks. This is especially the case with alcoholic drinks, which are not necessary for nourishment and survival.

When we celebrate, when we relax, when we socialize, as legal adults in Western society, we (often) have a drink. In that context, ‘drink’ usually implies alcoholic drink; a sub-category of drinks consumed worldwide. While drinks are part of food, there is a very important difference between *alcoholic* drinks and food. Without food, we die. Without booze, we... well, we definitely do not die. We would miss out on the interesting physiological effects of alcohol. Consumption of alcohol, and the association of alcohol with socializing, is part of/grounded in food culture in Western Europe. This is visible in the prevalence of stories, rituals, mores, and stereotypes around alcoholic drinks as well as the economic importance (Rogers, 2014). The popularity of alcoholic drinks is also visible in Douglas’ (1972) comments on the social events of drinks versus meals; in discussing the differences in structures governing ‘meals’ and ‘drinks’, she adds: “*The judgment ‘It is too early for alcohol’ would both be rare and likely to be contested.*” (Douglas, 1972, p. 65). Douglas clearly associates ‘drinks’ as a social event with the consumption of alcoholic drinks, again showing the cultural embeddedness of alcoholic drinks in Western European culture.

I thus argue that while social constructs around drinks and meals, or foods, cannot be assumed to be the same, drinks have been studied less, while especially alcoholic drinks play a social role in Western European culture. I therefore focused on alcoholic drinks in this research. Throughout all following sections of this thesis, when using the word drink(s), I refer to alcoholic drinks.

1.2 Performing identity through drink choice

As with food, drinks can be part of performing one's identity and culture. Not only what we eat but also what we drink co-shapes, communicates, and carries identity and culture and is in turn shaped by them, which is exemplified by the following vignette.

Vignette:

It's happened time and time again. As I mention having a liking for Laphroaig 10, I see it- that spark lighting in his eyes, the immediate increase in interest. I suddenly become, to a whisky-loving man, more than I was before. But what is it about whisky that triggers this increase in interest? If I'd proclaimed a passionate love for wine coolers - had he known what they were- would it have triggered the spark? In that moment, I moved from a woman to a whisky woman. And no matter how initially flattering this can feel, to be viewed as 'special', the Laphroaig leaves a bitter aftertaste when considering the implications. If a whisky woman is decategorised as a typical woman, what does that mean about how we view women? Why would I want to be unlike other women? Why would I need approval of my drink selection? Why do we judge what one drinks as a tattletale of their identity? Who decides these norms, and their borders?

The above vignette focuses on my gender as an aspect of my identity, which I perform e.g., through drink choice. In this particular case, I subvert hegemonic gender norms by drinking whisky (apparently viewed as a masculine drink) and show the internal discomfort of being decategorised as 'a typical woman' and recategorised as 'a whisky woman'. While this de- and re-categorisation takes place in the eye of my conversational partner, the unnamed whisky-loving man, it does affect me. Performing my identity communicates it to the social world around me, but through the performance itself and through reactions on the performance, my identity is continuously shaped and re-shaped. This view on identity as performative and (re)produced through practices is informed by Butler's (1990a, b) work on gender as a socially construct reproduced by performative practices. It is also heavily shaped by Abarca's (2017) work on food practices as a means of sharing and reproducing identity both on an individual and a community level. Below I give several examples of how aspects of identity are associated with specific drink preferences: specific tastes. I use stereotypes and societal assumptions to demonstrate how drink choice is associated with gender, age, and sub-cultural background.

The links between gender identity, gender performance and drink choice were already shown in the above vignette. It also appears in pop culture. For example, as described by Balestier (2015) and Farrell (2014) in their Punch Magazine articles on 'drinking as a woman (who likes whiskey)' and as Waldman questioned in an article aptly named "What's so lame about "girly" drinks?" (2014). The idea that your drink of choice gives an indication of your personality and identity comes back in pop culture, for example as (e.g., Vamos, 2015; Mullins, 2017). Both these examples of pop culture analyses describe, de-categorise and re-categorise women, which shows an interaction between stereotypes and performances of gendered identity through taste. The taste-identity link is also shown in a 2014 New Yorker piece "Man, woman, bourbon" where writer Ian Crouch describes constructs of masculinity and femininity communicated in bourbon marketing and how such ads target gender anxieties as a sales technique, by posing specific bourbon brands as reinforcements for constructs of gender (Crouch, 2014).

Another aspect of performing identity appears in (sub-)cultural background, for example with French grape spirit cognac; in the Netherlands this is not established as a drink of choice for young people, while in the U.S.A. it is a status symbol in rap culture (The 6 Best Rap Songs That Mention Hennessy | Cognac Expert, n.d.). This goes to show how the intersecting fields of identity

construction and drinks have given rise to stereotypes and assumptions around drink choice, pop cultural boundaries in taste.

The above examples of performing identity through taste across gender ('girly' drinks), age ('old-people' drinks) and cultural background (cognac), and stereotypes around drinks (pop culture) confirm taste in drinks depends on and involves more than flavour alone. Articles such as those mentioned above show boundaries/ collective norms in how identity is performed through drink choice. The very pervasiveness of assumptions about what drink choices mean about a person indicates studying the topic of taste, drinks and identity could yield insights in how taste and identity shape, and are shaped by, food and drink in general. Drinks are, as food is, part of culture and linked to identity, to performance of identity and to taste.

Yet compared to food, social constructions of taste in drinks have been little studied. The social aspects of alcohol consumption paired with the lack of research into social construction of taste in alcoholic beverages show a gap in food sociological scientific knowledge. '

1.3 Research focus and definitions

As mentioned above, taste in wine, beer, specialty coffee and of course food has been extensively studied. However, little to nothing is known about the field of high end/fine flavour/specialty spirits and cocktails; the field is not defined academically. When different societal groups are talking about spirits, and by extension cocktails, what is meant by a 'good' drink? To answer this question, I focused on how taste in drinks is constructed by Spirits and Cocktail Professionals (SCPs). Before moving on to questioning what a good drink is, this section defines spirits, cocktails, and SCPs.

'Spirits' refers to distilled alcoholic beverages of any kind. This includes drinks based on distilled liquors, such as herb- or fruit-infused liqueurs. Spirits can be consumed as they are, which is called 'neat', but are frequently consumed in the form of cocktails as the high alcohol content of spirits can be unpleasant for some drinkers. Mixing a spirit into a cocktail can balance it out, take the harsh edge off, and make it more approachable. 'Cocktails' are mixed drinks, containing more than one ingredient, often but not necessarily containing spirits.

SCPs are individuals who work in the field(s) of spirits and cocktails. SCP jobs include bartenders, bar managers, bar or liquor store owners, and alcoholic drink producers.

I argue that not consumers, but Spirit and Cocktail Professionals were the tastemakers in this field, as only the most interested and knowledgeable consumers would even be aware of the infinite variety of existing drinks. In addition, only through bars and other drinking spaces can consumers sample spirits without buying the whole bottle. You can make a new dish by following a well-written recipe using available base ingredients. You cannot make a Negroni without buying a bottle of gin, a bottle of vermouth, and a bottle of red *amaro* (red bitter liqueur, often Italian). For specialty drinks such as single-cask whiskies or aged liqueurs, such bottles are not even available on the 'mainstream' consumer market; they are only available through good contacts with the right sellers, as interviewee Said explained, and tend to be prohibitively expensive. However, they can be tasted in the right drinking spaces. As in fine dining, fine cocktails are generally not re-creatable at home without a great investment of money, time, and effort. Spirit and Cocktail Professionals (SCPs), especially those who make the bar menus and run drinking spaces, thus determine what drink options are available for consumers. At the same time SCPs need to make and sell drinks that customers will buy, as this research takes place in a capitalist society. This gives an impulse to sell the most-liked drinks, creating a homogenous drink-scape (foodscape of drinks); like the McDonaldization George Ritter described (1993; 2009). 'Taste-

making' SCPs are then those that go in against this homogenisation by offering or creating non-mainstream drinks. I focused on these SCPs, who (try to) effect changes in drink taste; I refer to them as 'flavour sublime' SCPs.

'Flavour sublime' SCPs are SCPs who believe in the existence of, and actively pursue, flavour sublimines. I coined this term to describe the way the SCPs I studied self-identify; it is thus a result. However, it is introduced early on in this thesis to improve narrative flow and comprehension. The criteria for participant selection as 'flavour sublime' SCPs can be found in chapter 3. Methodology. In sections 4.1 'Flavour sublime' and 4.2 'Knowledge' I respectively define flavour sublimines and the flavour sublime communities and describe how such SCPs value and gain their knowledges of drinks.

1.4 Research questions

I study taste in drinks of 'flavour sublime' SCPs. Taste as used here refers to one's cultural preferences, not to flavour itself. I interpret SCP taste here as 'SCP views on what good drinks are'. See also section 2.3.1. 'Taste' vs. 'Goodness'. As mentioned above, 'flavour sublime', introduced in section 1.3 Research focus, is a term informed by this research and thus strictly speaking a result; it is brought forward to create a stronger narrative.

To study taste in drinks of 'flavour sublime' SCPs I answer the research questions: First, who are flavour sublime SCPs? Second: How do they learn about good drinks? And Third: What do they think makes a drink good?

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Theories on taste

As mentioned in chapter 1. Introduction, no other research had been conducted on SCP taste in spirits and cocktails. Due to the lack of previous research, I applied theories on taste in food, wine and music, and coffee to study taste in spirits and cocktails. Social constructions of taste in food have been extensively studied. Below I describe various scholars' theories on good food and drink/taste to give a brief overview, starting from a viewpoint of social constructivism. The main dichotomy in the following list of previous research is between structuralism (Bourdieu, 1984; Johnston and Baumann, 2014; Massoth, 2017) and relational approaches to goodness/taste (Abarca, 2017; Heldke, 2014; Manzo, 2010; Hennion & Teil, 2018).

2.1.1 Structuralism

Structuralist approaches to taste view taste as a tool used to gain social status. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) describes a person's navigation of (social) fields, and their preservation or increasing of social status, in terms of their capitals and habitus (embodied, accumulated lived experiences). Taste is posed by Bourdieu as an aesthetic disposition in which objects of taste (e.g., art or food) are valued and evaluated for their form or aesthetics (e.g., beauty, emotional appeal, craftsmanship; cultural appeal) instead of for their functionality (e.g., art communicating morality, food providing nutrition). Taste here refers to one's cultural preferences, not to flavour itself. To Bourdieu taste is a form of cultural capital, a tool to create and re-create distinction. Taste is used to reinforce class boundaries and construct social hierarchies around having 'good taste'.

Yet – as we will explore in the next sub-sections – food can also help cross borders, to create spaces and moments that are more inclusive, to share aspects of people's identities, fuelling cross-cultural understanding. The changing of boundaries into borderlands, increasing inclusivity, is referred to as democratisation of and through food.

This tension between open-ness and constructed hierarchies of taste is described by Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann (2014) as the democracy-distinction tension in their book *Foodies: Democracy and distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape* (2014). In this book Johnston and Baumann describe their research on how taste is socially constructed among American foodies, defining 'foodies' as people who are not food professionals, and who view their interest in and love for food to be an important part of their identity. Johnston and Baumann (2014) looked at how foodies evaluate food as worthy or unworthy in our modern-day time of culinary omnivorousness. Good taste is not just about the food you do (not) eat; it is about how you eat, handle and view that food. No longer is the type of food one likes a clear-cut indicator of social status; rather the evaluative approach to food is what foodies use to distinguish themselves. This lines up well with Bourdieu's (1984) description of an aesthetic disposition.

In the *Foodies* book, Johnston and Baumann explain what frames, or underlying criteria, were used in circa 2010 American foodie culture to evaluate foods as 'good' food. They also described boundaries in taste, for example across gender, class, and cultural background, questioning what is actually meant by 'good' food among foodies, and who those foodies are. They found foodie discourse used the frames of 'authenticity' and 'exoticism', which can each be deconstructed into markers, to construct and evaluate food as 'good' (e.g., a meal of local fish with sautéed vegetables from a nearby farmers market) and 'bad' (e.g., McDonald's happy

meals). Of course, when certain foods are socially constructed to be 'good', the reverse also occurs with some foods being constructed as 'bad'; some 'worthy' and some 'unworthy'. They thus showed foodies' normative ideas and experienced pressures (e.g., feeding your children good food for foodie mothers). Foodies' omnivorous, but evaluative approach to food (Johnston & Baumann, 1984) reflected Bourdieu's (1984) abovementioned concept of an aesthetic disposition; judging whether things like food or art are tasteful on form rather than function.

Mirroring Johnston and Baumann's argument of culinary omnivorousness in Foodies (2014), Järvinen, Ellergaard, and Larsen (2013) executed a quantitative analysis of the relations between social status and taste in alcoholic drinks in Denmark. As a case study they analysed a mid-size company, finding that an omnivorous drinking style and the specific consumption, and reason for consumption, of certain types of drinks was linked to high status within the company. The specific preferences and practices around drink types also mirror the patterns in which foodies were found to practice taste in Johnston and Baumann's research.

In practicing taste, foods are evaluated and socially constructed to be somewhere on a spectrum from worthy to unworthy, good to bad. 'Bad' foods can be seen as contaminating the body with otherness, as Katherine Massoth (2017) describes in her Food Across Borders book chapter 'Mexican Cookery That Belongs to the United States'. White American women, after the U.S. annexation of New Mexico, constructed specific Americanized versions of Mexican foods as good, clean, and acceptable to eat while condemning Mexican food cooked by Mexican people as dirty, unsafe, and 'bad'. Taste is thus always inherently political; when considering taste, it is vital to consider who are the tastemakers and who are unheard. Massoth's (2017) chapter showcases how important it is to take into account who has power; whose ideas are dominant, and whose ideas are studied. Describing the community which is studied is thus vital.

These structuralist views on taste have however been criticised for the historical focus on elite tastes. This follows from the assumption that 'good taste' refers to the taste of (often white) people with a high socio-economic status. As Krishnendu Ray (2017) argues, this is an exclusionary assumption. In his essay "Bringing the immigrant back into the sociology of taste" Ray calls to scholars to study not only the tastes of the elites, arguing that immigrants and so-called 'lower classes' also have had major impacts on what is considered good taste. This aligns with this research's focus on Spirit and Cocktail Professionals (SCPs) rather than consumers. SCPs determine which drinks are available to consumers to choose from; yet they do not necessarily have a high socio-economic status in greater society. High social status does not necessarily equate to 'foodie-like' tendencies, especially when studying professionals rather than amateurs, connoisseurs, food geeks *et cetera*; those who pursue taste to earn a living, rather than pursuing taste out of personal interest alone.

2.1.2 Towards a relational view on 'good food'

John Manzo (2010) adds to the critique on the structuralist view of taste as a tool to gain status. He described taste in third-wave coffee as social and acquired, illustrating the development of taste as enthusiasts learn more. Manzo points out that coffee aficionados included in his research perceived negative social effects of their interest in coffee. Practicing taste in third-wave coffee thus cannot be explained by a struggle for social status alone.

So, for now sticking to the case of coffee, a non-alcoholic beverage with strong social connotations, Manzo (2010) used an ethnomethodological approach to study how coffee aficionados themselves viewed their taste in coffee and the development of this taste. He argues that with a field such as third-wave coffee enthusiasts, the socio-structuralist approach does not fit as well as an ethnographic approach since the reported practices only increase social status

within the third-wave coffee subculture and can actually reduce social status or increase friction outside of that subculture.

A reason for this asymmetry in social effect within and outside third-wave coffee culture could be that one needs to be aware of the first and second wave of coffee culture in Northern America before being able to know what third-wave coffee is and why it is relevant to aficionados. This is also why Manzo argues for ethnomethodology; only 'insiders' are aware of and can participate in the specific subculture. To quickly explain, third wave coffee culture is a quality turn in coffee where enthusiasts become excited about optimizing the flavour of their coffee in every way possible, from rare coffee beans to specialized equipment. This quality turn only becomes visible by contrasting it to the first wave (widespread popularity of coffee in Northern America; think a big communal pot of filter coffee at home/a diner) and the second wave (rise of 'special' coffees such as espresso/ latte macchiato and café culture; think Starbucks' near-infinite customization of individual coffee drinks). Suddenly the rise in interest; in optimizing product flavour, and endlessly tinkering with ever-more-specific coffee-making techniques, stands out as a culinary movement. As something different from what was there before. This culinary movement is only recognizable by 'insiders' who share a knowledge base about what coffee *was* (in the first and second wave) and what coffee now *is or is becoming*. To these insiders, the self-identified 'coffee geeks' which Manzo studied, 'good coffee' is not singular and simple, nor is it a static concept. Instead, it is a complex concept which is fluid and constantly evolving as is their taste. To outsiders this makes it difficult to understand or define third wave-coffee, while to insiders, such specialty coffee is clearly and objectively better than first- or second-wave coffee.

Similarly, to third-wave coffee, before understanding why 'flavour sublime' SCPs get excited over certain drinks, before understanding what makes a drink special, one needs to understand what the 'normal' drink would roughly be like. In fact, specialness or uniqueness are relative concepts. Heldke (2005) argues for authenticity being a relative and relational concept which is perceived or not by an eater depending on what they contrast a potentially authentic experience with. In the same way as authenticity, perceived specialness or uniqueness depends on what is perceived as normal. This makes studying what makes certain drinks, such as coffee or spirits, special/unique/ 'good' to aficionados impossible without accounting for the knowledge base necessary to participate in the community.

Meredith E. Abarca, in her (2017) book chapter "Afro-Latina/-os' Culinary Subjectivities: Rooting Ethnicities through Root Vegetables" explains how her family's fondness of *viandas*, staple root vegetables commonly eaten by Caribeños (Fuster, 2021), links her family history and identity to erased African heritage. Abarca views food and its meaning as relational. She emphasizes how food can offer a taste of home, and how this sensation of home can be shared. As I wrote in the preface vignette about Opi Jan, as Abarca explains with her family's love of *viandas*, what we find good is produced by and reproduces our individual and collective identities. In this chapter (2017) on food, identities, and culinary belonging, Abarca describes the formation of collective ideas on what food is and what food should be like to be 'good food'. She theorises 'good food' as a collective sense memory which is formed in a community over shared food experience. Each individual community member has their own individual sensory experiences and memories, yet through processes of social dissemination and sharing food together, communities develop collective sense memories. Collective sense memories are shaped by and in turn shape individual palate memories. These collective sense memories are embodied and reproduced through *sazón*; the specific way the food is prepared and shared by individuals from the community, thus performing some part of these individuals' identities. However, with food, individual identity, and community identity so intertwined, individuals that do not belong to the community may not be able to read and understand this identity communicated through 'good food' and *sazón*. 'What is good food' is thus community specific.

Manzo (2010) and Abarca (2017) show how 'taste' - ideas on what is 'good' coffee and food - produce and are in turn produced by collective and individual identities. They also argue that this (re-)production of taste occurs through individual and shared food/drink practices.

Hennion and Teil (2004) argued, like Manzo (2010), for the use of (neo-)ethnomethodology to study taste and tasting. They studied individuals who loved music and wine, comparing the way their tastes in music and wine developed. Hennion and Teil posed taste 'as a result of tasting', stating this is a reflexive and performative activity and a way of building relationships. This aligns well with Manzo's (2010) and Abarca's (2017) works as described above.

Hennion and Teil (2004) argued that to fully understand the activity (practice) of tasting, it must be viewed as occurring in multiple ways simultaneously. They argue against focusing on the individual and collective elements of tasting. When focusing on only these elements or dimensions of tasting, the ways that artefacts are used to practice tasting, and the ways taste becomes embodied, are neglected. To illustrate this, they constructed a 'four-legged stool' model of tasting, with each 'leg' element of tasting contributing to the practice of tasting without excluding the other 'legs'. They state this model is provisional and non-exhaustive. The importance of the model is in its allowing for multiple views on tasting to co-exist and cooperate to describe the practice(s) of tasting more fully. They thus describe the practice of tasting as having four elements; as *"... a complex activity which involves individual cognisant subjects, operating in social collectives, using mechanical devices, and processed through the body... a heuristic device for describing how people with a level of interest in wine and music undertake the process of making judgements about taste"* (Hennion & Teil, 2004; Harvey, McMeekin, & Warde, 2004). In my own words and applied to spirits and cocktails when you taste a drink, you a) consciously think about whether you like it and what the flavour reminds you of b) talk about it with other people who perform tasting c) sip it from a glass shaped to suit the drink's flavour development and appreciation, d) and your experience of this drink is processed through, e) as well as it becomes part of your body. The elements of taste are thus different aspects of the practice of tasting. They showcase the multiplicity of the practice, rather than being mutually exclusive. Tasting occurs individually, in a social collective, using artefacts and is processed through the body; along these four elements simultaneously and together, not in a separated fashion.

Through the practice of tasting, you evaluate whether you find the drink good. Your taste is thus ever-changing and evolving, shaped in discussion with other tasters. As a result, relational views on 'good food' reject the view that taste is only a tool for status. Instead, focus is laid on the relations people have to food, to themselves, and to each other mediated through food.

2.2 Ethnomethodology

Hennion & Teil (2004) and Manzo (2010) conducted ethnomethodological studies on taste. Ethnomethodology was developed and advanced by Harold Garfinkel in the 1950-1970s (Laurier, 2009). Named in relation to fields such as ethnography and ethnobotany, ethnomethodology studied how 'insiders' or 'members' of society or social settings create social order. Social orderliness dictates that members of that social group, setting, or society must understand what the other members mean with their practices (including e.g., verbal, and nonverbal language). If members didn't understand what other members meant with their practices, how could social order be created through their interactions? Rather than assuming social order is put upon members of society top-down and the members then work with or against this order, as in structuralism, Garfinkel argues that social orderliness is built bottom-up by the everyday practices of members. To give a drinks-based example: the reason whisky is seen as a 'masculine/not

conventionally feminine' drink is not because men with high social status drink whisky, and women with high social status do not, but because in general society women are not conventionally portrayed as whisky drinkers. The masculine/feminine ordering of drinks is not dictated top-down, but rather (re-)produced or created by members of a social structure. By studying the practices of members, ethnomethodologists then aim to study social order and the methods for the ongoing (re-)production thereof (Garfinkel & Rawls, 2002; Laurier, 2009; Rawls, 2000). The only way to do so for ethnomethodologists is from a member's perspective. These principles lead ethnomethodologists to use a wide variety of methods which are deemed fine as long as the researcher had 'unique adequacy': the capacity to function passably as a member. As Rawls describes, introducing Garfinkel (2002):

"Ethnomethodology... itself is not a method... It is a study of members' methods based on the theory that a careful attentiveness to the detail of social phenomena will reveal social order... The object of all [ethnomethodological] research methods... is to discover the things that persons in particular situations do, the methods they use, to create the patterned orderliness of social life." (p. 6, Garfinkel, 2002)

This careful attentiveness is how Manzo (2010) and Hennion and Teil (2004) arrived at their theorizations of how members developed taste; through the social, knowledge-based, and knowledge-creating orderly practices of tasting. However, as Manzo (2010) described, the order created (e.g., what is good coffee) functions within the third-wave coffee community but can lead to social tensions outside it. Similarly, Garfinkel's ethnomethodology has been criticised for focusing on localities where social order is (re-)created or (re-)produced, and for a lack of linking multiple localities to 'zoom out' and see larger patterns in social order-creating member's methods (Laurier, 2009).

2.3 Conceptual framework

2.3.1 From a structuralist to a relational, ethnomethodological approach

The *a priori* theoretical approach to this thesis was a structuralist approach based on Johnston and Baumann's (2014) approach in Foodies. The research aim was to study the frames used to construct taste in 'fine' drinks, as well as the capitals needed to access this field. However, in the initial scan of the field the assumptions underlying this *a priori* approach and plan were shown to be incorrect. This realisation was a result of the research; however, I touch upon it here to explain the shift from a structuralist approach to an ethnomethodological approach.

Unlike I had assumed prior to starting fieldwork, SCPs did not always evaluate drinks at all. SCPs, in the initial scan of the field, spoke about how the most important characteristic for a good drink was that the drinker liked it; not whether the SCP personally evaluated the drink as good. SCPs thus both did and did not evaluate drinks as good; the assumption of an evaluative SCP approach was incorrect. SCPs also did not use homogeneous mediated information sources, making it clear that SCP ways of gaining knowledge on their field were not comparable to those of foodies (Johnston and Baumann, 2014). The realisation that the *a priori* assumptions were incorrect led to the question whether SCPs were comparable, being professionals, to the previously studied amateur (foodie, connoisseur, aficionado, consumer) constructs of taste at all. Applying previous, structuralist theorizations on taste to the flavour sublime SCPs community therefore did not work.

I thus shifted to a relational and ethnomethodological approach to this research, following the works of Hennion and Teil (2004) and Manzo (2010). As described above in section 2.1.2, these scholars studied how members, or insiders, of specific communities organised around their interests developed taste. Their findings aligned more with what I was seeing in the initial scan of

the field. Again, these realizations are results and introduced here to clarify the iterative research approach used. Manzo argued that to understand these communities and the way the members (re-)create social order, researchers must take an insider's view. To an outsider, Manzo explained, the existence of the third-wave coffee movement would not be clear as outsiders lacked the knowledge base to realise the movement existed. Similarly, the difference between 'fine' and 'mainstream' drinks is not clearly visible to everyone, yet obvious to 'insider' flavour sublime SCPs. Hennion and Teil (2004) also argued for taking an insider's view, criticising theorisations on taste and the practices of tasting to develop their heuristic four-legged stool model with four elements of the practice of tasting. Rejecting previous/outside theorisations to instead focus on how insiders or members make sense of their socially constructed worlds is part of the ethnomethodological approach to studying social order and orderliness (Garfinkel & Rawls, 2002; Laurier, 2009; Rawls, 2000).

2.3.2 Research/conceptual overview

During the research process, I came to recognize how various theories and concepts coming from a relational viewpoint on taste aligned well with SCP views. Rather than rejecting all previous theorisation in the entire research process, I first conducted fieldwork in an ethnomethodological manner, then used various relational theories to structure and make sense of the gathered data. This is visualised in Figure 1.

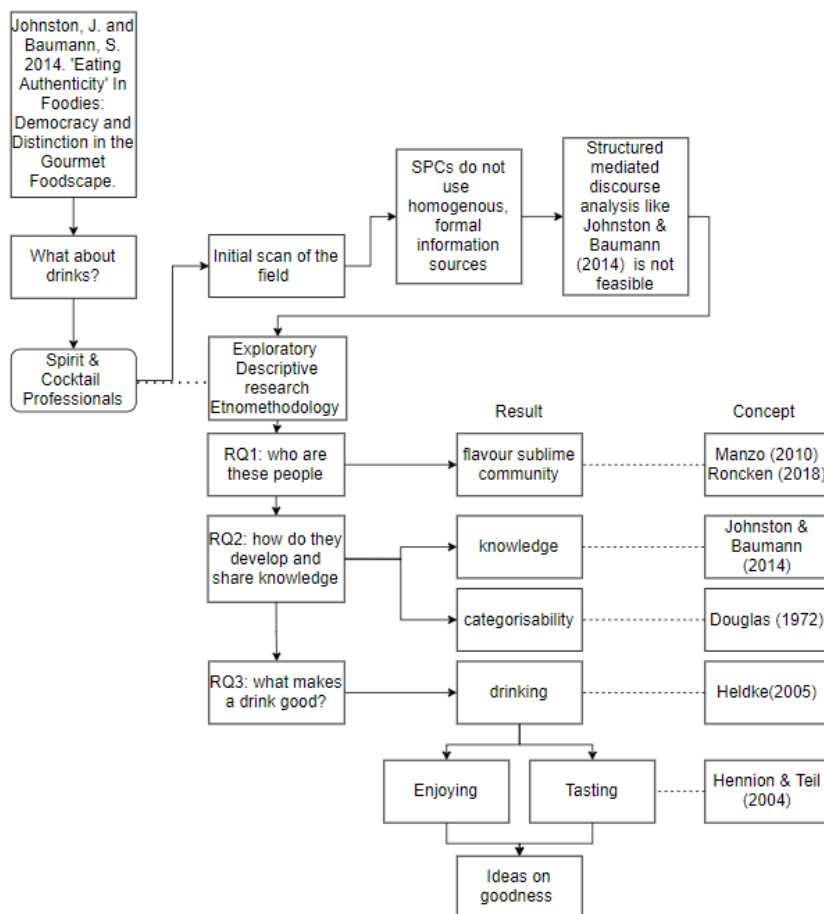


FIGURE 1: OVERVIEW

From this relational, ethnomethodological viewpoint not only how taste is socially constructed, but also by whom taste is constructed, whose taste, and how these ideas are shared and reproduced are important. I view 'taste' as 'what is good'. As the term 'taste' when applied from the socio-structuralist view carries inherent associations of distinction, I use the terms 'good' drinks and 'goodness' instead in my results and analysis (see chapter 4). The essential research questions were thus (intended: the research questions of this thesis): First: Who are and aren't members of the community? (RQ1: Who are flavour sublime SCPs?), Second: How are members' views shared and reproduced? (RQ2: How do SCPs learn about good drinks?) Third: What, according to the community, is good: what do members find good? (RQ3: What makes a drink good?). Figure 1 shows how I contrasted various theories to SCP views to answer these research questions.

To clarify: I did not seek to confirm or deny previous theorisations, as this would not fit with an ethnomethodological approach. I described the members' (i.e., SCPs') viewpoints and used outside theorisations to make sense of the data. I described where previous or outside theories fit with SCP views and extended on or combined these theories where the theory could not entirely explain the data. The aim of this study remained to describe SCP views, not to test outside theories. The below conceptual framework is thus both how I analysed my data, and a result of how well these theories worked to make sense of the data.

As the used theories and concepts were used to make sense of the data and understand SCP views, the ways the theories were applied only work for specific parts of the data. The ways these theories were applied is thus further described in the results (chapter 4). The extent to which the theories functioned to explain SCP views is discussed in the discussion.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, I describe how I executed the research. I first (section 3.1) discuss research design and the three steps of this research (gaining background information, initial scan of the field, in-depth interviews, and observations). This includes overviews of the participants and information sources in these three steps (sections 3.2 to 3.4). I then describe how I processed and coded the data (section 3.5). Finally, I discuss ethical considerations of consent, safety, and positionality (section 3.6).

3.1 Research design

This qualitative research followed a single embedded case study design (Yin, 1994; Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). The case studied was ‘the community(-ies) of ‘fine flavour’/high-end Spirit and Cocktail Professionals, in North-Western Europe’. The units of analysis were drinking spaces (for observations) and individual SCPs who worked at the aforementioned drinking spaces. As SCP ideas on drink goodness have not been previously studied, but SCPs considering whether drinks are good is a common situation, it was a revelatory case (rather than a rare or unique case). This suits with the exploratory nature of the study and justifies the use of a single case study research design. The study was not a multiple-case study as the data was compared across all units of analysis, rather than analysing each unit of analysis as a single case in itself. As the study analytically generalises to theory on what makes a drink good according to a specific community, this research design suits the aim of the thesis: not describing a series of drinking spaces and SCPs in detail, but generalising theory about how SCPs view good drinks.

Fieldwork was conducted from August 2020-January 2021. Fieldwork took place in the Netherlands (Utrecht, Eindhoven, Wageningen) and Denmark (Copenhagen). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, fieldwork was conducted both online and offline. Thus, not all interviewees resided where the fieldwork took place. The research took place in three steps: The first step consisted of gaining background information on the fields of spirits and cocktails, and of food sociology (see section 3.2). The second step consisted of an initial scan of the field (see section 3.3). The third step consisted of in-depth interviews and observations (see section 3.4)

Below I describe these three steps of data gathering in detail.

3.2 Gaining background information

Various books, social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram) and articles in drinks magazines and newspapers were used to gain background information on the field and attain ‘unique adequacy’. ‘Unique adequacy refers to the capacity of an ethnomethodological researcher to function as a group member (Garfinkel & Rawls, 2002). In essence, I did not have to be a flavour sublime SCP, but I had to be passably capable of interacting within the social order of the flavour sublime community. As I have had a personal interest in the field since 2015-2016, I had been reading such information and speaking with SCPs for ± 5 years before starting the research. During the research I read 3 books on drinks and drinking culture: firstly “The Drunken Botanist” (Stewart, 2013) on the plants used in drinks covering a global variety of plant-based drinks;

secondly “Proof: The Science of Booze” (Rogers, 2014) about the history, science and cultures behind humanity’s fascination with alcohol; and thirdly “Everyday Drinking: The Distilled Kingsley Amis” (Amis & Hitchens, 2009) a recent collection of columns and books on drinks originally published between 1971 and 1984.

I followed the Facebook and/or Instagram accounts of Punch, Mr. Lyan, and Empirical, and read all Punch magazine articles published, or promoted via social media, from March 2020 to August 2021. Punch is an online U.S.A. based spirit and cocktail culture magazine. In addition, I read articles on drinks from various (food, drink, or pop culture) magazines and newspapers: Imbibe, Serious Eats, Saveur, Wired, Vice, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Volkskrant and NRC (Dutch newspapers). I also viewed the 2020 and 2021 programming for the annual Tales of the Cocktail event, which gave insights on current topics of interest for (U.S.A. / global) SCPs; however, due to time and resource constraints I could not attend many of the seminars.

I had informal conversations with SCPs (store owners, producers, bartenders) before and throughout the research. This informed my views on the field prior to the research. The conversations during the research aided the iterative process, with each research stage yielding findings to test and investigate in the next research stage.

In addition to gaining information on the field of ‘fine flavour’/high-end SCPs, I also needed to gain information on the field of food sociology itself. As a food technologist by training, I was lacking in knowledge on conducting sociological research. To close this gap, during the thesis process I followed extra courses and worked as a student assistant. I worked as a student assistant in the courses Food Customs and Cultures, and Sociology of Food and Place. The courses I followed were a) Sociology of Food and Place, RSO chair group, WUR; b) Global Sense of Place, RSO chair group, WUR c) Alternative Research Methods Training, OtherWise and d) Ethnobotany (interview skills), BIS chair group, WUR. This allowed me to engage further with sociological theories, learn how to write a research proposal for social science, gain interviewing experience, and study alternative / creative research methods.

To further gain knowledge on food sociology, I read three books in addition to the literature review: firstly, “Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape” (Johnston & Bauman, 2014); secondly, “Food Across Borders” (DuPuis, Garcia and Mitchell, 2017), and thirdly “Diners, Dudes, and Diets: How Gender and Power Collide in Food Media and Culture” (Contois, 2020). These books informed me on the breadth and possibility of sociological research on food, how identity and food are interwoven, and how societal / structural power inequalities and tensions can be seen through how people do food.

This background information was gained and used prior to as well as throughout the thesis process. In particular the SCP-specific background information informed the participant selection for the initial scan of the field.

3.3 Initial scan of the field

To gain insight into SCP information sources, so I could find how SCPs select good bars/drinking spaces/drink producers, I conducted an initial scan of the ‘fine’ or ‘flavour sublime’ drinks field through semi-structured interviews. The aim of the initial scan of the field was to find the SCP equivalent of the food media Johnston and Baumann (2014) studied. By conducting - as done on food media in the Foodies book research (Johnston and Baumann, 2014) - a discourse analysis on such drinks media, I theorized that I could find SCPs that were viewed as good by their peers and what criteria were used by SCPs to evaluate drinks or drinking spaces as good. I thus tried to avoid superimposing my own preconceived ideas on good drinks and drinking

spaces over the reality of how SCPs themselves viewed this. However, as detailed in sections 3.3 and 4.2, conducting this mediated discourse analysis was out of scope for this research and the approach was shifted to focusing on interviews and observations.

TABLE 1: INTERVIEWEES FOR INITIAL SCAN OF THE FIELD

	PROFESSION	ORIGIN	AGE	GENDE R	RESEARCH LOCATION	INTERVIEW DATE	INTERVIEW MEDIUM
Alexander	Liquor store owner (mainstream)	South Africa + the Netherlands	39	Male	The Netherlands	August 2020	in-person, recorded & notes
Justin	Bar owner	The Netherlands	23	Male	The Netherlands	August 2020	in-person, recorded & notes
Lukas	Former bartender, enologist	Austria	27	Male	Germany / Austria	August 2020; follow-up June 2021	Facebook messenger chat
Martin	Bartender, student	Germany	23	Male	The Netherlands	September 2020	Phone call, recorded
Said	Bar owner	Australia	52	Male	The Netherlands	September 2020	in-person, notes

For the initial scan of the field, I contacted spirit professionals that I already knew; five people that I had spoken with about flavour and who had come across as knowledgeable and passionate about drinks.

To ensure a representation of various spirit and cocktail professions in the initial scan of the field, I interviewed bartenders, bar owners, and a liquor store owner. The initial scan of the field primarily took place in the Netherlands, with one online interview conducted via Facebook Messenger chat with Lukas, a trained hospitality professional who resided in Germany at the time. **TABLE 1** lists the SCPs who participated in the initial scan of the field.

Other informal conversations with SCPs were also held during the ISOF, and observations were conducted. However, to ensure no breach of official consent to participate, all such observations/conversations were kept anonymous and used only as background information.

3.4 In-depth interviews and observation

As described in detail in section 4.2. Knowledge, SCPs were found to use heterogeneous information sources and to rely heavily on learning from peers and mentors.

Mediated discourse analysis was thus not possible as there were not commonly used, formalised, documented information sources to conduct such a discourse analysis on. SCPs also distrusted bar rankings such as the World’s Best 50 and did not use such lists to find other good bars. Instead, they asked their personal/professional networks or simply walked around new cities/places until they serendipitously found a bar, they liked and asked bartenders there for advice.

Using such rankings to find bars, other spirit companies or SCPs to interview thus also would not reflect what SCPs themselves found good. There was a knowledge gap on how SCPs gained

knowledge; what forms of learning and media did they use? Without knowing this, discourse analysis to triangulate interview findings with was not feasible. In addition, it was clear that previous research on taste and ‘good food’ did not align with what knowledges were valued and how these were shared among SCPs. This was therefore added to the research questions and in-depth semi-structured interviews; see also section 4.2.

I thus used the background information on the field that I had read/viewed, my own background knowledge as a fine flavour professional, and the initial scan of the field interviews to find criteria for ‘drinking spaces where they have good drinks’.

In the background information I had viewed/read, specificity, technical know-how and innovativeness was praised. This is also the case in fine flavour cocoa and chocolate (also known as bean-to-bar or craft chocolate), a field in which I had already been working for several years. In my experiences working with artists who used food as a medium for art, as a gastronomy student at Wageningen University (MSc specialisation, Food Technology + Sociology), studying wine in France, meeting artisanal/craft food and drink producers and in my liqueur-making hobbies I also noticed that in ‘high-quality’/fine flavour/artisan/craft foods the same qualities were valued: a passion for/deep personal interest in flavour, technical knowledge, specificity, and innovativeness. I thus decided to search for these qualities.

Following the ethnomethodological approach and with breaching experiments (find that which is out of the ordinary/disrupts hegemonic social order) in mind, I searched for SCPs that were offering more than the most mainstream spirits and cocktails. I searched for bars, participants and companies that developed, used, or sold niche products. In-depth interview participants are listed in Table 2 .

TABLE 2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWEES

Name	Profession	Origin	Age	Gender	Research location	Interview date	interview medium
Lukas	Former bartender, enologist	Austria	27	Male	Germany / Austria	August 2020; follow-up June 2021	Facebook messenger chat
Anna	Bartender, student	Denmark	31	Female	Copenhagen, DK	October 2020	in-person, recorded & notes
Giusi	Bar manager	Italy	22	Female	Utrecht, NL	November 2020	video call, recorded
Lars	Bartender, trained chef	Denmark	29	Male	Copenhagen, DK	January 2021	video call, recorded
Mark Emil	Co-founder of spirit/flavour brand	Denmark	35	Male	Copenhagen, DK	January 2021	video call, recorded
Sarah	Former bartender, barista	Denmark	31	Female	Copenhagen, DK	September 2020	in-person, recorded & notes
Vincent	Bar manager	Denmark	23	Male	Copenhagen, DK	September 2020	in-person, recorded & notes
Woj	Bartender, student	Poland	29	Male	Copenhagen, DK	September 2020	in-person, recorded & notes
Wouter	Liquor store owner (niche)	The Netherlands	33	Male	Rotterdam, NL	January 2021	video call, recorded

For bars a main criterium was that they had original menus with drinks developed in-house. This included use of home-made ingredients in cocktails such as cordials or infusions. I made the assumption that if bartenders or bar managers were developing unique recipes, they were likely to be interested in drink flavour. Menus were thus key in choosing bars that I did not previously know. In addition, I looked at the bar shelves; the visibly exposed range of spirits in stock at a bar, often exposed behind the bar counter. I looked for bar shelves with a variety of bottles from lesser-known brands. Bars which I was already familiar with were selected based on my previous encounters with SCPs there; if we had previously spoken about flavour and the SCPs were interested in this, I reached out to them.

For distilleries/producers I focused on 'flavour company' Empirical (company's own term), as they had been described in my background reading as doing ground-breaking work with novel kinds of spirits. Empirical was transparent about their ingredient sourcing practices and used an unusual distillation process; they had an aim to democratise access to fine flavour and were founded by former employees of a renowned restaurant. Empirical thus seemed like a good case study for research into fine flavour drinks. To verify this, I also visited Empirical for a distillery tour as part of choosing a thesis topic, prior to starting this research.

For liquor stores I chose to interview a liquor store owner I already knew in the initial scan of the field. As he owns a franchise-type liquor store with a broad range of products, I chose to also interview the owner of a niche liquor store in the in-depth interview phase. This to include more diverse viewpoints, from both a more mainstream store with a 'flavour sublime' SCP owner and a 'flavour sublime'/niche/specialty store owner.

As the first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in the Netherlands started two weeks after I started my thesis, and the pandemic is still ongoing as of writing, the pandemic had a strong effect on this thesis research. Fieldwork and the thesis process in general were greatly altered since as a medical risk group person myself I had to be extremely careful not to contract Covid-19. This is further discussed in section 3.6.

3.5 Data processing and coding

I transcribed the recorded interviews using Amberscript (Dutch-language interviews) or Otter.ai (English-language interviews). Lukas' interview occurred via Facebook Messenger; the messages were copied into a Pages/Word document. Said's interview was not recorded due to the ambient sound and phone policy of the interview location; only notes were taken. These were later digitalised. Observational notes were taken during fieldwork and served as background information.

Interviews were inductively coded. Coding was done manually by adding comments on the interview transcripts. These comments were a combination of interview snippet content description, main- and sub-level codes, and analytical memos. Following a grounded theory method of analysis (Burck, 2005), a coding tree was constructed after coding. This was done by starting from the comments and coded interview snippets, structuring the data by merging lower-level codes, and thus constructing higher-level codes as emerging from the data. This grounded theory-style inductive approach was selected as it became apparent in the initial scan of the field research phase that SCPs were not directly comparable to foodies and other taste amateurs. For this exploratory research, it was therefore not a good fit to deductively code based on previous research and theory.

To make the coded data more easily searchable I extracted the coded interview snippets and comments into a.csv table. I used Orange, an open-source data processing software with

artificial intelligence tools, to create word clouds of frequently used words in the interview snippets and comments (see Appendix 7.3). This, together with qualitative insight into the data, provided the basis for several categories of comments: in essence, for emerging codes. I then auto categorised the comments using keywords and manually verified the categorisation. This provided the basis for building the coding tree structure. Starting from the structure of the categorised comments, I engaged with theory and restructured the data into a logical whole/coding tree. Iterations of the coding tree can be found in Appendix 7.3. I attempted to verify the coding tree structure using Orange; however, correctly categorising the comments proved to be a barrier. The categories initially used were contextual factors (recurring factors influencing nearly all data) rather than true codes (underlying structures in the data). The categorised data was used to build the eventual coding tree but could not be used to verify its structure without re-categorising the data. This was not feasible within the scope of this thesis. Detailed information on the extraction, categorisation and structuring process can be found in Appendix 7.3; as all tools used were generally available or free open-source tools, this may be interesting for research conducted without access to coding software. While the tools used were not new, this specific combination and application is not common knowledge in social science research (to the best of my knowledge).

3.6 Ethics, Consent, Safety and Positionality

Ethically testing your interactions, assumptions and methods is vital when conducting research; below I expand on consent and giving back. In addition, I discuss the Covid-19 pandemic and ethics, as when conducting in-person sociological fieldwork during a pandemic, it is vital to consider how to keep participants safe.

3.6.1 Ethics, informed consent, and anonymity

One part of participant safety is ensuring informed consent. To ensure informed consent, interviewees were asked to complete the consent form (see Appendix 7.2). In addition to the written consent, verbal consent to participate in the research and for interview recording was obtained at the start of every interview. Interview transcripts were sent to the participants for redaction before coding the data; and any requested passages were deleted. Two persons consented verbally but not in writing, their data are used as background information but are not quoted or paraphrased in the research.

It is a general practice to anonymise participants to ensure they do not suffer personal or professional harm due to their participation in the research. However, I wanted to academically validate the knowledges the participants held. These knowledges had not been previously studied in academia; thus, participation in this research could have a validating effect on how they viewed the importance of such knowledges. In the consent form interviewees could indicate whether they would like to be anonymised or named, and whether they would like their businesses/ places of employment to be anonymized or named. Interviewees who indicated they would like to remain anonymous were given a pseudonym; Interviews who wanted to be named are referred to by the first name or nickname they preferred.

3.6.2 Personal safety of participants in view of the Covid-19 pandemic

As the research and fieldwork took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring none of the participants contracted the coronavirus due to their participation was paramount. I travelled within the Netherlands and from the Netherlands to Denmark during the fieldwork. Observations

were carried out in person. Interviews were carried out online and offline depending on the location of participants and researcher, and whether there were lockdowns in place in that location. As I am in a risk group myself, I took the necessary precautions during fieldwork (social distancing, hand sanitiser, face masks, avoiding busy places). Self-tests were not freely available in the Netherlands or Denmark during fieldwork; PCR tests were reserved for people with Covid-19 symptoms or who had been found through track and trace research. Preventive testing to decrease the odds of infecting anyone during fieldwork was thus not feasible. Due to the necessity of being cautious myself, I posed little risk for my participants.

3.6.3 Giving back

Giving back is an aspect of research ethics I value highly in research. As this community of 'flavour sublime' SCPs (see results) has not been previously studied, and studies on taste in general are often conducted on consumers rather than professionals, this study may have a validating effect on SCP knowledges. The act of doing research on a topic could help make the topic more 'real'. By researching knowledges that have not been previously, explicitly studied, the importance of such knowledges can be validated to participants and the greater (academic) world (Gibson-Graham, 2008). In this thesis documenting SCP knowledges and ideas is part of giving back. All participants will receive access to the finished thesis. The thesis was written in a more narrative style - especially the results - than is standard in a master's thesis. This was done to make the work more accessible to participants and other parties without an academic background in food sociology (or technology). There was no other standard protocol used for giving back such as financial recompense. This was due to budgetary constraints and the variation in locations and online/offline research work. Giving back thus occurs through making this research accessible and hoping to validate SCP knowledges by conducting the research.

3.6.4 Positionality

In order to account for possible bias, it is important to reflect on my own positionality as a researcher. Being a former dive bar bartender and current Gastronomy student, as well as having studied wine for a year in Bordeaux, France, having experience in fine flavour cocoa and chocolate, and making small-batch experimental liqueurs as a hobby, is a possible advantage in terms of gaining entry to the field and useful icebreakers with informants. However, this also means I had my own ideas about what makes good drinks good, and my own beliefs and theoretical knowledge about various views on taste. It was vital to remain reflexive to ensure I was documenting and generalizing to theory SCP views, rather than merely validating my own ideas about good spirits and cocktails.

My background facilitated this ethnomethodological study, as the background readings and knowledge on the field gained both prior to and during this research allowed me to fulfil the unique adequacy requirement of ethnomethodological research (Garfinkel & Rawls, 2002; Laurier, 2009; Rawls, 2000). In other words: due to my educational and professional background and my personal interests, I could function passably in the flavour sublime SCP community in this research. That is explicitly not to say I functioned as a flavour sublime SCP; I am educated as a gastronomist and do not possess the same skills as my interviewees, and certainly do not possess SCP skills at their level of functioning. However, I could reasonably preserve social orderliness in my interactions with SCPs, without accidentally conducting breaching experiments overly much, and was described as part of the studied community by multiple research participants.

In addition, I am a twenty-seven-year-old, outspoken, white-passing, mixed (multicultural), feminist female scientist. These ways of being inform my worldviews and impact the way I move

through the world, who I am influences the spaces I have access to, feel comfortable in, and how I am perceived and thus communicated with. Language also impacts communication; interviews generally took place in English, which I am fluent in but was not the native tongue of the participants. Lastly, I am in a medical risk group for Covid-19. This heavily influences the physical spaces I feel safe to move in, and the way I move in spaces.

My positionality heavily impacted my motivations, views, and findings for this research. Instead of denying this and claiming objectivity, I practiced reflexivity and performed the personal work of rejecting strong theory and looking beyond my assumptions (see also section 2.2).

4 Results

4.1 'Flavour sublime'; an imaginary community and why I chose to study it

As explained in chapter 3, this research focuses on flavour sublime Spirit and Cocktail Professionals (SCPs), an academically unknown community. Below I describe what I found to bind my participants together; their belief in the 'flavour sublime' and their self-identification as a community.

4.1.1 The flavour sublime community

Interviewee Mark Emil, an anthropologist and researcher who worked with acclaimed restaurant Noma on their MAD (food) symposia and later co-founded flavour company Empirical, described the community around 'fine' dining, food, and drinks. Paraphrasing him: he described it as an imaginary community which is centred around the belief that deliciousness must be hedonistically and sustainably pursued and around the belief that deliciousness is inherently good, can teach, can build bridges, and must be pursued by its ability to cross borders and make one feel fully alive and grounded in our world, connected to time-space nodules far away. As if, by ingesting something delicious, we can temporarily flip a switch and experience Doreen Massey's (2004) description of relational space, that big, tangled, knotted net of relationship-threads spanning the globe, lighting up and show us all our connections and possibilities for reshaping our worlds and lives.

Evidently, that's a tall order for a drink. Yet, there are people who believe that, again paraphrasing Mark Emil, for its capacity to make us feel fully alive and present in a moment, deliciousness is something of the highest order to be pursued. These are the people forming this imaginary community. Lars, a Copenhagen bartender who previously trained as a professional chef, described this chase for perfection as an admirable madness (paraphrased) 'to spend your life chasing something you could never achieve. Because if you reach it, then what's the point of exploring and trying more? What's the point of life if you've found the formula for utter perfection?'

This quixotic chase of perfect moments of life-aliveness mediated through flavour is not exclusive to spirit and cocktail professionals in the least. It is a characteristic of what can be called the 'fine' communities. 'Fine' is a term used by these communities to describe things they find good, fine dining, for example. I learned to use 'fine flavour' to distinguish 'craft' or 'highly aromatic' chocolate from bulk chocolate in my work with 'fine' chocolate communities. SCPs frequently compared their practices and experiences of drinking with their experiences in other forms of consumption. They described more commonalities than differences between the fields of 'fine' cocktails and spirits, food, coffee, and chocolate. Interviewee Mark Emil even compared dining, his food and drink beliefs and practices to music and art. In all these fields or consumption experiences, what they pursued was what I call a (flavour) sublime.

In landscape architecture, the Sublime is a quality of a landscape which overwhelms the viewer. As Paul Roncken (2018) described in his PhD thesis on the sublime as a tool for designing meaning into landscapes:

“In experiential terms, the idea of the sublime can be interpreted as an extreme type of aesthetics, a supernova of sensations (after: Lewis 2003). It is extreme...In a more light-hearted version it is an inspiring experience with an uplifting effect (Longinus 2010 (third century)). The fact that the whole of nature is bigger and more complex than any individual can imagine or fathom may induce some fear, but this can settle within moments into a sense of awe and respect (Kant 1951 (1790))...Sensations described as ‘sublime’ are often associated with grand and astounding natural scenery, ...Such phenomena...seemed to address some ancient and symbolic aspect of life before human influence” - den Hartog Jager 2011 (p.9)

Encountering the sublime triggers a sensation of sinking into beauty or dread, creating a moment of disconnection to the individual self or ego and connection to the world as a whole. While the sublime can be an uplifting experience as well as an oppressive, frightening one, I focus on the inspiring, enlivening effects of what Roncken names the more light-hearted sublime. I use the term ‘flavour sublime’ to describe such a vivid, connecting experience encountered through food/drink. SCPs described chasing by consuming ‘fine’ cocktails and spirits, coffee, chocolate, and ‘fine’ foods in general. The belief and interest in the existence of ‘flavour sublimes’ is what binds the SCPs I researched together as a community. I use the term ‘community’ rather than ‘social structure’ or other (sociological or ethnomethodological) terms because the SCPs I interviewed used this term, and the aim of this thesis is to describe and theorise SCP views on good drinks. In addition, Mark Emil described, later referring to Benedict Andersons’ 1983 book *Imaginary Communities*, the community around his company Empirical as connected in their belief in, and social pursuit of flavour sublimes:

“We are a company that - allow ourselves but are also handicapped by- living in an echo chamber of people who are very like us. ... community is not so much around just a product or drinking together. It's about sharing ideas. It's about establishing values. It's about establishing, beliefs, and truths, and goals, and things like that.”

In the above quote, while Mark Emil is aware of the flavour sublime community-specificity of their focus on flavour, he again repeats one of their collectively shared norms; the products itself must be good. It’s not just the story, the relational aspects, or the ways the products are produced that make it good; products without the story need to be objectively good. The underlying belief is that objective goodness exists. He also hesitates in describing this community, indicating nuance and difficulty defining this flavour sublime community. Mark Emil showcases that he is part of the community with his belief in objective goodness; at the same time, he describes the community itself, demonstrates how difficult to define it is, and argues that the flavour sublime community is about more than flavour itself. The flavour sublime community is ever-changing and self-defined.

Exactly defining the flavour sublime community- or depending on this definition communities- is complex. It is often self-described in opposition to hegemonic or mainstream drinks and flavour cultures, without clear and generally understandable definitions for ‘outsiders’.

This mirrors Manzo’s (2010) struggle to define 3rd wave coffee, as described in section 2.1.2. As with 3rd wave coffee, ‘fine’ is a “members term”:

“... some observers and analysts would and do find the term “third wave ”coffee phenomenon to be imprecise and confusing, the point is that “third wave ”is used and understood as an organizing concept for the connoisseur subculture that is under investigation in this project.” - p.142

The coffee connoisseur subculture described by Manzo in the above quote has commonalities with the SCP communities I studied; both are imprecisely defined, and both are flavour sublime communities, though the focus is laid on different products. Manzo's views on 'coffee geek' subculture can thus be used as an affirmation of the existence of such flavour sublime communities. SCPs often compared different 'fine' foods to illustrate ideas, showing how they viewed the differences between 'fine' and 'normal/mainstream' foods as bigger than the differences between various 'fine' foods. They viewed the belief in a flavour sublime as defining for being part of the flavour sublime communities, not the specific product focus. Thus, coffee specialists can be part of the flavour sublime communities, as can chefs, SCPs *et cetera*. The flavour sublime communities are shaped by and shapes itself; its beliefs, its unwritten rules, its discourses; in short, its (sub)culture.

4.1.2 Community access

However, as with any community, it cannot form without processes of inclusion and exclusion. And there we come to the downside of believing in flavour as a form of the sublime; it gives the idea of objective beauty and sublimity, which one can either be interested in and 'get', or not see and understand. Similarly, to art, one needs knowledge to understand the flavour sublime. One needs knowledge to even be able to be aware of the existence of such a thing as the flavour sublime. Not only theoretical knowledge, but also embodied, experiential knowledge. These knowledges are discussed in section 4.2. To pursue gaining this knowledge, being interested in the flavour sublime helps, yet to be interested, one must know it exists. Therefore, in my observations, so many people spoke about how *they had never known booze could be like this* (paraphrased). They had never been part of, or invited into, an imaginary community where the community members had decided alcoholic drinks could be sublimines. When the community places so much emphasis on belief in the flavour sublime, which one needs both technical/theoretical and embodied/ experiential knowledge to see or believe in, people who do not have this belief, this interest, or the knowledge needed to even take part in the community conversations, are excluded. This is logical, in a way; when a community revolves around a pursuit of sublime experiences and someone isn't interested in those experiences, that person is not part of the community. However, it can also lead to feelings of discomfort when entering a flavour sublime community space, or when you realise you don't fit in. SCPs didn't seem to care much about external/hegemonic symbols of social status, instead focusing on whether people were knowledgeable about and/or interested in flavour.

That all sounds very democratic and accessible and wonderful; a community one is or isn't part of based on common interests. And yet.

In a world where access to food is heterogeneous, where food insecurity and obesity exist hand in hand, it is impossible to deny that there is a certain level of security; food security, for example, that one must have to be able to choose their food and drink based on chasing the sublime. A certain amount of leisure time, for consumers, to dedicate to learning about flavour. A shared knowledge base and discourse. This is visible in the exclusion of BIPOC and less socially and economically privileged people in many academic studies on taste (see also section 2.1.1) By focusing on those who gain access to this fine flavour community simply because they wanted to earn a living, rather than spend one, I also laid less focus on the elite consumers of fine flavour drinks and more on the often-overlooked professionals.

4.1.3 Tensions and greater societal influences

It is important to note that though I focus on this flavour sublime SCP community, it is a community which exists in greater society. Greater societal inequalities and tensions were

reflected in the fine flavour community; at times these tensions were reproduced, at times subverted. Marked tensions in my research included stereotypes about differences in taste, across boundaries of gender and age. I found that 'good ways to drink' were more associated with age and drinking experience among SCPs, with SCPs unanimously noting that they found 'drinking to get drunk' a bad way of drinking while 'drinking to enjoy the drink (and then you might accidentally end up drunk)' was prized. Drinking with the aim to get drunk was associated with a juvenile manner of drinking. Drinking to enjoy, with adult drinking. SCPs also had a tendency to dislike drinks they found 'too sweet', explaining that sweet, fruit-forward drinks were made that way to cover up the taste of low-quality alcohol. They preferred spirit-forward drinks. *An sich* this is not a problem. However, sweet and fruity drinks are associated in greater society with being 'girly drinks. Spirit-forward drinks are associated with masculinity. Cosmopolitans are often depicted as being drunk by feminine-presenting characters in tv series (Sex and the City comes to mind), while Old Fashioneds - a spirit-forward whisky/bourbon drink - became more popular in Copenhagen when popular series Mad Men and Peaky Blinders aired, since the (male) leads frequently drank Old Fashioneds and whisky. These examples demonstrate that taste is social and cultural, and the flavour sublime community exists within greater society, not in a vacuum. While about half of my participants noted that they were aware of these gender stereotypes and disagreed with them, also about half stated they were more likely to recommend sweet, fruity drinks to feminine-presenting people than to recommend them bitter or spirit-forward drinks. This aligns with my own observations, in asking bartenders whether they'd recommend me a whisky-based spirit-forward drink - or a fruit-forward, less boozy-tasting drink in various bars, including my participants' bars. I received a recommendation for the fruity, 'girly' drink about half the time; the other half of the time, I received an explanation of what the drink tasted like and comments like 'it depends on what flavours you prefer / feel like'. I asked the bartenders who recommended me to try fruity drinks over whisky drinks why they had offered me that recommendations. Most bartenders explained it was because, though they disliked stereotyping, they had noticed that feminine-presenting people tended to prefer the fruity drinks in their work experience. They were betting on the stereotype.

There was one noticeable exception; Woj recommended me a fruity drink instead of a whisky sour because he personally strongly dislikes whisky, not because I am a feminine-presenting woman. He also indicated loving Cosmopolitans, which does not align with hegemonic ideas on masculine drinks; it is strongly associated with femininity. Woj indicated he viewed Cosmopolitans as representative of gay subcultures, while Anna viewed Cosmopolitans as nostalgic and associated with juvenile/young, feminine practices of drinking, as well as being associated with a specific time; the 90's era of cocktails. This, depending on the exact associations and subcultures, could align with reproducing the associations of Cosmopolitans with more feminine practices of drinking; it also reinforces the idea that drinks are multiple and can have different meanings to different drinkers.

There are gendered associations with drinks, which reflect greater societal constructs of gender. I base my views of the reproduction and subversion of hegemonic gender norms on the views of Judith Butler and Emily Contois. Butler (1990a, b) views gender as a social construct reproduced by gendered practices; Contois builds upon i.a. Butler's views in her 2020 book *Diners, Dudes and Diets: How Gender and Power Collide in Food Media and Culture*. Contois describes the ways masculinities and femininities were both reproduced and subverted by food media and especially marketing. While the book does not focus on alcoholic beverages, I found the theoretical framework used helpful to see and analyse gendered aspects to SCP drink preferences, especially when contrasting and comparing them to gendered views on drinks in greater society. Within the SCP communities I studied I found patterns of SCPs a)disliking fruity, sweet drinks and preferring spirit-forward drinks; b)associating fruity, sweet drinks with being made to hide the use of bad alcohol and spirit-forward drinks as being made with good alcohol

; c) as being juvenile or associated with less-experienced drinkers ; d) juxtaposing these two types of drinks, when spirit-forward drinks themselves can also be quite sweet (an Old Fashioned is, after all, in essence whisky with sugar and bitters). SCPs tended to emphasise that to them, drinkers' personal preferences for flavours were more important than gendered ideas around drinks. However, the spirit-forward drinks the SCPs preferred are associated with hegemonic masculinity in greater society, while the fruity, sweet drinks SCPs liked less are associated with hegemonic femininity.

In this research I focus on Spirit and Cocktail Professionals; when they are not working SCPs are also customers themselves.

4.1.4 Summary: the flavour sublime SCP community

The flavour sublime SCP community is defined as those who are tied together by their belief that flavour sublimes exist and should be pursued. As in all communities, exclusion is inherent; in the flavour sublime SCP community was found to primarily occur based on a lack of knowledge and interest (assuming you are not socially unpleasant in general). Greater societal tensions in age and gender are visible in the flavour sublime SCP community. As this research explicitly focuses on this community, the members are simply referred to as 'SCPs' in this thesis.

4.2 Knowledge

My fieldwork took place from August 2020 to January 2021 in the Netherlands and Denmark, while Johnston and Baumann's *Foodies* describes the circa 2004-2010 situation in the USA [they live in Toronto. SCPs were found to gain and share knowledges in different ways than foodies, as mentioned in section 3.4 of the methodology. This section describes: SCPs vs. Foodies (4.2.1); which knowledges are held and values (4.2.2., 4.2.3.); knowledge acquisition cq. How SCP knowledges are shared and acquired (section 4.2.4)

4.2.1 SCPs versus foodies

The SCPs indicated they found both technical knowledge and experiential knowledge important in evaluating good products. This is an interesting contrast to how authentic food experiences are often viewed by (foodie) eaters; they often see experiences that are Other to them as being more authentic and thus good, while in a way they are in a worse position to evaluate these foods due to their lack of familiarity (Heldke, 2005). This was not reflected in the SCPs I interviewed.

In their research for the book *Foodies*, Johnston, and Baumann (2014) analysed food media to identify frames used in discourse about good food. They then interviewed foodies to verify whether foodies used these frames.

Presumably, since Johnston and Baumann used food media to identify frames in foodie discourse, foodies used food media to gain knowledge on food. Johnston and Baumann studied "four sources that were best suited to our study, the magazines *Bon Appétit*, *Saveur*, *Food & Wine*, and *Gourmet*" (ibid., p. 215) as their initial food media sample.

However, in this research it was initially unknown which information sources SCPs used. It was unknown whether they used magazines, and if so which ones, books, social media, *et cetera*. Since the 2015 publication of the second edition of *Foodies*, social media has risen in popularity as an information source. To avoid doing research on information sources that were not actually

used by SCPs I conducted an initial scan of the field; a series of five interviews where I primarily asked SCPs what information sources they used and how they learned.

There was great heterogeneity in the responses. SCPs used such a variety of sources that no single formalised source was named by more than 3 different SCPs. Where Lukas and Alexander indicated they read specific magazines on drinks and drinking culture, Martin and Justin never read such magazines at all. Some SCPs used social media as an information source, others used YouTube, yet others strongly preferred books. The one type of information source all SCPs used was learning from other SCPs; as this is informal information, studying it prior to further interviews was not feasible. Every SCP, in every moment, holds constantly changing knowledges, making studying SCPs like they were magazines nonsensical.

There were no formalised information sources which were used by a majority of my SCPs; their formalised information sources were extremely heterogeneous, making a structured media analysis like Johnston and Baumann's an unsuitable way of understanding SCPs' worldviews on good drinks.

The studied SCPs gained knowledge in manners unlike the foodies described by Johnston and Baumann. During the initial scan of the field, I found that SCP ways of learning and information sources were highly heterogeneous. These sources could not be representatively summarised to a feasible amount of formalised information for mediated discourse analysis. Instead, SCP knowledge was explored and through interviews and described in this chapter: namely which knowledges are valued and how are they acquired by flavour sublime SCPs.

4.2.2 Formal and informal knowledges

I classify documented, verifiable sources of information as 'formalised'. Informal knowledge is not documented and thus not verifiable first-hand, e.g., learning directly from peers and experiential/embodied knowledges (see below).

4.2.3 Technical/theoretical knowledge

Technical knowledge covers information on ingredients, processes, and legal frameworks around production. For example, Giusi demonstrated legal technical knowledge when discussing ageing whisky:

"You actually have to be careful [with ageing whisky]. Because if ... you end up with 39.9% in alcohol, is not whiskey anymore, and you just waited- wasted 30 years. 40 years, 50 years...Scotland is a good place for that, because it's quite cold and miserable. But places like India, Taiwan. They calculated a three times faster maturation and a very high angel's share, like up to 12% of the volume of the cask evaporating every year"

Giusi shows how she combines knowledge on alcohol evaporation during ageing (colloquially named the Angel's Share), the atmospheric/climate impacts on the ageing process, and legal requirements for a drink to be sold as whisky. Technical knowledge also covers technical information about ingredients and processes (including equipment) used. It is clear Giusi has extensive knowledge about not only the various ways of whisky production, but also about how these processes and the equipment used impact the final bodily experience of the product.

Similarly, Anna and Mark Emil discussed various drink-making processes, mentioning Empirical's processes of vacuum-distilling and the impact of various ageing vessels (oak wood barrels, stainless steel tanks) on the final drink's sensory properties. In my observations and interviews I

noticed a high level of respect for and interest in technical knowledge. SCPs in general felt that the ingredients and processes used to make drinks defined the drinks; I further elaborate on this in the section 4.3. on categorisation.

However, this kind of product and process-related technology knowledge was far from the only type of theoretical knowledge valued. SCPs told me of their knowledges of geographical origin and legal frameworks (e.g., Scottish whiskey); historical, cultural, or ethnobotanical knowledge species and origin of plant or animal ingredients used; flavour descriptions from the product manufacturer; sometimes even extensive knowledge on the history of certain foods or regions, as Mark Emil explains:

"...the head of R&D is reading the biography of Jerusalem right now because we're looking at...if we're to do anything with Middle Eastern spices? Are there any gems there, even... if it's political or religious? Like, how is it that we really kind of get into a deeper understanding other than... just taking a spice from the land or something? What is there to learn that we're not seen [seeing]?"

This quote demonstrates how information related to drinks was consumed omnivorously by SCPs. They did not focus on, for example, the chemistry or history of drinks alone, or on only one type of drinks, as demonstrated by Mark Emil's description above of an SCP who sought out broad knowledge on possible ingredients for drinks. SCPs had a strong tendency to continuously search out novel information to broaden as well as deepen their technical/theoretical knowledge base.

SCPs often gained theoretical knowledge from formalised sources of information. They attended trainings, drink-making competitions, and masterclasses, watched YouTube videos, read books and websites, and sought out the information provided by producers or sellers on drink bottles, websites, and social media. They did not commonly use magazines as their primary source of information, explaining that such magazines were expensive, and it was hard to know which magazines would be relevant to them. Selecting sources of information was complex. As Vincent explains:

"...some people have gone to a bartender school, and then learned some stuff, then when you actually dig through the history of the cocktail is totally wrong... It occurred to me like, there's a lot of misinformation. You can't really call it that because of course, there isn't an EU certified way of doing cocktails. It's a big world, with a lot of different interpretations of different cocktails."

With so many different takes on cocktails, SCPs indicated that it can be difficult to be sure which information is true. They thus source theoretical information from many different sources and triangulate it, as Vincent demonstrates with comparing bartender school information and historical information. They had a strong preference for peer-to-peer or mentor-guided learning; SCPs felt that a personal connection with an information source made it clearer whether the information was reliable. As a contrast, sources of information that were heavily sponsored by large industrial drinks companies were viewed as less reliable due to the commercial interests of these companies. Sponsored awards and rankings such as the World's Best 50 bars were viewed as unreliable and not very relevant. Instead, SCPs spoke to their peers and mentor figures to gain knowledge on other good bars and drink trends. SCPs thus sourced theoretical information from many types of sources, critically triangulating what they learned and primarily valuing knowledge gained from trusted personal contacts.

4.2.4 Experiential / embodied knowledge

While SCPs placed high value on technical knowledge, they emphasised that technical knowledge must be paired with embodied/experiential knowledge to be useful. Technical knowledge is used to understand and categorise embodied and experiential knowledge; yet technical knowledge alone is seen as insufficient to understand a drink. To truly know a product, SCPs emphasised, you must have first-hand experience with it. Wouter, discussing drinks knowledge, said:

"I think the basics, and how it's done, and all the fixed rules and regulations, obviously you can get them from books. But experiencing it... can give so much sort of depth, you can't [verbalise that experience] ... how you read the words is not how you can experience it. And you can't get everything from books, that's just not that sort of deeper, understanding, and feeling, you know?"

Wouter described how theoretical knowledge wasn't sufficient for him to understand drinks. Reading about a drink only gets you so far, SCPs indicated, and to truly know a drink or product you must have experience with it and develop your own internal reference base of experiential/embodied knowledge.

Experiential knowledge is acquired by experimentation and through sensory experiences with drinks; by practicing drink-making and tasting. Experiential knowledge is often embodied; for example, a technique for shaking cocktails becomes embedded in muscle memory in the drink-maker's body. Sensory experiences from tasting contribute to the taster's individual palate memory (see also section 2.1.2 and Abarca, 2017). This was often thought of as a flavour library in the mind and body; SCPs explained how developing drinks was "like a game of memory" (Martin), using their experiential/embodied knowledge to round out flavour profiles or get inspiration for new drinks. Giusi explains how she combines technical/formalised knowledge with experiential/embodied knowledge, to further her aim of making customers happy with their drinks:

"The explanation that we give about the whiskies is mostly what's written on the label. The part in which you have to put your own personal experience is when you choose the drink together with the person and, having such a large variety, you have to taste them and remember them..."

Giusi's explanation shows how different knowledges are combined to create a holistic understanding of a drink.

4.2.5 Knowledge acquisition

On building knowledge, Wouter stated:

"...it is sort of a learning curve...you learn stuff, and then next time, you know better what to ask...There's always a second step, or a step further. But you can't know that if you've never been there. If you don't get the process, the basic principles, you can't go any deeper because you don't know it. So, you need to grow in that. So, every time you visit a maker, or you read a book, there's always something new in there."

Wouter theorises knowledges as something cyclical, with new knowledge allowing him to ask different questions and acquire more new knowledge. This is very similar to Manzo's (2010) and Hennion and Teil's (2004) work on taste (see section 2.1.2).

How freely available knowledge sources are, varies greatly. Not everyone has access to technical/formalised knowledge sources like trainings and masterclasses. Buying bottles of spirits to experiment with tasting and tools for cocktail-making can rapidly get expensive; yet without experience, how can drinkers gain such holistic knowledge? Information sources like social media, YouTube videos or online spirit/cocktail magazines are more freely available, but only when the drinker has internet access, time, and energy to find reliable information sources. Gaining knowledge on drinks means investing resources, time, energy, and money. For consumers, enthusiasts, amateurs, or aficionados this limits access to knowledge. Often gaining knowledge becomes limited to a socio-economically privileged group like the foodies Johnston and Baumann (2014) studied. However, for SCPs, gaining such knowledge is part of their profession. Giusi stated:

"I wouldn't be able to put as much time and passion into something if it wasn't also my job. But of course, the fact that I like it helps and allows me to put maybe 200% instead of 100% because it's what I actually like doing"

Like Giusi, flavour sublime community SCPs I spoke to have a personal interest in drinks and flavour. They genuinely liked learning more about all aspects of drinks and broadly sought out information. However, learning about these interests was considered as part of their jobs. They learned at work, often starting as dishwashers, cleaners, barbacks or in nightclubs- positions where less specialised knowledge on spirits and cocktails was necessary for the job. As they gained work experience, they also gained knowledge, shifting to different positions like bartender or bar manager. SCPs generally emphasised that, like Giusi, they would not have been able to learn as much about drinks if it hadn't been their job. Studies on taste often studied amateurs (Johnston and Baumann, 2014; Manzo, 2010; Hennion & Teil, 2004 and section 2.1) who invested leisure time and their own money into gaining holistic knowledge. Professionals, in contrast, make their living from it, shifting the previously studied dynamics of who has access to knowledge or acquires taste.

4.2.6 Summary

SCPs gained technical/theoretical knowledge from a wide variety of formal and informal sources. They combined this technical/theoretical knowledge with embodied/experiential knowledge gained through tasting. These knowledges were used complementarily to give a "real, deeper" (Wouter) "holistic" (Giusi) understanding of drinks. SCPs viewed knowledge acquisition as cyclical with gained knowledge giving access to more in-depth knowledge. Knowledges were pursued both out of personal interest and out of professional necessity; SCPs felt they had access to acquire interesting knowledges on drinks through their work

4.3 Categorisability

In the work I found - much to my surprise - echoes of Mary Douglas' (1972) work on food taboos as foods that defied categorisation. In the introduction/proposal of this thesis I referred to her essay 'Deciphering a meal' to argue for the societal importance and engrained-ness of alcohol in Western Europe. However, as I observed how SCPs spoke about drinks and how drinks media like Punch Magazine or books like 'The Drunken Botanist' or 'Everyday Drinking' spoke about drinks, I realised there is a strong drive to view drinks as categorisable. SCPs spoke about types, or typologies, of drinks. They often preferred classic cocktails, while it always remains disputable who decided what 'the classics' are and who gets to decide that. They juxtaposed bitter, boozy,

spirit-forward drinks with sweet, fruity drinks. I started noticing that both spirits and cocktails, or drinks, were largely categorised on two aspects: ingredients and technique, or products and process. Spirits and cocktails were generally described and defined by these two aspects. This idea of good drinks as deliberate, specific representations of categories is similar to Douglas' (1972) essay on food taboos; she described/argued that foods which are taboo under kosher food law are foods which do not fit into categories. For example, frogs are tabooed as they are neither land nor water creatures. Pigs do have cloven hooves but do not chew the cud and are thus also uncategorisable, and taboo. I argue that, as Mary Douglas theorised, there is a human drive to categorise food items, and that this was reflected in the way SCPs defined and described drinks.

Spirits were defined by their process, ingredients, and geographical origin. This categorisation allowed SCPs to understand differences and similarities between various spirits. An example of process being used to define products was given by Giusi when she explained how different stills used in distillation can lead to different flavours and how the barrel and time for aging define whiskies. This aged/unaged definition of spirits extends to rum, tequila, jenever and moutwijn; it is globally used to define spirits and communicate something about the flavour and quality of the spirit. Spirits are also defined by their ingredients. When discussing tequila, Vincent expressed distaste over tequilas not made from only agave: "*Vincent: That's basically... that's not proper tequila, right. I don't think- I don't even think that is made from 100% agave.*" Giusi expressed how amazed she was, learning that (Scotch) whisky was made using only barley. Sake is famously made from rice. Gins are defined by the botanicals used to flavour them, just as the above-mentioned jenever must be flavoured using juniper extracts or berries.

Lastly, geographical origin plays a role in the definition and differentiation of spirits in the E.U. context I studied. As Vincent said, there are legally defined areas (EU info 2021) where Tequila can be produced; the same goes for Scotch whisky, as Giusi explained:

"Only whiskey that has been distilled, matured, and bottled in Scotland can be called scotch. Everything else is not scotch. You can distil it and mature it there and then bottle it... somewhere else? It's not scotch anymore."

As Vincent and Giusi demonstrate, SCPs found the place of origin of a spirit a necessarily defining characteristic of the drink itself.

The tendency to categorise spirits by origin, ingredients and process is formalised in the European PDO/PGI system. This legal structure defines what characteristics drinks must have to be allowed to use a certain name.

Similarly, to spirits but without legal definitions, cocktails were also categorised by their production process and ingredients. For example, cocktails can be shaken, stirred, blended, clarified *et cetera*. The ingredients used are what differentiates a Bee's Knees (gin, lemon juice, honey syrup) from a Gin Sour (gin, lemon juice, simple syrup) ratios between ingredients are also used to define categories of drinks. The combination of ingredients (products) and techniques (processes) define various styles, or typologies of drinks. In ethnomethodological terms, such typologies could also be referred to as haeccities of drinks; this-nesses, that which makes the drinks be those specific drinks and not be other drinks (Garfinkel, 2002; Rawls, 2000).

There is yet another way to categorise alcoholic drinks, used for spirits (to reiterate: this includes liqueurs) as well as cocktails. In the EU context, drinks have historically often been categorised by their function. Just think of the French aperitifs and digestifs, and their Italian counterparts aperitivo and digestivo. These categories describe what the drinks are used for, what function they have: to open the stomach and prepare it for a meal (aperitivo) or to help digest a meal (digestif). The terms describe both categories of drinks, and their associated drinking practice.

While this is a historically common way to categorise drinks, it was not [frequently] mentioned in my interviews or observations. While especially aperitivo has become popular in the U.S.A. in recent years, even sparking the new cocktail genre Aperitiki (tiki-fied aperitivo drinks) (Parsons, 2020), this traditional drink categorisation is apparently not in vogue among Netherlands- and Copenhagen-based SCPs belonging to the flavour sublime community. This may be different in countries like France and Italy, where aperitivo and digestif cultures may be stronger.

SCPs thus categorised cocktails and spirits by the processes and products used to make them. Good drinks are evaluated as being deliberate, specific representations of these categories. Within the European context, geographical origin is also used to categorise spirits, but not cocktails. While drinks were traditionally often categorised by their function, this was not common among my interviewees. This system of categorisation is socially reproduced by SCP discourse and formalised in E.U. law on alcoholic beverages and geographical indication protected products.

However, at the same time as this categorising system is reproduced, it is also subverted. Both Empirical and the Malt Vault defy the categorisation system on primarily product, process and geographical origin, instead categorising drinks primarily on flavours. At the same time, technical knowledge - understanding of how processes and ingredients influence flavour - is highly valued among SCPs. On the one hand, by focusing on flavour, the barrier of knowledge needed to access and feel comfortable in drinking spaces is decreased. On the other hand, knowledge is still highly prized in flavour discussions, together with interest in flavour. This reflects a tension between reproducing and subverting the hegemonic drinks categorisation system in the E.U.

A similar tension is visible in the social indicators of product and process goodness. SCPs rejected industrial, artificial processes and products. This focus on 'purity' and dislike of artificiality shows a rejection of the dominance of global spirits companies. SCPs spoke about how, in the hospitality industries, often a few large companies have enormous market dominance and power. By propagating social indicators of goodness that reject these large companies, SCPs pushed back against this existing power structure. This rejection of global, industrial companies fits with the food zeitgeist. This is similar to the current post-Michelin world of fine dining.

I thus argue that there is a tension between rejecting and reproducing existing power structures and relations like the dominance of large alcoholic beverage companies, and the hegemonic E.U. categorisation system. This rejection or reproduction is propagated through SCP discourse. It is visible in the evaluative practice of tasting, especially in the social/collective indicators of goodness, and in SCP selections of knowledge/information sources. The categorisability of drinks is an indicator of goodness, yet it is a contested indicator which showcases tensions within flavour sublime communities and greater society.

This drinks categorisation structure, which has historically developed, can be viewed as a formalised reproduction of social hierarchies. The categorisations of drinks, and the associated language and knowledge barriers, can then be / are exclusive. The focus on flavour is a push to democratise the category system. Drinkers do not need to know the categories to like the drink. This shows a tension between reproducing and rejecting existing power structures.

SCPs were found to categorise both spirits and cocktails along ingredients, process, and geographical origin as formalised under E.U. law. At the same time, they rejected this hegemonic categorisation through a focus on flavour. This categorisation shows both reproduction and rejection of the dominance of large, industrial alcohol companies and the E.U. hegemony of drinks as categorisable.

4.4 What makes a drink good?

4.4.1 The practices of drinking

I argue that what makes a drink good is the drinker's experience of the practices of drinking. The practices of drinking are performative, learned, and social. They are culturally, historically, and geographically diverse; drinking is multiple, associated with both virtue and vice. The practice of drinking is both a knowledge-based/knowledge-driven and a knowledge-creating practice.

Lisa Heldke's (2005) work on authenticity is helpful for explaining the practice of drinking further. Heldke argues that a dish cannot be authentic in itself but can only be experienced as authentic. Authenticity is not an objective, measurable property of a dish *in sich*, but rather the outcome of the eater's experience of a dish in and with its experience, as compared to other food experiences of the eater. A dish floating in space cannot be authentic when there is no eater there to experience it as such, and no other dish to compare it with. Authenticity is thus a relative property of the experience of the eater, when consuming the work of cuisine, the dish in and with its experience.

I adjust Heldke's (*ibid.*) relational and experiential view on authenticity as a property of the experiencing of a work of cuisine to 'goodness' of drinks. Goodness does not, and cannot, exist without badness- or its true juxtaposition, indifference. Goodness only exists as one drink being better or less good than another drink. A drink floating in a space vacuum is neither good nor bad. It is simply an indifferent object. Similarly, to Heldke, I argue that what makes a drink good is the experience of the drinker when drinking. It is not the dish which is authentic; authenticity is in the eater's perception of the work of cuisine. Not the drink, which is good, but the drinker who perceives the drink in and with its experience as being good.

Heldke theorised a work of cuisine as a dish in and with its experience, which is always a transaction between a dish created by a culturally embedded cook and experienced by a culturally embedded eater. I modify this to a drink in and with its experience is a transaction between a drink-maker and a drinker, mediated through the physical object of the drink itself and through the practice(s) of drinking. This shows both the importance of the drink itself, and the interactions which caused the drinking experience to exist. Where Heldke focused on the dish, I place the drink and the human and more-than-human interactions at an equal level of importance to 'goodness' of drinks.

Drinks are experienced through the practice of drinking. I argue that the practice of drinking can be viewed as consisting of two different, intertwined aspects: the practice of tasting, and the practice of enjoying. The practices of tasting and enjoying are related but employ a different focus and serve a different purpose.

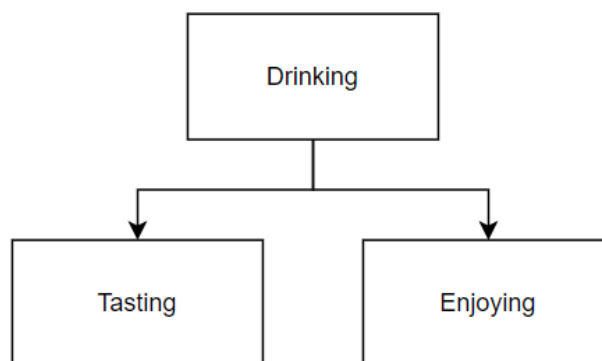


FIGURE 2: DRINKING CONSISTS OF TASTING AND ENJOYING

4.4.2 Tasting versus enjoying

The heavily knowledge-driven practice of tasting focuses on what's in the glass, the drink itself. The practice of enjoying focuses on what's beyond the glass and is more focused on the hedonistic, social, and relational aspects of drinking. I describe tasting and enjoying as separate practices that are aspects of the practices of drinking, as they are divergent in their aims, focuses and standards of evaluation. A drink can be experienced as a good drink in the practice of enjoying, while simultaneously that same drink can be experienced as not good in the practice of tasting.

Both the practice of tasting and the practice of enjoying are social and knowledge-driven; both are learned behaviours. Both are, as Hennion and Teil (2004) propose, individual, social, processed through the body and performed using artefacts. This also fits with Manzo's (2010) theorisation of taste as acquired through the performative practice of tasting, and taste as social and learned within a community of people who are interested in this practice. However, where Manzo and Hennion & Teil (*ibid.*) describe the practices of tasting, I extend my theorisation to the practices of drinking. This adds the practice of enjoying. Where the practice of tasting is evaluative, knowledge-driven and knowledge-creating, the practice of enjoying a drink is situational and relational. Below I further describe the differences between the practices of tasting and enjoying.

That what makes a drink good when performing the practice of tasting is the outcome of a systemic, learned evaluation on multiple factors, focusing on what is in the glass; the liquid object that is the drink itself. The drinker, when performing the practice of tasting, mentally and physically evaluates the drink on various parameters designed to determine if the drink approaches objective goodness. The focus is on determining whether other people would like this drink. The question asked is 'Is this a good drink? Would other drinkers like it when they drink it?' What makes a drink good when enjoying it, in contrast, are the people around the drinker, the place, the drinker's mood, the whole experience surrounding the drink. In the practice of enjoying, the question asked is 'Do I like this drink, in this moment, in this place, with these people?'. In other words, does this drink hit the spot, for me, right now? Is this drink good in my experience of this relational space-time nodule? When performing the practice of enjoying a drink, the focus is laid not on the drink itself but on the drinker's experience of everything around it in that time-space nodule. The focus is laid on what's beyond the glass.

Another way to view the practices of tasting and of enjoying is to explain them by who performs these practices.

I argue that the practices of tasting and enjoying are performed by respectively SCPs and customers. Of course, this is not an absolute boundary; it is more of a blurry borderland with general tendencies of customers towards enjoying and SCPs towards tasting. Customers primarily focus on whether they themselves like a drink. Whether they find a drink good -or sometimes, in the case of gifting or sharing drinks, people they know will or do like a drink. They focus on whether a drink fits and suits their personal preferences in that moment, in that space-time nodule. They focus on how a drink makes them feel; emotionally as well as physically. This fits with the practice of enjoying.

My interviewees were spirit and cocktail professionals (SCPs) whose financial security depends on making and/or selling drinks that the guests or customers will like. My interviewees unanimously indicated it was important to them to make the customer happy; both out of an innate desire to do so, and out of a desire to build a community of regulars. The important question to them as professionals is thus not 'Do I think this drink is good?' but 'Will my future, often unknown, customers think this drink is good?'. This fits with the practice of tasting.

To highlight how the practices of tasting and enjoying are intertwined; SCPs, when they are not working, when they are not drinking in a professional capacity, are also customers themselves. The role they perform changes, as do their practices. Tasting is then a practice associated with the role of SCP, while enjoying is associated with the role of customer.

4.5 The practice of tasting

4.5.1 Theorising tasting

The important question to SCPs, in their role as professionals is not ‘Do I think this drink is good?’ but ‘Will my future, often unknown, customers think this drink is good?’. This fits with the practice of tasting.

I found out that to answer this question, SCPs endeavour to take their own personal preferences out of the evaluation process. To this end SCPs employ a wide range of indicators of goodness would be a more appropriate term. These indicators of goodness are used to evaluate drinks in the practice of tasting.

In its simplest sense, the practice of tasting is a ritualistic pattern of behaviour. This pattern is learned and becomes automatic. In the following sections I will describe the steps of tasting, the indicators of goodness used to evaluate drinks in the practice of tasting, and how these steps and parameters relate to Hennion and Teil’s four-legged stool model

4.5.1.1 The steps of tasting

The steps of tasting for my SCPs are making, looking, smelling, sipping, and swallowing. These steps are learned, ritualistic, become automatic and formalised. These steps are learned; an example is Sarah, who explained that she performs tasting using the above-mentioned rituals because she learned to do so from her mentors and SCP work experiences. She was taught that this was *the way* to taste and the only way to evaluate drinks. She was also taught the language shared and used by SCPs in tasting discourse, such as nose (smell), palate (flavour and aroma), *et cetera*. The steps or rituals of tasting become automatic, as evidenced by Giusi: “*I always [smell the drink] though, because it kind of prepares you, and now even if I’m drinking water, I find myself going [mimes sniffing/ ‘nosing’ a glass] ... (laughs)*”.

‘Nosing’ or smelling a drink has become an embodied habit which automatically transfers over to anything Giusi drinks. The steps are formalised through (trainings in) the practice of tasting itself, and in formal professional activities like judging competitions, and become automatic through experience and embodiment. Through the training indicators of goodness are formalised and reproduced.

These steps of tasting are used by all spirit and cocktail professionals involved in the research. These rituals are, by flavour sublime SCP communities, viewed as the *only* way to perform the practices of tasting. They thus also serve as an entry barrier: anyone who doesn’t know the steps and does not express interest in learning them and joining the tasting discourses, does not belong.

4.5.1.2 Indicators of goodness

SCPs used the practices of tasting to evaluate drink goodness. For this they used a wide variety of ‘indicators of goodness’: attributes of the drink that as associated with good or bad drinks. These are measurable, specific attributes. In other words: SCPs operationalised the abstract concept of ‘goodness’ into the indicators of goodness. The indicators of goodness are perceived

or processed in various ways. For example, the smell of a drink is perceived through the body, while the care taken in making the drink is perceived more cognitively and is a social construct.

The results for this section were a list of indicators of goodness. To analyse how SCPs evaluate goodness using the practices of tasting, I structured and consolidated the indicators of goodness into categories. More detailed explanations, including quotes, can be found in Appendix 7.5.

4.5.2 The elements of tasting

I categorise the indicators of goodness based on Hennion and Teil's work (2004) on taste as a result of performing the social, learned, and reflexive practice of tasting, as explained in section 2.1.2 and 2.3.2. To reiterate: I categorise the indicators of goodness as showing first: the artefact-

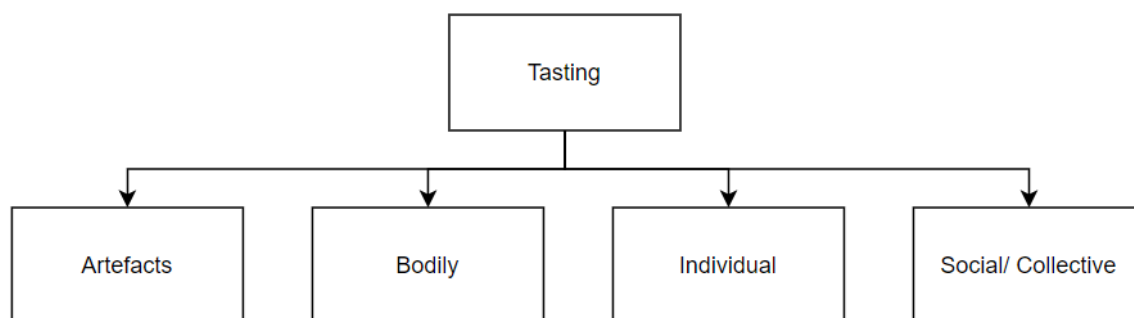


FIGURE 3: ELEMENTS OF TASTING

using, second: bodily, third: individual, and fourth: social/collective elements of the practice of tasting. I will then discuss how the social/collective parameters especially reflect greater trends in the food world.

4.5.2.1 Using artefacts

The first step, making the drink, can be as simple as pouring a spirit into a drinking vessel; there is a vast range of levels of complexity in the process of making drinks, ranging from opening a bottle or can and pouring it, involved multi-day preparation processes including in-house made infusions of liqueurs. At Empirical, a Copenhagen company that describes itself as a flavour company, liquors are made in a process including koji and kombucha fermentations, macerations, infusions, and vacuum distillation; the process of making the drinks is quite involved but serving the finished product can be very simple; just open the bottle (or canned cocktail). The level of complexity of the making process can vary drastically.

SCPs stated they had strong preferences for certain types of glassware and other tools to make and taste drinks with. There are special glasses for tasting spirits 'neat' (just the spirit, no ice), shakers, ice, garnishes, straws, juicers, strainers, bar spoons; I include these in artefacts of the practice of tasting.

The preferred artefacts change depending on the drink itself and the situation; for example, Anna, a Copenhagen bartender/hospitality professional, strongly prefers different drinking vessels depending on drink temperature.

"I like a short glass [lowball glass]. I don't like high balls. Mainly because then you've got to deal with like straws, and I don't like drinking things through straws.... I don't like drinking hot drinks from glassware...It's weird to me. It's also very weird to me when you have cold drinks in ceramics...I'm very aware of textures. So, like, have a very cold

thing in like - what should be - a textured thing that it should be something hot in, that's like, my brains like no. Not good."

Anna also mentioned here how specific glassware is associated with other artefacts; she dislikes highball glasses specifically because she dislikes using straws. SCPs use artefacts for specific purposes, as Sarah explained: *"The glass you use [for tasting spirits] ... the nosing type of glass, which is like [stemmed and] narrow at the top. So, all the smells [are] guided one direction..."*

Here Sarah described how she was taught to use specific glasses to taste drinks, ascribing functionality (aroma transfer to the nose) to the artefact choice. She later explained that she has strong preferences for tools she used to make and serve cocktails:

"But then when it comes to how I prepare the cocktails myself it's like, I have a huge range of glasses for cocktail... all the equipment that I have, the shakers, the jigger, everything, I've picked out, because for my home bar, I want something that I like, and it's such a big part of the experience. There is a lot of rituals about the equipment, and how it looks, and how it functions, and just the best. Like, if you can."

So specific artefacts are preferred, and SCPs have strong opinions about which artefacts to use for which purpose. However, SCPs also indicated that these artefacts are not always necessary or available for people making drinks at home. Artefacts, as detailed above, are chosen based on their functionality in making and drinking. They can enhance or distract from the bodily, sensory element of tasting. They are also selected for aesthetics and function. A last aspect of artefact choice was pointed out by Woj:

"I use a lot of special glasses... you know, every gay house I think has that kind of stuff. But it's just like every glass for a different cocktail. And it has to look beautiful. I mean a lot of garnishes. No even stupid gin tonic has to have like a lot of different things being inside. And I don't talk about cucumber or lemon, but those small things you buy in a fancy wine shop... Buy it as a thing for a garnish thing. So, it's very important, like, to give it a little twist that people do not expect."

Woj views carefully choosing the artefacts to use as part of being a good host; an action to show guests that you care. He explains these preferences, however, as associated with gay culture(s) more than as being influenced by his profession.

Woj also mentions garnishes, which are interesting as an artefact that is sometimes consumed. Garnishes thus blur the distinction between the artefact-using and bodily elements of tasting. Aesthetics, the look of the drink, also show how the various elements of the practice of taste are intertwined through being processed through the body (via the eyes), yet what is beautiful is heavily individually and socially influenced, and the artefacts used are an important aesthetic factor in drinks.

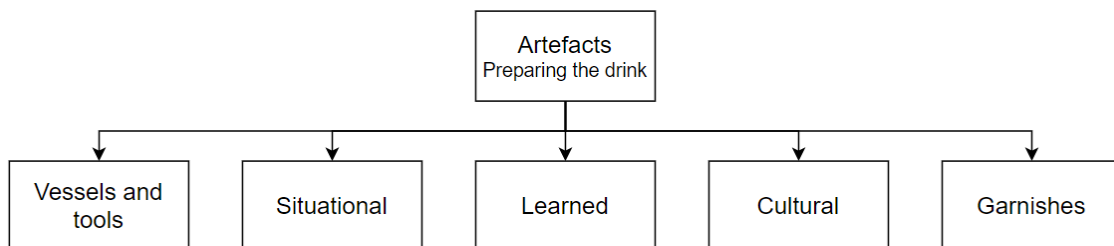


FIGURE 4: ARTEFACTS

4.5.2.2 Processed through the body

Once the drink is prepared, the next steps of the practice of tasting are looking, smelling, sipping, and swallowing. During these steps the aesthetics, aromas, flavour, mouthfeel, and aftertaste of the drink are processed through the body. The steps of sniffing, sipping, and swallowing are repeated multiple times to ensure a representative impression of the drink, as Sarah explained:

"... you have to taste the spirits three times to be able to, kind of [properly taste it] ...you tasted like three, three [separate] sips. Otherwise, you can't get the full experience of it..."

By repeating the practice of tasting, SCPs aim to arrive at a thorough impression of a drink's sensory impact. This sensory impact is processed through the body and evaluated using the drinker's embodied and experiential knowledge. The sensory aspects of the drink are evaluated based on bodily indicators of goodness, namely aroma, texture, flavour, and bodily effects.

Anna explains how she practices tasting:

"...you'll look at something, then you smell it straight away. Because you know that aroma is the first things to go. And then you start tasting. Right? ... I definitely think I'll always take a small sip, first, and kind of just like, think about what's happening, in my mouth. And then, when I feel like I've had all of my senses, it's like ticked everything and I feel like 'Okay, oh, that's the acidity, that's the bitterness that's the sweetness, like this really nice, I like it'. And then I think I stop thinking about [tasting]... and then I just enjoy it. And drink it. Yeah."

As Anna and Giusi both mention, aromas are one of the first sensory aspects of a drink that the drinker experiences; only looking at the drink comes earlier. A drink's aroma often gives an indication of what flavours to expect on the palate, i.e., in the mouth. SCPs indicated that a pleasant, interesting, clearly discernible aroma is important. Wouter, a Dutch specialty liquor store owner focusing on cider and Calvados, described a drink he particularly liked as being 'almost perfume'. Vivid descriptions of scents and flavours often came up in my research; as did mentions of the next indicator of goodness, texture. As an example, Anna explains:

"I have like a love-hate relationship with egg whites in cocktails. Because I have a super sensitive nose. I love what they do to the texture of a cocktail, but. If I can smell those egg whites. It's just, the whole cocktail is ruined for me."

Anna mentions texture and scent as intertwined by the use of egg whites in cocktails. Texture impacts aroma release in foods; the exact dynamics behind this are not yet fully understood. In the fields of food physics, chemistry and sensory science, the aroma release / texture / eater experience links are as of yet primarily studied using model food systems (Gierczynski et al., 2011; Saint-Eve et al., 2006; Lubbers & Butler, 2010; Seuvre et al., 2007). Drinks, as mentioned in the introduction, fall under food in food technology and E.U. law. Depending on the method of making, drink typology, alcohol and sugar content, tannins, temperature *et cetera* can have a very different mouthfeel; this also impacts aroma and flavour. A pleasant texture is important to SCPs, but there is no one definition of 'good texture'; the texture must suit the aim of the drink. e.g., Boston-style Sours must be fluffy, fizzes must be carbonated, spirits can range from thin and sharp textures to rich and oily mouthfeels, *et cetera*. The importance of texture in drinks is reflected in the wide range of texture-related articles on drinks magazines such as Punch and Imbibe. From fat-washing spirits to stirring a Negroni variation last-minute with rice, dry-shaking egg whites or using aquafaba as a vegan (and less eggy but unfortunately more beany substitute),

SCPs have developed endless techniques and recipes to come closer to perfecting drink texture (Favre, n.d.; Frechette, 2021; Jaworska, 2017; Krigbaum, 2018; Newman, 2015; "Recipe | Essential Classics: Whiskey Sour", n.d.; Simonson, 2017).

While scent and texture are important, flavour of a drink on the palate (i.e., in the taster's mouth) was most often mentioned when it comes to bodily indicators of goodness. The overall flavour of a drink must be good. This does not mean it must align with SCPs personal preferences necessarily; SCPs emphasised that they are not always the target group for drinks they develop, sell, and serve. SCPs evaluate drink flavour using multiple indicators of goodness, namely: sweetness, spirit presence, balance & complexity, and aftertaste. For a detailed description of each indicator, see Appendix 7.5.

My interviewees universally indicated they disliked overly sweet drinks. As explained above in section 4.1.3. Tensions and greater societal influences, sweet drinks are associated with feminine and juvenile drinking, as well as overly sweet drinks being made to hide the usage of 'bad booze', low-quality spirits. Drinks with a strong spirit presence, colloquially referred to as spirit-forward drinks, were often juxtaposed to sweet drinks. These tended to be preferred by the SCPs I spoke to. However, this preference for spirit-forward drinks does not mean SCPs do not enjoy other drinks.

Lars still enjoys less intensely spirit-forward drinks, but he does indicate his taste changed as he gained more experience as an SCP. This hints at ideas of spirit-forwardness, and ingredient/product use in general, which are shared and socially transmitted in SCP communities. I elaborate further on good products in section 4.5.2.4 below on social/collective indicators of goodness.

SCPs indicated that no matter whether the flavour of the drink is spirit-forward or sweeter, it must be balanced and complex. Every ingredient in the drink must be discernible, and good drinks have multiple layers of flavour. These flavours must be balanced to create a harmonious composite flavour where none of the flavours overpower other flavours. A complex drink is not good if unbalanced, just as a balanced drink with zero complexity is not good. After sipping and swallowing the drink the aftertaste remains. The evaluation of the drink's flavour on the palate makes way for considering the aftertaste.

Aftertaste preferences are quite individual, but the presence of a distinctive aftertaste, like the presence of a good 'nose' or scent, is generally viewed by SCPs as an indicator of goodness. Flavour is thus evaluated by judging whether the sweetness, spirit presence, balance and complexity, and aftertaste of the drink are experienced as good by the SCP. Each sub-indicator, as well as the drink as a whole, must be good for the flavour to be good.

Lastly, one of the facts of alcohol being processed through the body is that alcohol is toxic; no matter how accepted it is to drink in Western European society, this is still the case. Lars mentioned a tension between liking a drink and disliking its physiological effects in his preference for absinth, stating:

"I still sort of adore anything that contains absinth because that's my favourite spirit. It does not treat me well, but I do like it."

He touches upon the idea that good drinks are less bad for your body than bad drinks. While SCPs are fully aware of the toxicity of alcohol, good or high-quality spirits and drinks are viewed as being less bad for your body. The exact effects of specific drinks, however, were viewed as

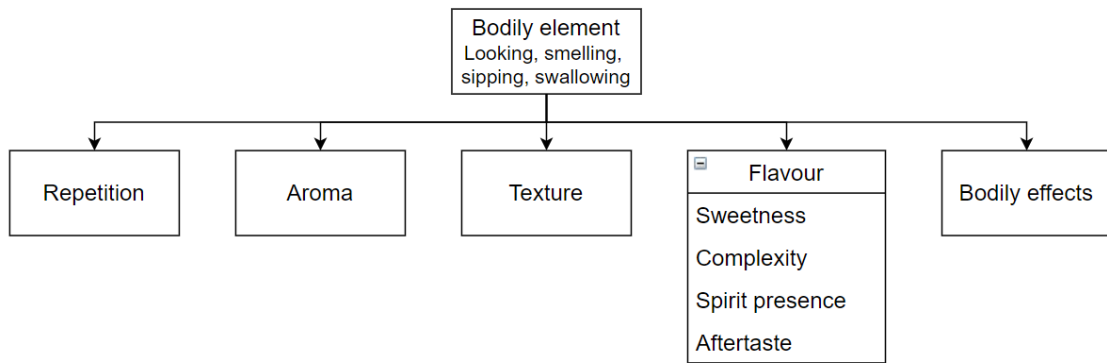


FIGURE 5: BODILY ELEMENT

highly individual (and to be discovered experimentally, a process viewed as quite fun). In summary, the practice of tasting is performed in several steps: looking, smelling, sipping, and swallowing. When performing the practice of tasting SCPs evaluate drinks on various indicators of goodness. This section described indicators of goodness which are processed through the body: scent, texture, and flavour. I unpacked flavour into sweetness, spirit presence, balance & complexity, and aftertaste. Finally, I discussed bodily effects as a last indicator of goodness.

4.5.2.3 Individual

All SCPs I spoke to had strong opinions on a few ingredients or flavours. Anna does not like absinth, while this is Lars’ favourite spirit. Several SCPs indicated they disliked some drinks for having had too much of them; they had either gotten tired of the flavour, or now associated the drink with bad bodily effects and had come to dislike the flavour as an effect. SCPs having personal preferences is logical when considering that tasting is an activity performed by cognisant individuals, who have their own individual likes and dislikes in terms of flavour. However, the practice of tasting is performed in the role of professional to evaluate whether other people would find a drink good. This is demonstrated by Lars’ response when asked about drinks he dislikes:

I don't like the flavour of coconut, so I will never like the Pina Colada. But objectively, I can look at the flavour combination, and see why someone else would. And then on the opposite side of that I have the Dirty Martini, with putting olive brine into vodka, and I cannot objectively see why everyone likes that ...Like at least if it's gin you have the gin flavour. But they'll typically have vodka, and then just - the olive brine? So, it's just olive brine, and booze? [long pause] Yeah, like that one's a mystery to me."

Lars emphasises that while he has some personal dislikes (coconut), he can set these aside to evaluate whether others would like a drink. This shows how SCPs actively attempt to take their

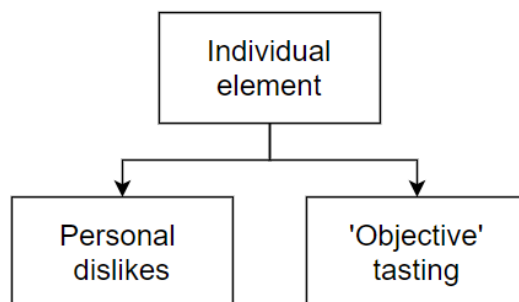


FIGURE 6: INDIVIDUAL ELEMENT

personal preferences out of the evaluative process in the practice of tasting, instead focusing on social/collective indicators of goodness and artefact-using and bodily indicators of goodness. However, in the case of the Dirty Martini, it also comes up short on these other indicators of goodness, leaving Lars mystified why drinkers like it.

4.5.2.4 Social / collective

Many indicators are shared among multiple interviewees and reflect trends in society. These indicators of goodness fall under the social/collective element of tasting. These social parameters

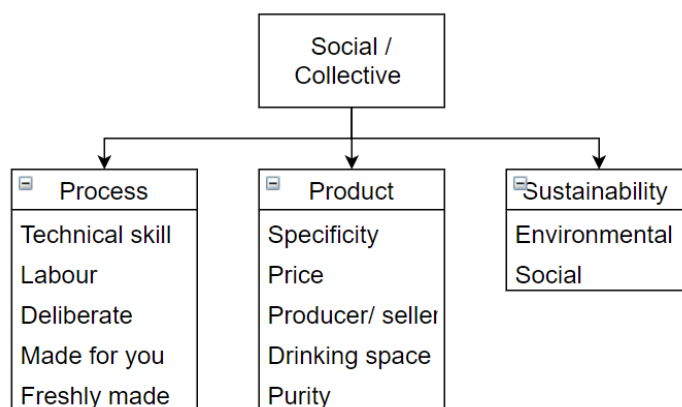


FIGURE 7: SOCIAL/ COLLECTIVE ELEMENT

of goodness are still also individual preferences; however, they consist of more than just ‘do I like this flavour’. Bodily indicators of goodness are also social to some extent, as they are learned and tasting in general is an activity that the drinker performs individually but learns and shares collectively (within their community/-ies). These social/collective indicators of goodness, then, are parameters which are not processed through the body, but processed cognitively, and which are generally shared among the SCP community that I studied. The indicators of goodness are related to: **process, product, and sustainability.**

4.5.2.4.1 Process

SCPs indicated that, for a drink to be good, not only the bodily experience of the drink – e.g., the flavour - should be good, but the drink must be produced in a good process. They indicated that for a drink to be good, every component of the drink, and the drink as a whole, must be made in a good process. I unpacked a good process into the following indicators: technical skill, labour, deliberate (and care), made for you and freshly made/not pre-mixed/-made. The drink must be made in a deliberate, conscious way; it must be made with care. It must be made with technical skill, underscored by knowledge of what techniques have what effects on the drink.

In essence, the process- the techniques used- are impacting the bodily experience. Drinks should also be made in a way that minimises unnecessary labour. While a long, complex, and/or involved process of drinks-making is not necessarily seen as bad, a complicated process just for the sake of complicating matters is not appreciated. Where Lars indicates that a complicated process is fine, as long as he feels it is necessary to deliver his aimed-for drinking experience, Martin prefers simpler processes. A major difference between these two SCPs is that whereas Lars works in a casual, craft, cocktail bar, Martin works in a restaurant bar; this can impact the amount of labour that is available for preparation of cocktail ingredients.

SCPs indicated that the development of these processes is a result of knowledge-based trial and error. They described recipe development as coming up with a desired flavour profile, a certain

spirit or ingredient to work with, or a specific target group that is currently underserved in the menu (e.g., a menu having many sweet cocktails but few dry or acidic drinks for customers who prefer those). They then experiment, trying a few different combinations and asking colleagues or target group members for input if needed.

It is more important that a drink be made with care and deliberate choices, than that it is made with difficult techniques (Sarah). Yet Anna indicated that if she is going out for excellent drinks, she prefers or even expects that the drinks are made with processes and levels of technical skill that mean she cannot make the drink at home herself. Anna also indicates she has 'safe drinks' which are simple to make and can thus be expected to be good in bars which do not specialize in highly technical drinks or drinks made using a complex process. However, when asked which bars I should visit for my fieldwork, she advised me to visit Balderdash, as this bar was technically advanced and innovative. Woj demonstrated both an exacting and relaxed attitude when it came to making drinks for friends at home; on the one hand he prizes aesthetics, artefacts, and use of good ingredients; on the other hand, he described a friend making Cosmopolitans by throwing the ingredients into a jug and stirring it with their hand. The demands of technical difficulty and involvedness of the process thus depend on the drink and the situation, yet they must generally be done with deliberateness and care. This situational, care-focused approach comes back in section 4.6.

This brings me to the last two indicators of goodness concerning the process; the drinks must be made for you, and freshly made. SCPs indicated that they primarily wanted to ensure customers were happy with their drinks; that the drink was a good match to the drinker. One way to ensure this is to make the drinks customisable, and to enter into conversations with the customers to make a drink which for the drinker, in that moment, 'hits the spot' and is experienced as a good drink. This desire for drinks to be adaptable to different drinkers' personal preferences is a factor in recipe development and describes how the SCPs when they are drinking prefer a drink which is made specially for them. I will describe this personal, relational approach to drinks further in section 4.6. I am touching upon it here because it is, in a way, a social indicator of goodness in the process of drink-making and because it provides an explanatory counterpoint to the final process-related social indicator of goodness; the drinks must be freshly made. SCPs indicated a general dislike for pre-mixed drinks like canned cocktails; when one pre-mixes a drink, the adaptability of the drink to the consumers' preferences decreases. At the same time batching (creating a larger batch of) ingredients, to facilitate the drink-making process, or even batching entire drinks, was seen as perfectly acceptable and a good way to make the process of drink-making less labour-intensive in a bar.

Pre-made drinks are associated with not being fresh, not reflecting care for the people receiving the drink, and with low-quality ingredients; products will be discussed in the next set of social/collective indicators of goodness. Sarah indicates a degree of ambiguity about pre-mixed drinks. Apparently when the drinks are made by people she views as caring deeply about flavour, as part of the flavour sublime SCP community, she has more trust that the drinks can be good. This ambiguity is also seen in Lukas' caveat that the quality of products he normally uses in freshly mixed drinks may play a part in his comparative dislike of pre-mixed drinks. Pre-mixed or not fresh drinks being made with care, in a deliberate way; made by people who care; can still be good according to the SCPs I spoke with. I conclude that while my SCPs indicated they found technical skill and freshly-made-ness of drinks important indicators of goodness in the process of making drinks, they found that drinks being made with care and in a deliberate manner was more important than them being made with difficult techniques or the drinks not being pre-made. A drink made carelessly and thoughtlessly is generally viewed as bad; while a drink made with simple techniques, or which is pre-mixed can still be good.

4.5.2.4.2 Product

SCPs differentiate between levels of goodness in the products (ingredients) they use to make drinks. As exemplified by Lukas: "...Although I have to admit that I typically used superior products for that comparison [between premixed and freshly made drinks] so not exactly comparable". Giusi stated a similar preference for good products:

Giusi: 'The main focus, that we have, is the product. Because even for the cocktail[s], we use top shelf products. we don't use blended or in general, things that are not nice. Like the whiskey that we use for that cocktail [Peated Mule] can be drank by itself and it's still a nice peated whiskey single malt

Giusi explains that using 'top shelf' - high-quality and often more expensive - products in cocktails is unusual; if this was a normal thing to do, she would not have stated it so explicitly or used the phrase 'even for the cocktail[s]'. She also implies single malt whiskeys are nicer, or better, than blended whiskies. The products, not only the processes, used in making spirits and cocktails are important. This goes for spirits and for cocktails; every aspect of the drink should be good, from the raw materials and processes used in spirits to the final garnishes used on a cocktail. These products can be spirits, syrups, sodas, waters, fruits or vegetables/produce, spices, even garnishes and ice. There is an interaction between product and process; good products are generally made using a good process, which is described above. However, as it is often impossible to know every detail of a production process, and ingredients in alcoholic drinks (with ABV>1.2%, EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, 2021) are currently not required by EU law to be listed on the packaging, my SCPs used various indicators of goodness to estimate whether a product was good. The indicators of goodness related to products, or ingredients, are specificity, price, producer/seller, and purity. As with process, the care and deliberation applied to choosing products was important

As I did above with the process-related social indicators of goodness, below I unpack and explain the product-related indicators of goodness, specificity, price, producer/ seller, and purity. Full details can be found in the Appendix 7.5.

I use the word specificity to describe uniqueness, specialness, different-from-other-products-ness. Exactly copying a drink developed by another SCP is viewed as, paraphrasing Justin: "If someone else is already doing it, I don't find it fun anymore. You just need to come up with your own ideas."

Originality and norm-breaking increases drink specificity and are prized in the SCP flavour sublime community. To recognise specific products as being norm-breaking, one must of course be familiar with the norm; So how can SCPs evaluate whether a product is likely to be unique, specific, or good? Often the indicators price and producer/seller are used.

Giusi, when asked about drinks she liked, described a number of different distilleries with processes and ingredients she found fascinating and good; often these products were highly unique and specific. Showing how process and product are intertwined; the ingredient she described to be used by Springbank distillery is malted barley, but the malted barley becomes more unique and specific by the distillery malting it rather than buying industrial malted barley. This also increases the price, a sentiment mirrored by Martin. Generally, a higher price was seen as an indicator of specificity, specialness, and quality, especially in smaller, artisan producers. Perhaps these are seen as being more honest and less marketing-focused when increasing prices. Anna also mentioned price as an indicator of quality.

Anna views good, or excellent, products as something the producers put a lot of labour and care into, which must be respected. She indicates that for a drink to be good, all products used must

be good in themselves. She juxtaposes good products with industrial products, as seen from her reference to Schweppes tonic. This dislike of industrial products or producers is corroborated by Giusi:

Kilchoman in Islay ...is very good, and once again they're totally independent. They are independent from the big Diageo monsters that wanna (laughs) own everybody. And you can taste it. When a distillery is independent, you can taste the character in the whiskey

Giusi expresses a clear preference for unique, specific products; at the same time, she indicates a dislike of industrial, large-scale production (Diageo is a multinational drinks company covering various brands; this is common in the alcohol industry). She prefers artisan, in-house made products, from vertically integrated production chains, and uses in-house-made ingredients as well as small-scale barrel aging in making drinks at the Malt Vault. This increases specificity of products used in the drinks.

Products are chosen with deliberateness and care, for what they can add to the drink. A product should add something to the bartender's repertoire. Lars describes good products as either known/recognisable, or as having a special flavour/being specific. He refers to the current gin boom in Western Europe, with many new gins flooding the market; thus, Lars' number of available options to select a gin has increased drastically. The more popular a drink, the more options available for that drink, the more specific / picky you can be. Yet this doesn't work in all alcohol market sectors. Said provided a sharp contrast, explaining that in the world of single malt whiskies, there is always a scarcity of good products from good distilleries, and that these bottles sell out fast. With his bar the Malt Vault focusing on high-end, highly specific, often single-cask whiskies, he and Giusi are dependent on what they are offered by the seller. They rely heavily on historical reputations of good whiskey producers, relying on known good producers to continue making good products.

Specific, unique, good products are, in summary, essential to good drinks and often identified by having a higher price-point and being made by a producer that the SCP trusts to deliver a good product. Evidently, a higher price does also make a product less accessible to customers with budget for luxuries and leisure. As I interviewed spirit and cocktail professionals, though this is not work associated with high economic capital, they interfaced with such higher-priced products through their work.

SCPs wanted products to be pure. This means both representative of specific, often natural flavours, and not being artificial or fake. Anna explains this preference using grapefruit soda as a reference:

I think, products that are as pure as they can be to the flavour. So, if you have a grapefruit soda, and it just tastes sweet, I get really annoyed. Because grapefruits are not just sweet, they're super bitter, and it's delicious, and they're acidic. That's why you choose grapefruit, right?

SCPs often described flavours, of 'anything that's tasted' (Anna), in a vivid, detailed manner, breaking flavours down into various aromas, mouthfeels and basic tastes. They strongly disliked artificial aromas, viewing them as a reduction of the real flavours, even going so far as to view this mimicking as disrespectful to other good products.

This dislike of artifice was linked to a dislike of industrial products; my interviewees associated industrial or bulk ingredients as artificial, fake, and impure. A good example is sour mix, as explained by Vincent:

“Sour mix is instead of taking lemon juice and sugar syrup, it's a... it's a premixed stuff of that. I think. Of course, it's not real lemon juice. I'm pretty sure I've never worked with it myself. I've never seen a bottle of it. But it's like, you know, premixed, factory made. Yeah, fake stuff, right.”

Vincent associated ‘premixed, factory made’ sour mix with fakeness and juxtaposed this with ‘lemon juice and sugar syrup’, combined when making a drink and associated with ‘real’ and pure. SCPs associated premixed, industrial products with bad drinks; drinks made using sour mix and overly sweet drinks were the most named bad/disliked drinks. There is a clear collective sense of dislike of sour mix, associated with its use in the 90’s styles of cocktails.

Around the 2000s, as a reaction to the brightly coloured, sweet, artificially flavoured drinks of the 90s, the craft cocktail movement started. With strong emphasis on good processes, good products, and artisan or in-house-made ingredients used to make classic cocktails, the craft cocktail movement has had a lasting impact on how we drink and what drinks are valued by SCPs; many SCPs I interviewed had views which aligned with the craft cocktail movement. These preferences are mirrored in the interest in ‘good food’ as viewed by foodies; there is a strong crossover between the culinary and boozy fields, as Lars told me:

“... the cocktail bars are just like a few years behind of the food trends. Because like, what's kind of really up in food trends is usually what kind of spirals down and hits the cocktail bar, a little afterwards.”

Interestingly enough, while there is a strong dislike of sour mix and other such artificial ingredients, Punch Magazine describes a rising interest in using purified acids instead of fresh citrus juices to use as the sour components in drinks. According to these articles (Dao, 2019; Jaworska, 2017; Newman, 2020; Newman, 2019) reasons for preferring industrial compounds like citric, malic, or tartaric acids over fresh juices are more control over the level of acidity and sustainability. The articles argue that fresh products are more prone to variance in flavour, cost more environmental resources to produce, spoil faster, and create more waste than pure acids. Even the White Lyan team, a highly celebrated now-closed London bar praised for its innovative, sustainability and flavour-driven approach, promoted the use of ‘citrus stock’. Perhaps even in industrial, artificial, or fake products the care and deliberation behind the drink, the *raison d’être* of the product, can make a product good even when it is quite removed from its raw ingredients.

As mentioned previously in this section on product-related indicators of goodness, SCPs indicated a strong preference for small-scale, vertically integrated, artisan or DIY products; these are also viewed as being ‘purer’. Lukas explained how he identifies superior products as: *“Like high end products e.g., without artificial aromes, artesian production and/or organic”*. This short statement sums up neatly how specificity, price, producer/seller, and purity are assessed; and how important they are to SCPs. It also touches on sustainability, which I will elaborate on next.

4.5.2.4.3 Sustainability

When asking my interviewees what they consider in evaluating drinks to add to their stores or bar shelves, I inquired whether they took social or environmental sustainability into account. Social sustainability relates to product being made without exploiting the people (individuals and communities) involved in the supply chain. Environmental sustainability concerns environmental degradation, such as losses in biodiversity, pollution, or soil degradation in production. Considering drink sustainability emphasized how the processes and products used by people in a drink's entire supply chain are intertwined.

SCPs named environmental sustainability-related indicators of goodness more than social sustainability indicators. Lukas indicated he associates organic products with being better than

conventional products, which was seconded by Anna. Anna associated conventional produce with pollution of her body; this shows how organic is associated with purity, a product indicator of goodness (see above). In this manner, indicators of goodness tended to be intertwined in SCP discourses. Giusi, in contrast to Sarah, does mention whiskey producer Benromach's organic releases; she found the organic certification important also in spirits. Yet Giusi focused more on locality, both as increasing specificity (see above) and to improving environmental drink sustainability by reducing food miles. Giusi manages a niche whiskey bar focusing on high-end single-malt whiskies; she focused more on local, vertically integrated production by distillers. She has little power to change a recipe to make it more sustainable, when most drinks served in the Malt Vault are neat whiskeys. She therefore focused on organic whiskey producers. Wouter, similarly, mentioned taking organic certification of Calvados (a French apple brandy with Protected Geographical Indication status) into account. Sarah, Lars, and Mark Emil have more input in developing drinks as (former) bartenders and drink producers. Sarah indicated she liked using local, seasonal produce in drink recipes. Lars, from his experience as both a chef and a bartender, developed drink recipes by asking the kitchen for waste products and building drinks around these waste streams. He thus reduced waste within a venue. This circular, no-waste approach was also employed by Empirical. Mark Emil associated sustainability and good products with regenerative agriculture, a 'holistic' approach which is similar to zero-waste / circular product and process design, and with organic production.

Social sustainability was mentioned markedly less than environmental sustainability. Often when social sustainability of the alcohol industry is considered, focus is laid on the harmful effects of alcohol consumption rather than production (Mialon & McCambridge, 2018). Alternatively, the well-being of SCPs themselves is considered; for example, Sarah shifted to working as a barista in part due to the late hours required for most bartending jobs. Several SCPs spoke about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their social and professional lives. As the hospitality industry was often one of the first industries to be shut down and one of the last to open, COVID-19 had a large impact on SCPs jobs and lives. SCPs who took an activist stance to improve SCP wellbeing were spoken of admiringly. This can be seen as a push towards social sustainability for SCPs. Social sustainability of alcohol production and producing communities has been academically studied, for example in the case of tequila (Bowen & Zapata, 2009), yet it was not named often as an indicator of goodness by the SCPs I interviewed. This lack of awareness around social sustainability, compared to environmental sustainability, is reflected in the relative unpopularity of Fairtrade certification in spirits and cocktails. While FairTrade certification is in no way by the only or best way to improve social sustainability, organic certification is far more common in distilled drinks than Fairtrade certification (see also Appendix 7.5). This aligns with my findings of SCPs being more aware of environmental, than of social sustainability.

In summary, SCPs focused on environmental sustainability of products more than on products' social sustainability. They considered indicators of goodness such as organic certification, locality, and food miles, produce seasonality, and circular and zero-waste products or recipes. These indicators of goodness fall under environmental sustainability indicators. Social sustainability indicators of products and processes did not come up often. SCPs did discuss and pay attention to well-fare of SCPs and service/ hospitality industry professionals in general and related to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, where organic certification was apparently common and well-known, social sustainability certification FairTrade was not mentioned.

4.5.3 Summary: the practice of tasting

To summarise, this section described the evaluative, knowledge-based, and knowledge-creating practice of tasting. Tasting drinks occurs in steps: making, looking, sniffing, sipping, and swallowing. The practice of tasting is a ritualistic, learned behaviour which becomes automatic.

SCPs use a wide array of indicators of goodness to evaluate drinks in the practice of tasting. I described these indicators of goodness and categorised them according to Hennion and Teil's (2004) four-legged stool model of the practice of tasting. This model describes four elements of tasting which occur simultaneously: using artefacts, processed through the body, individual, and social/collective. SCP practices of tasting were found to align with Hennion and Teil's model; however, the individual element of tasting was found to differ.

SCPs use artefacts to practice tasting, and these artefacts are part of the practice; for example, tools to make drinks and specific glassware use for tasting drinks. Using the appropriate artefacts was an SCP indicator of goodness.

When tasting a drink, the drink's sensory characteristics are processed through the body. SCPs evaluated drinks using the bodily indicators of goodness: aroma, texture, flavour, and bodily effect.

SCPs are 'individually cognisant subjects' (Hennion & Teil, 2004) and do have their own personal preferences. However, they consciously try to avoid letting their personal preferences influence their evaluation of drinks through the practice of tasting. The practice of tasting is associated with the role of professional, where drinks are evaluated not on whether an individual SCP likes them, but on whether other people would like them. Personal preferences and the individual aspects of tasting are thus remarkable mostly through their aimed-for absence in the practice of tasting by SCPs.

SCPs instead heavily relied on social/collective indicators of goodness. As tasting each and every possible drink to evaluate it using bodily indicators of goodness isn't feasible, and flavour doesn't say everything, social/collective indicators of goodness were the largest category of indicators of goodness I found. SCPs shared ideas on good drinks related to process, product, and sustainability. In short: a good drink is made with technical skill and without unnecessary labour. This process must be deliberately chosen. Good drinks are freshly made and adaptable to the consumer, leading to a dislike of pre-mixed drinks. However, when all other indicators were good, premixed drinks were accepted (e.g., artisanal, deliberate, technically sophisticated drinks). Good drinks must be made with good products; SCPs had a strong preference for artisanal, unique ('specific') products. These products are recognized by often carrying a higher price and by being

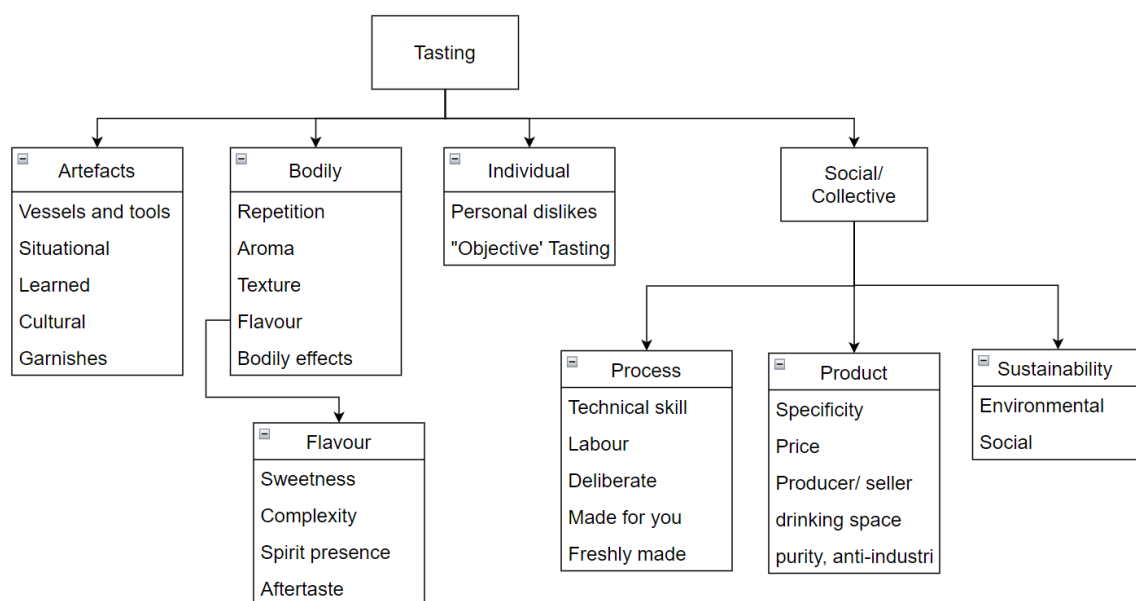


FIGURE 8: TASTING OVERVIEW

made by good producers. SCPs also showed a strong preference for 'pure', natural, non-artificial flavours. The products/processes of drinks are highly intertwined; this is also seen in how SCPs viewed sustainability, with importance given to environmental sustainability of both product and process. However, social sustainability was less spoken about; this is mirrored in the popularity of organic certification compared to Fairtrade certification.

SCPs used the practice of tasting in their role as professionals to evaluate drink goodness. This section showed the complexity of this evaluation by describing the wide array of indicators of goodness used.

4.6 Enjoying: beyond the glass

Vignette: What is the practice of enjoying, really? Ah, there we have the key issue... the practice of enjoying is when you let go of an internal evaluative state and instead focus on your surroundings; social and physical. It is not a physical state, nor a self-absorbed one; instead, it is rather a loosening of the ego, of self-consciousness, it is the contented "mmm" sighed when the sun hits your face and your skin warms; laughter in a moment of joy shared with friends; contentment and gratitude to be where you are, when you are, and who you are with; it is recognisable yet indescribable; it is a letting go of the judging self and sinking into connection with others.

While Hennion and Teil's (2004) model worked well to describe the practice on tasting, SCPs emphasised that a good drink is not only about whether it is evaluated as good. To the contrary, SCPs viewed good drinks as highly individual preferences and believed individual enjoyment of a drink was far more important than expert evaluations of that drink. This departs from previous research on taste/ goodness (see section 2.1), which pre-supposes that an evaluation of 'is it good?' firstly takes place, and secondly is relevant to the studied individuals and community/-ies. SCPs emphasised that a good drink is not about the drink itself. Giusi stated about helping customers choose a drink:

"We always say 'If you don't like it, we will change it for you'. The idea is to enjoy yourself, not to struggle, with drinking. You have to find out what you like, and what you don't like. And if you don't like it, it's fine. But you're still, drinking a drink maybe with a boyfriend or a girlfriend or with friends, so. You want to feel nice and having a nice drink that you enjoy, not struggling to drink."

She emphasised drinking as social and hedonistic. SCPs found the experience around a drink, such as the environment and service at a bar, more important than the drink itself. Lars explained how alcoholic drinks are not necessary for survival, while food is; as such, he viewed good drinks as a luxury and something that should be deeply enjoyable. Hennion and Teil's (2004) theory described how taste is acquired, but it cannot be used to explain how SPCs view enjoyment and how they view enjoyable drinks. As Anna stated:

"[First I'll taste the drink] And then I think I stop thinking and then I just enjoy it. [when asked about artefact preferences] Yeah, I don't know. That's different. That's tasting."

SCPs viewed tasting and enjoying as separate practices. They often happened sequentially, as Anna describes above, but this was not always the case. Wouter described enjoying a drink in

the weekend as occurring in a social context (with friends). He viewed this as different from tasting drinks and deciding whether to sell them in his liquor store.

So, then what is enjoying? Where tasting is a learned, formalised practice with clearly defined steps, I did not find what actions are taken when enjoying a drink. I thus cannot describe the steps of enjoying. I can only describe how SCPs viewed good drinks in the context of enjoying. I split these descriptions into two parts: First - Goodness as multiple and situational and second - more than just liquid. The first part describes the ways in which SCPs viewed goodness as changeable. The second part describes the relational views on goodness SCPs held.

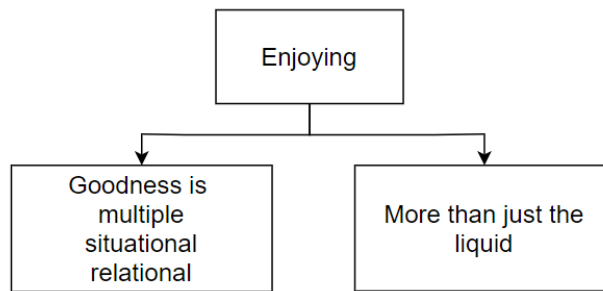


FIGURE 9: ENJOYING

4.6.1 Goodness as multiple, situational, and relational

SCPs explained how a drink is not good *an sich*, but good in and with the experience of drinking it. A drink that is good in one situation can be bad in another situation. SCPs viewed a good drink, in the words of Anna, as *“It’s whatever matches your mood in that particular instant”*.

Just as Heldke (2005) argued that a work of cuisine is created and experienced by a culturally embedded cook and eater, SCPs spoke about how perceptions and popularities of drinks have changed over time and are culturally and geographically diverse. SCPs viewed good drinks - or rather, perceptions of which drinks are good - as temporally, geographically, and culturally embedded.

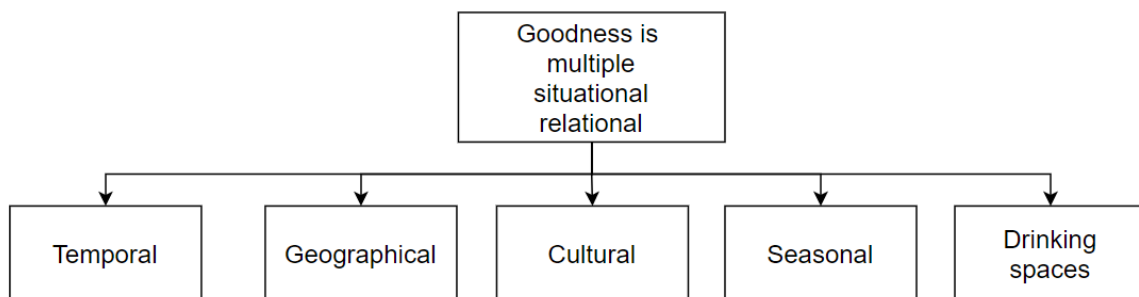


FIGURE 10: MULTIPLE, SITUATIONAL, RELATIONAL ASPECTS

4.6.1.1 Booze history; temporal shifts in drink perceptions

Alexander, a South African/Dutch liquor store owner (Dutch: slijterij) from a hospitality industry family, spoke about how the availability and perception of different drinks changed drastically in the Netherlands after the Second World War.:

Alexander’s explanation of Dutch booze history shows the temporal mutability of drink goodness. Over the past 76 years, he explains, the drinks landscape in the Netherlands shifted drastically; industrialisation and globalisation played large roles in this. Drink perceptions changed with the

shifting landscape; perceptions of drinks like port, sherry and pastis shifted from exotic to commonplace, perhaps even a bit old-fashioned. The gendered ideas around drinks changed as well - according to Alexander bittersweet liqueurs like Campari and Oranjebitter were previously seen as very feminine. Yet nowadays, as mentioned in section 4.1.3, such intense, bitter drinks are societally associated with masculinity. On a shorter timescale, drinks trends are continuously shifting, showing reactions and counter-reactions. Just take the 90's, neon, artificial cocktail era and the following 2000's craft cocktail boom as an example - or the modern-day shift towards comfort drinks and fun, frivolous drinks in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. As another example, the Negroni, described as "one of the cornerstones of the classic cocktail revival" by Punch Magazine's recipe and lauded for its popularity in the USA (Pariseau, 2014) and globally (Smith, 2021), was not always viewed as a good or classy drink. Andrea Strafile, in another Punch Magazine article, state:

"In fact, ordering a Negroni in Italy during the drink 's dark ages—in the late 1970s, '80s and '90s—was akin to asking for a Vodka Red Bull in the States in the 2000s: something for the drinkers more interested in the effects of alcohol than the taste." - (Strafile, 2021)

Nowadays, Vincent stated, *"I think, every cocktail bartender loves Negroni"*. All SCPs I spoke with about this drink did indeed love it; it tended to come up as a favourite or good drink along with Old Fashioneds. Vodka Red Bull, if mentioned, was derided; clearly the Negroni has lost its reputation as a 'club drink'. Perception of drinks is always changing. Thus, the answer to 'what is a good drink?' is temporally mutable and ever-changing.

4.6.1.2 Booze geography; place-basedness of good drinks

SCPs emphasised that some drinks are more commonplace, available, and mainstream in different places. For example, Vincent, the bar manager from Copenhagen, saw green Chartreuse as a novel ingredient for Denmark while acknowledging it is well-known in France; he was also unfamiliar with Dutch jenever, unlike Alexander and other Netherlands-based SCPs. Yet Giusi, an Italian SCP based in the Netherlands, specialises in Scottish whisky:

"...we have mostly single malt Scotch at the bar, and I am more comfortable talking about that, cause the New World whiskies and more, non-European whiskies are... There are a lot of very good distilleries ...they don't carry the same history that Scotland does."

Giusi acknowledges the wide-spread production of whisky, while still emphasising how she views Scottish whisky as carrying history; she finds this an indicator of goodness. Drinks are thus both globalised and perceived as place based. The gastronomic movements towards re-localising food and drinks are also visible in the current gin boom with various brands developing gins based on local or place-specific ingredients (e.g., Bombay listing the provenance of their botanicals on the bottles, Dutch brand Citygin making city-inspired gins with city residents) and in Empirical's Flora Danica spirit made with foraged plants from around Copenhagen, based on a 1752 book on Danish botany.

Spirits and cocktails tend to be plant-based (with exceptions, e.g., egg white cocktails). Geographical variations in which drinks became traditional in different regions make sense when considering that plants grow well in certain soil and microclimate conditions. The lack of palm wine, rum or tequila as a traditional Dutch drink is quite unsurprising; palms and agaves have sugary, quick-fermenting sap and do not grow well in the temperate Dutch climate. Production of rum and tequila in the Netherlands was thus vastly more difficult to achieve than distilling ingredients available locally. Barley and wheat are historically more commonly grown in the

Netherlands; jenever, malt wine (moutwijn) and brandy (brandewijn) made from fruits are more traditionally associated with the Netherlands. Similarly grape production for wine is traditional in Italy and France; with leftover grape skins and pits from wine making (pomace), distillers there made and make marc and grappa which is also not associated with Dutch drinking culture in the ways jenever, moutwijn and brandewijn are. The physical, climatic constraints of which plants grow where thus led to the historical development of regional, place-based drinks (Stewart, 2013).

The processes in drink-making also differed geographically. In Western Europe barley and grains were malted to transform starches to sugars; in Japan koji (*Aspergillus oryzae*) was used to achieve the same aim, unlocking sugars in rice so yeasts could perform alcoholic fermentation, creating sake. This koji fungus was simply not present in Western Europe when people began fermenting grains to beer and distilling it (Rogers, 2014).

This place-basedness is still visible, and formalised, in EU Protected Geographical Indication laws, as discussed in the section 4.3 Categorisation.

4.6.1.3 Booze culture; enjoyment as cultural

By viewing which drinks are popular where - both a spatial and social 'where' - we can gain insight into cultural norms and values.

Drink perception is not homogeneous, which drinks are available and seen as good differs culturally. As explained above, SCPs and drink writers perceived historical geographical differences in drinks and drinking culture. However, I argue that nowadays cultures are blended beyond geographical boundaries and culture - though often associated with regions, with specific places - cannot be defined in this place-based manner alone. Jenever, rather than grappa, originating from the Netherlands where grains grow better than grapes, is logical in a historical context. But today grappa is also available in the Netherlands; drinks are no longer purely locally bound, consumed and understood. Thus, we come to culturally embedded drinks, and whether these drinks are now accepted globally.

Alexander emphasised, (section 4.5.1.1.) that he is describing the situation in Western Europe and in particular in the Netherlands. He spoke about how before the Second World War primarily local, traditional Dutch drinks like jenever and herbal bitter liqueurs were available at liquor stores - and that French/European drinks like pastis were seen as exotic. Compare this to now, when rum and tequila - from the other side of the world - are completely integrated into our drinking habits! What was once considered exotic is completely different from our modern-day globalised views on 'exotic' drinks.

While rum and tequila - and in the flavour sublime SCP community also the lesser-known spirits like pisco and mezcal - are used often in modern-day drinks in Western Europe, other non-European drinks such as Chinese baijiu, Korean soju, and West-African palm wines are not as available by far. They are not used as a mainstream drink or cocktail ingredient like rum or tequila. Baijiu, a Chinese spirit category, is the most-selling liquor in the world; in 2018 volumetrically more baijiu was sold than whisky, vodka, gin, rum, and tequila together (Froissart & Martin, 2019). However, baijiu is not a mainstream drink or cocktail ingredient in Western Europe. It did not come up in interviews as a drink SCPs liked, nor did I come across any baijiu in my observation's baijiu flavour is described as being assertive, funky, even a little reminiscent of gasoline - yet mezcal is often described similarly and various SCPs did speak of mezcal as a favourite spirit. However, place-basedness alone cannot explain why tequila and mezcal did become popular in Western Europe while baijiu (the most sold category of alcohol in the world, yet not often used in Western Europe) did not.

Palm wine is an interesting example; due to the uncontrolled production processes and associated risks of methanol poisoning or other forms of toxicity, it is seen as a bit dangerous by the few Western Europeans who are aware of it. I was told stories of friends being poured palm wine to drink with the village headman before conducting sociological fieldwork in the village. These friends explained how it was pre-fieldwork advice to check whether other (local) people had been drinking from the same batch of palm wine, as if the palm wine was toxic, they would not be drinking it anymore. Palm wine was viewed as potentially dangerous. Yet if in the Netherlands local, artisanally made, small-batch spirits are offered they are seen as premium and better than others, like Wouter's description of the perfume-esque quince eau-de-vie from a small Dutch distiller. This difference in perception of essentially the same thing reflects a love of regulation for alcohol production, or a certain fear of unknown and distant-to-us foods - as described by Johnston and Baumann (2014) in their chapter on exoticism. Apparently palm wine is too norm-breaking, and the producers too socially distant from us.

Drinks like palm wine and baijiu are engrained in local culture, and not currently/yet popularised in Western Europe. This shows how drinks carry culture and the perception of a good drinks differs culturally and/or geographically. Vincent referred to cultural differences within Scandinavia:

"So, do you have a culture in the Netherlands about like home burning, making your own booze? ... Because we don't have a culture of like uh, distilling our own alcohol in Denmark, but I know that in Sweden and to some extent in Norway as well, where like every home has, well not every home but, a lot of homes have like a home burning, home distilling unit."

In the Netherlands, home distilling is illegal (it is seen as a form of tax evasion). The Dutch national news reported in 2016 that there are few hard numbers on how many people home distil, but that there was a growing interest in the practice. Vincent's statement above is an example of how drinking and drink-making practices carry strong cultural components. Perceptions and practices around drinking are culture specific.

So far in this section I have given examples of region-associated cultures. However, drinks are also associated with subcultures and cultural stereotypes; Woj associated Cosmopolitans and his preferences in artefacts (see 3. Practice of tasting) with gay culture(s), and as explained in Tensions and greater societal influences, drinking practices are viewed as differing across boundaries of age and gender (though these views are rejected as much as they are reproduced by flavour sublime community SCPs). SCPs thus emphasised that perceptions of good drinks vary (sub-)culturally.

4.6.1.4 Seasonal drinks

Lars described a specific drink practice, when discussing drinks that he liked:

"[there is] a bitter, called Arnbitter. There's a time and a place for it, and it's when you come in, and you're like, cold to the bone? You come in. You walk into the warm bar, and you get warm from outside, you take the shot, you get warm from the inside, and you're good."

As this quote exemplifies, some drinks are only good in a particular context. Arnbitter is drunk to warm up in winter; so are mulled wine drinks like vin chaud, glühwein, and glogg. Other drinks - Aperol Spritz, Pimm's cups and Frosé are examples - are quintessential summer drinks. Depending on the season, different drinks are enjoyed.

4.6.1.5 Drinking spaces, moods, and company

Lars, when asked about good other bars to visit, responded:

"...one of my favourite places, because to me it kind of ticks all the boxes, like you can sit in the bar, talk with the bartender, you can have a booth and sit with a group, you can just like have a nice and quiet corner, you can be a bit more rowdy and party. So, to me, I really enjoy that it's a venue where you can do- whatever, like the night can take you wherever it should go."

He emphasised how different bars - different drinking spaces - are suitable for different moods, and for different social settings. This is a relational, social view on goodness. Vincent also mentioned this when discussing Whammy Bar's clientele and social environment:

"...our usual guests are like adult sober people who come down and have a good night, have a chat. Right? Enjoying the [drinks], not getting crazy loud, or who do stupid shit. Of course, this happens, late on a Friday night, but ...we aren't suited for having like a crazy, get drunk mentality. We are suited for 'We have one nice evening out, once a week. Like, we get a couple of drinks. And then we go home', right."

Both these quotes showcase the ideas that drinking spaces should suit the customers' mood and social setting. Woj, when speaking of drinks he likes, explained how it depends on who he's with:

"It's different. When I go with my friends? It's usually, like, funny places when you drink a lot of cocktails very fast. I mean, one cocktail is 10 minutes, and you order another one. And it's just like that. When I go out, for example with my boyfriend, my fiancé it's more like, you know, sitting in a fancy bar talking and sipping. So, it depends on who am I hanging out with."

Woj mentions the differences between being with his fiancé or his friends; depending on his relations to the people he is drinking with, he enjoys different drinking spaces and drink types. This aligns with Vincent's explanation of Whammy Bar's clientele. Vincent associates Whammy Bar with an 'adult' drinking style of drinking; namely drinking with the aim to enjoy the drink itself, in and with its social experience. He juxtaposes this with drinking with the aim to get drunk without caring whether the drink is enjoyable. Different ways of doing drinking are associated with different: customer groups (Vincent), social settings (Woj), and drinking spaces (Lars) (See section 4.1.3).

This shows how SCPs view good drinks as depending on the situation. Not only the drinking practice of tasting versus enjoying changes based on the situation; how SCPs enjoyed a drink change as well. SCPs emphasised that in various drinking spaces and social settings, some ways of enjoying a drink were appropriate and other ways were not.

This links to how SCPs viewed drinking spaces in general. To SCPs drinking spaces are continually co-created and recreated by the people in those spaces. The way drinking spaces are designed attracts certain people and promotes a certain atmosphere; bars that are suited for loud, rowdy nights out are different from bars suited for chatting and sipping your drink. This does also create inclusion and exclusion; customers who are perceived by SCPs as detrimental to the experience of other customers are turned away at the door or asked to leave. If customers' behaviour does not suit the atmosphere of the drinking space, they are refused continued access to that space. This is a double-edged sword; on the one hand it can help to promote a safe and inclusive environment in that space (e.g., refusing customers displaying homophobic behaviour

from LGBTQ+ drinking spaces). On the other hand, it means that when customers are unfamiliar with the socially acceptable behaviour or discourses of drinking spaces, they can feel unwelcome and uncomfortable. On the one hand tensions of inclusion and exclusion in social spaces are what co-creates these spaces; but where should lines of exclusion be laid? Should they exist at all? Would it be more democratic to include everyone, or to create safe spaces by excluding customers who do not suit the aimed-for atmosphere of a bar? The SCPs I spoke to generally fell on the side of welcoming everyone, as long as their behaviour was not disruptive to other customers. They wanted the drinking spaces they frequented and worked at to be open, welcoming environments. They strongly disliked needing to exclude anyone from such spaces and held low regard for drinking spaces that they perceived as snobby or unwelcoming. This ties back into their primary thought on enjoying drinks; the experience around the drink is more important than the drink itself.

4.6.1.6 Summary; goodness as multiple, situational, and relational

Said, when discussing good drinks, spoke about how breaking bread and sharing a drink is a way to connect with other people. To paraphrase him: ‘the core of food and drink is peace and comfort. When negotiating and connecting, we - people - share food and drink. We eat and drink not for nourishment, but for feeling of a safe environment. A good drink - a celebratory drink - has been with us forever, since we lived in caves. What makes a drink ‘great’ is not the drink, but the design of the space it is drunk in, the music, the smell, the environment, *et cetera*.’ In the above sub-sections I have argued that SCPs view good drinks as ever-changing, and goodness as perceived in and with the experiences of enjoying, rather than as an innate property of the liquid object of a drink itself. SCPs placed goodness in various temporal, place-based, cultural contexts and viewed goodness as multiple. They found the experience and social, relational, and spatial aspects of the experience of enjoying more important and ‘real’ than drinks being innately good.

4.6.2 More than just the liquid

In the previous section I have described how SCPs view the experience of enjoying. So how do SCPs view good drinks within the experience of enjoying? How do they view goodness, when it is about more than just the liquid inside a glass?

In section 4.5 on the practice of tasting some relational aspects of drink goodness already appeared. SCPs used various indicators of goodness to evaluate whether a drink had been made with good products and processes but found the care-full and deliberate input of the drink-maker more important than the drink being made with great technical skill or high-quality ingredients. Drinks are thus not about their liquid object, but about what they represent; human and more-than-human relations.

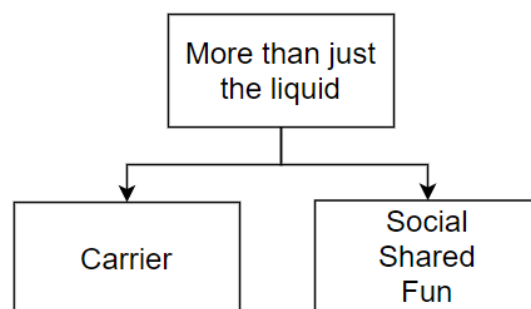


FIGURE 11: MORE THAN JUST THE LIQUID

4.6.2.1 Drinks as a carrier

Wouter, owner of a store specialising in cider and Calvados, spoke of *terroir*:

“Understanding where something comes from, seeing the landscape, seeing the animals that live there, like the cattle, but also just the [wild] animals that live there, the other products that are being made there. [pause] You know, the culture, of an area also, is sort of ingrained in the product”

To Wouter, a drink is clearly not just the liquid; to him good drinks carry place, stories, and time. Giusi also spoke of how she felt Scottish whisky carried history. This conception of drinks as place-based was common among SCPs; they not only emphasised how goodness is multiple temporally and culturally, as explained in the above section 4.6.1, but also how drinks *carry* culture and history. They cared about the stories of how drinks had come to be.

Not only stories of *terroir* and drink history were important to SCPs; so were the stories created within experiences of enjoying drinks. Paraphrasing Said again, ‘The pleasure of drink is the memory it evokes and / or creates’.

SCPs, especially bartenders and bar managers, emphasised how to them their jobs were fun because of the human interactions happening there.

Sarah and Giusi explained drinks as a way to gift nurture and care to customers. This was already apparent from the emphasis SCPs laid on good drinks in the practice of tasting as being made with deliberateness and care, and with SCP views on good drinks as customisable. The SCPs I spoke to rejected views of them knowing better than customers what good drinks are, viewing such behaviour as bad service and snobbish. They viewed serving good drinks as a human interaction, mediated through a drink. In this view, care for another person becomes embedded into the physical object of a drink, which is then taken past the body’s boundaries to become part of that person; an intimate exchange of care by giving pleasure.

This is similar to Heldke’s (2005) description of a work of cuisine always being a transaction between a culturally embedded eater and a dish, produced by a cook who is also culturally embedded. However, I found that SCPs focus more on the caregiving and enjoyment-sharing aspects of making drinks for people. I thus modify Heldke’s description: Heldke theorised authenticity as a property of an experiential work of cuisine; a dish in and with its experience, which is always a transaction between a dish created by a culturally embedded cook and experienced by a culturally embedded eater. I modify this to a drink in and with its experience being a transaction between a drink-maker and a drinker, mediated through the physical object of the drink itself and through the experience of enjoying the drink. This decreases the importance of the drink itself and instead lays focus on the human interaction which caused the drinking experience to exist. Where Heldke focuses on the transaction between the work of cuisine and the eater, I focus on the transaction between drink-maker and drinker with the drink as a medium for that interaction. While the drink itself is important (as explained in section 4.5. The practice of tasting), SCPs emphasised that they prioritise the experience of enjoying the drink over the physical object of the drink itself.

SCPs shared stories of how they became, and continuously become, part of communities around work. How they witnessed marriage proposals, built relations with regulars who they got to know by name, shifted from being co-workers to being friends- and how those social aspects were what made their jobs fun to them. As exemplified by Giusi and Sarah’s quotes, making and serving drinks to another is a social transaction of care, a human interaction, mediated through

a drink. When SCPs describe enjoying, the object of the drink becomes unimportant. The focus is laid instead on the intentions behind- and experiencing/perceptions of the drink.

4.6.2.2 Drinks as social, shared and fun

SCPs viewed good drinks as social, an experience to be shared with friends. While food is also generally seen as social; as argued in the introduction; spirits and cocktails are not necessary for nutrition and thus survival. The social aspects of drinks are thus even more important in drinks than in food.

Woj, when asked about good drinks, responded that a good drink is one that he would want to share with his friends:

" [friends/ guests] have to try it. Because I once tried it before. I think that's the definition of a good drink. Is like my boyfriend always makes a Kir Royale as a welcome drink, because once he tried it, and now it's just like almost like a tradition to welcome a guest with a Kir Royale."

Woj described how good drinks can become integrated into tradition within a social group. They can become signature drinks, carrying associations of a certain person and social setting. This sharing aspect of good drinks reflects SCP focus on drinks as a medium for care. Lars also referred to a sort of tradition in the hospitality environment he entered at age 17:

"...a lot of service industry have Fernet as like a go-to shot... me personally, I've developed full on Stockholm Syndrome. When I started working in the kitchen, and they went 'This is Fernet Branca, this is Golden Lady, and this is your life now'. And, as I said, I was 17, I just started in the kitchen so I was like 'Okay (shrugs), I guess that's my life now'... Now I thoroughly enjoy it and I can't for the life of me tell you if it's just a hostage situation or not."

Punch Magazine describes Lars' Fernet Branca and other such go-to shots or drink in the hospitality industry as a 'bartender's handshake'; a drink preferred by SCPs, sometimes used to signal the person ordering it is also an SCP. The SCPs I spoke to generally preferred Negronis, Old Fashioneds, and neat whisky; strong, bitter drinks. Fernet, a bittersweet liqueur, certainly fits in there. Like Lars, other SCPs stated their taste in drinks had changed as they aged and gained drinking/SCP work experience. While Lars was the only SCP to describe this acquired taste as Stockholm Syndrome, it signifies how drinks are enjoyed in a social context and drinking habits are shared in the flavour sublime SCP community.

Good drinks are also viewed as something that can make you feel fully alive in the moment, as a positive encounter with the sublime. This is another aspect of enjoying but will not be further elaborated on here as it was described in section 4.1.

Lastly, especially with the post-pandemic drive towards comfort drinks and frivolous drinks, SCPs felt drinks should be fun. Drinking should be an experience the drinker enjoys. Previously in section 4.6.1.1 on booze history, I explained how drink trends follow each other as counter-movements. In the 2000's era craft cocktail movement drinks became increasingly serious, with (strong) drinks made to be contemplatively sipped gaining popularity. The countermovement to this is frivolity; fun drinks, made to be enjoyed rather than seriously contemplated.

4.6.2.3 Summary; More than just liquid

I thus argue that SCPs view drinks as more than the drink itself; instead, drinks are a medium for stories, places, care, and human interaction. Good drinks are viewed as social, shared and fun.

What makes a drink good is the experience of enjoying it; within this experience drinks are viewed relationally and as inherently social.

4.6.3 Summary: The practice of enjoying

SCPs use tasting to estimate which drinks *an sich* are good but emphasise that a good drink is beyond the glass. SCPs view good drinks as something the drinker enjoys; they find the experience around the drink to be more important than the drink itself. They view goodness, when thinking of enjoyment, as multiple. Goodness to SCPs changed temporally, spatially, culturally, and situationally. Enjoyable drinks carried care, human interaction, stories, place, and memories; and they were viewed as social, shared and fun.

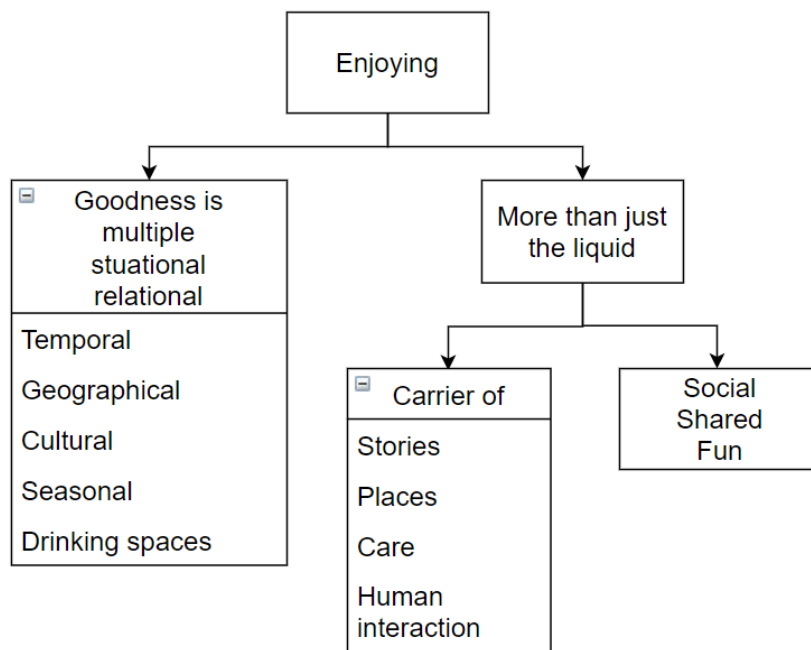


FIGURE 12: ENJOYING OVERVIEW

4.7 Ideas on goodness

In researching the practices of tasting and enjoying, I started noticing patterns in SCP discourse about goodness. The way SCPs spoke about drinks they found good or bad reflected the underlying beliefs about goodness they held. I found five such ideologies on goodness: Apophatic goodness, Plato's drink, Populist goodness, Capitalist goodness, and Aristocracy/ meritocracy's goodness.

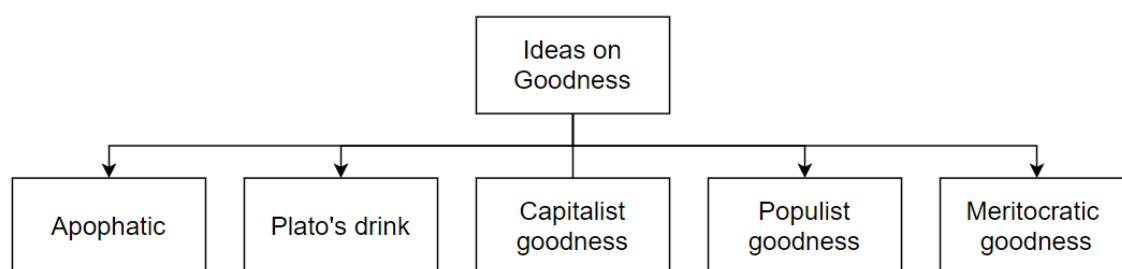


FIGURE 13: IDEAS ON GOODNESS

Synthesizing, SCPs had these five underlying ideas on goodness. These ideas on goodness were underlying beliefs on what goodness is and what makes a drink good. They were usually held subconsciously and were not named directly by my interviewees. Multiple ideas on goodness can be held simultaneously; they are not mutually exclusive. The multiplicity of goodness is emphasised by the variety in ideas on goodness held by SCPs. The flavour sublime community I studied is unified by their belief that good flavours can help people transcend the ego for a moment and connect to the greater world around them, in a vivid experience of being fully aware and alive through focusing on a sensory experience. While the SCPs I spoke to pursue this goodness, they did not all hold the same underlying beliefs about what goodness is. Instead of describing the most dominant ideas on goodness, I describe all five schools of thought I found, in order to give a thorough description as fits the ethnomethodological approach. Synthesizing, SCPs had these five underlying ideas on goodness: apophatic, platonic, capitalist, populist, and meritocratic goodness.

4.7.1 Apophatic goodness

A good drink cannot be defined, only identified through describing what is not good. I noticed SCPs struggling in interviews to define 'a good drink'. When asked what a good drink is to them, they paused, thinking, and searching for words. They sometimes approached the question relationally, focusing on drinks they enjoy, describing how a good drink is 'whatever hits the spot', in any given moment. They didn't define the properties of the drink itself- until I asked about *bad* drinks.

When asked to describe bad drinks, or drinks they did not like, there was less hesitation and more laughter. This pattern of defining goodness by what is not good - describing something by that which it is not - reminded me of apophatic theology. Apophatic theology, or the *via negativa*, aims to learn the truths of what God is by denying what God is not. The counterpart, the cataphatic way, approaches God by affirmatively speaking of what God is. For example, a theologian could say God is not evil (apophatic) or God is good (cataphatic).

I thus define apophatic goodness as defining what is good, by stating what is not good / denying that which is not good.

A boozy example: good drinks are not too sweet. It is impossible to define the appropriate sweetness level of a good drink, as there are too many options for different drink typologies and personal preferences. However, SCPs near-universally indicated a dislike of drinks that were too sweet, thus defining a good drink by what it is not, apophatic goodness.

4.7.2 Platonic (Plato's Drink)

A good drink fulfils its reason for existence; it reflects the platonic ideal version of that drink, or Plato's Drink. I use the term Plato's drink to clearly distinguish platonic as used in interpersonal relationships from platonic as used here. In section 4.3. Categorisability, I introduced the term 'drink typology'. I argued that drinks were categorised and defined by the processes and products used to make the drink. Drinks are thus defined as expressions of a certain drink typology,

When there are infinite possible expressions of any given drink typology, how can one know which ones are good? Vincent explained:

"I think it's about knowing the cocktail. What's the point of the cocktail, right? Is it made to be drunk quickly? Is it made to be enjoyed over a long while? Are you gonna enjoy it for what it is, or are you just drinking this to get shitfaced, right? It's understanding the point of the cocktail, really."

To Vincent, cocktail typologies exist for a reason; they have a certain purpose, a certain desire they fulfil. For example, he argues that if someone orders an Old Fashioned, they do so because they desire the intensity of a spirit-forward drink. A good Old Fashioned is thus intensely spirit-forward. To SCPs like Vincent, who ascribe to the Plato's Drink idea on goodness, there is a reason for drink typologies to exist and be popular enough to be ordered, not forgotten. This reason is that the drink fulfils a desire. There is thus also a perfect version of every drink typology which perfectly fulfils its reason for existence. I call this Plato's Drink; the platonic, unknowable idea or Form of a certain drink. (See Appendix 7.5)

In this idea on goodness, the belief is that there is a platonic ideal, a Form, of every drink typology. This platonic ideal drink perfectly fulfils the 'point of the drink', as Vincent would say. Good drinks are drinks that approach the Form of that drink typology, fulfilling the desire of the drinker and thus the reason of existence for that drink typology.

4.7.3 Capitalist goodness

A good drink sells well. Closely aligned to populist goodness is the belief in capitalist goodness. Martin and Wouter both spoke of drinks performing well; they viewed drinks that sell well and provide a good profit margin as good. The best drinks are the ones that provide the most money. Often, as popular drinks are sold more, capitalist goodness and populist goodness overlap. However, populist goodness focuses on which drinks are liked by the many, while capitalist goodness focuses on which drinks sell well. Marketing strategies and commercial availability of drinks heavily impact market performance and thus capitalist goodness; larger spirit conglomerates have more money to spend and larger turnover values, thus making more money. Yet the SCPs I interviewed tended to dislike industrial products and processes; capitalist goodness was used in tandem with other ideas on goodness.

4.7.4 Populist goodness

A good drink is one that is liked by many people. Several SCPs viewed a good drink as a drink that many people like. This is a quite democratic idea: the best drinks are those which are liked by the most people. However, there is a tension between democracy and distinction; if the best drink is the most popular one, how can individuals distinguish themselves by their taste? And how does exposure to different drinks, or experience drinking fit in here? Within what socio-cultural groups are different drinks popular? How should popularity be measured?

4.7.5 Meritocratic goodness

A good drink is one that experts like. Where populist goodness is very democratic, meritocratic goodness covers individual distinction by showing good taste. Believers in meritocratic goodness share the idea that experience with drinks matters in evaluating what is good. Good drinks are thus those that experts find good, since they have experience and training in identifying good drinks.

4.7.6 Summary: Ideas on goodness

Synthesizing the results above, I thus argue SCPs hold five underlying ideas on goodness. Namely, apophatic, platonic, populist, capitalist, and meritocratic. These ideas on goodness are not mutually exclusive, nor are they consciously held beliefs; rather, SCPs subconsciously held multiple contrasting ideas on goodness. There may be other ideas on goodness which are not yet discovered, making the five ideas listed above an exploratory list rather than an exhaustive one. This illustrates the multiplicity of goodness; drinks can be good in some ways and for some people, and bad in other ways and for other people.

5 Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Research process and challenges

In this research I applied a relational view on taste to describe ‘good’ drinks; with drinks I refer to spirits and cocktails as a drinks category, rather than focusing on a single specific drink such as gin, or Negroni cocktails. I hypothesised that, as in ‘fine’ dining, coffee, wine and chocolate, ‘fine’ drinks existed and were different from ‘mainstream/commodity’ drinks. However, there was no known definition of neither such ‘fine’ drinks; nor of the people interested in them. Neither the people, nor the object of their collective interest were previously defined academically.

Johnston and Baumann described ‘fine’ foods as part of the ‘gourmet foodscape’ and studied how foodie (self-described food aficionado/connoisseur) taste was socially constructed. To create a starting point, this research thus started out as being modelled after Johnston and Baumann’s 2014 book *Foodies*, but in 2020 Europe and about drinks instead of in circa 2004-2010 USA and about food.

I argued that Spirit and Cocktail Professionals (SCPs) determine which drinks are available to consumers; that ‘fine’ drinks are sold and created by non-mainstream SCPs: those who try to change the drinks hegemony. In addition, this fits into criticism of the focus on elite tastes in previous research on taste in food. I thus decided to study not the ‘foodies of drinks’ (the amateurs/aficionados), but instead the professionals (SCPs).

I assumed then that SCPs always evaluated drinks, the way foodies were described to judge food (Johnston and Baumann, 2014). I also assumed that, like foodies, there would be some common, formalised information sources used by SCPs to learn about drinks; after all, I had studied wine using formalised information at university, and I read magazines on drinks and cocktail culture.

However, it became clear in the initial scan of the field that SCPs did *not* use homogeneous, formalised knowledge sources. This meant that the planned research approach of using a mediated discourse analysis to identify themes of importance to SCPs, and triangulating these findings using in-depth interviews, was not feasible. Specifically, it became impossible to define criteria to identify ‘fine’ SCPs. The differences between mainstream and fine drinks were clear to insiders, but unclear to outsiders; this aligned with Manzo’s (2010) findings on third-wave coffee aficionados. As explained in section 4.1, I ended up describing these insiders by coining the term ‘flavour sublime’. In this thesis, when referring to ‘SCPs’, I refer to these insiders: flavour sublime SCPs.

It was academically unknown who these SCPs were, how they viewed or identified themselves, and how they differentiated between mainstream and ‘fine’ drinks. In my initial study of background information, the same names of bartenders, drinks producers, and bars reoccurred several times. I thus set out to ask SCPs who *they* saw as insiders. In the initial scan of the field, it turned out that SCPs did identify good other SCPs and drinking spaces, but they focused on those they had personal experience with. Instead of naming famous chefs, as foodies did (Johnston & Baumann, 2014), SCPs spoke about good drinking spaces in the cities they had work experience or ex-colleagues in.

It became clear that previous research on taste did not fit well with what I was finding in the initial scan of the field. Even the assumption that SCPs evaluated drinks, as described in previous

research on taste (see section 2.1 for an overview), did not match with what I was observing in the field. Rather than viewing their own taste as important, SCPs viewed 'good' drinks as 'whatever hits the spot' for the drinker. The assumptions made at the start of the research were shown to be incorrect.

I wanted to describe the varied realities I saw in the field. Knowing that the *a priori* structuralist approach did not work, I shifted to using an ethnomethodological approach to avoid further preconceptions about SCPs, instead centring SCP perspectives and asking more questions. What commonalities did 'fine', non-hegemonic SCPs have? What defined their community from an insider's perspective? If SCPs do not use media to gain knowledge as foodies did, how do they share and reproduce knowledges? And what knowledges are values by SCPs? This left my view wide open to the nuanced and complex reality, but also rather extended the research scope.

I conducted fieldwork and gathered data using an ethnomethodological approach, following which I made sense of the data by contrasting it with previous research. This was an iterative process of using outside theorisations in structuring, questioning, and analysing SCP views on good drinks, knowledge, and their own community. I described both where outside or previous theorisations were appropriate to describe SCP realities, and where the theories did not fit. I thus criticized, extended, and combined various scholars' theories to describe the flavour sublime SCP community's views on itself and on what makes drinks good. This ethnomethodological, relational approach was challenging, but worked well to create a holistic view.

In this research process I challenged my positionality and preconceptions. The active work of the research was thus not the thesis alone, but also a personal work to understand what I assumed and why. Investigating and challenging my own positionality helped me to avoid superimposing my own perspective on good drinks and goodness. Instead, I tried to depart from the perspectives of my participants and report the nuances, contradictions, and multiplicity I found there. This fits well with the (neo-)ethnomethodological approaches used by Manzo (2010) and Hennion & Teil (2004), as discussed above and in section 2.2.

5.2 Conceptual discussion

In this thesis I contrasted what I saw in the field with the works of various scholars (see Figure 1). This approach of using theory, then describing where the findings could no longer be described within the bounds of one theory, fits with ethnomethodology. This approach was also pragmatic, as completely open-eyed theory building, in an as-of-yet unexplored social structure, is far beyond the feasible scope of a MSc thesis.

I studied what makes a drink good (RQ3). To answer this using the chosen relational and ethnomethodological approach, I also had to answer to whom this drink is then good (RQ1: Who are flavour sublime SCPs) and how they gain and share knowledge, thus (re-)creating social orderliness (RQ2: How do SCPs gain and share knowledge).

I altered Roncken's (2018) description of the sublime to describe the organising belief of the flavour sublime communities, namely: that objective goodness exists, flavour can be a way of encountering the sublime, and good flavour should thus be pursued. I showed how the insider/outsider difficulty in defining this community aligns with Manzo's (2010) description of third-wave coffee enthusiasts. I described how SCPs gained and shared knowledges and contrasted my findings on SCP knowledges with Johnston and Baumann's (2014) foodie knowledge-ways. This showed the differences between foodies and SCP communities.

I contrasted Mary Douglas' (1972) work on dinners at her house and kosher food restrictions, 'Deciphering a meal', with how SCPs understand and define drinks. Douglas argues that foods which do not fit logically structured categories are taboo. This categorisation was visible in SCP drink knowledges and practices. Drink categorisability also showed how SCPs reproduce, reject, and subvert the EU drinks hegemony.

To describe what makes a drink good to the flavour sublime community I analysed how SCPs perform the practice of tasting. I analysed indicators of goodness and the practice of tasting using Hennion and Teil's four-legged stool model (2004). This model describes the practice of tasting as occurring simultaneously and intertwined along the four elements of tasting: 'using artefacts', 'processed through the body', 'individual', and 'social/collective'. The importance of the 'artefacts' and 'processed through the body' elements were readily recognised in the SCP community, but the elements of 'individual' and 'social/collective' showed a marked difference: SCPs systematically diminish individual preferences and instead rely heavily on social/collective indicators of goodness to arrive at a less personal and (to them) more objective evaluation of drinks.

In addition, SCP views on what makes drinks could not be entirely described by Hennion and Teil's (2004) four-legged stool model; SCPs emphasised how drinking was comprised of more than tasting, introducing the concept of enjoying as an essential part of good drinks. SCPs explained how various drinks are good or bad depending on the experience with the drink. They viewed enjoying as multiple, situational, and relational and explained how drinks are more than just the liquid object of the drink itself but rather can carry meanings of stories, memories, and care.

I thus extended from the practice of tasting to the practice of drinking by including the aspect of enjoying using Heldke's (2005) work: What makes a drink good is then, the drinker's experiencing of the drink as good. Goodness becomes an experiential property of the practice of drinking. Heldke (2005), points out the importance of the experience with the dish. However, she does not describe what aspects of the experiential work of cuisine the eater finds important. Nor does she describe how the eater performs their apparent evaluation of authenticity of the work of cuisine. In this Heldke's (2005) theorisation of authenticity fell short to describe the SCP practice of drinking.

I thus modified Heldke's theory on authenticity to describe goodness in drinks. While this works very well to emphasise the relational, transactional, and human-interaction-carrying aspects of authenticity, it falls short in two ways: It focuses on individual experiences of authenticity while

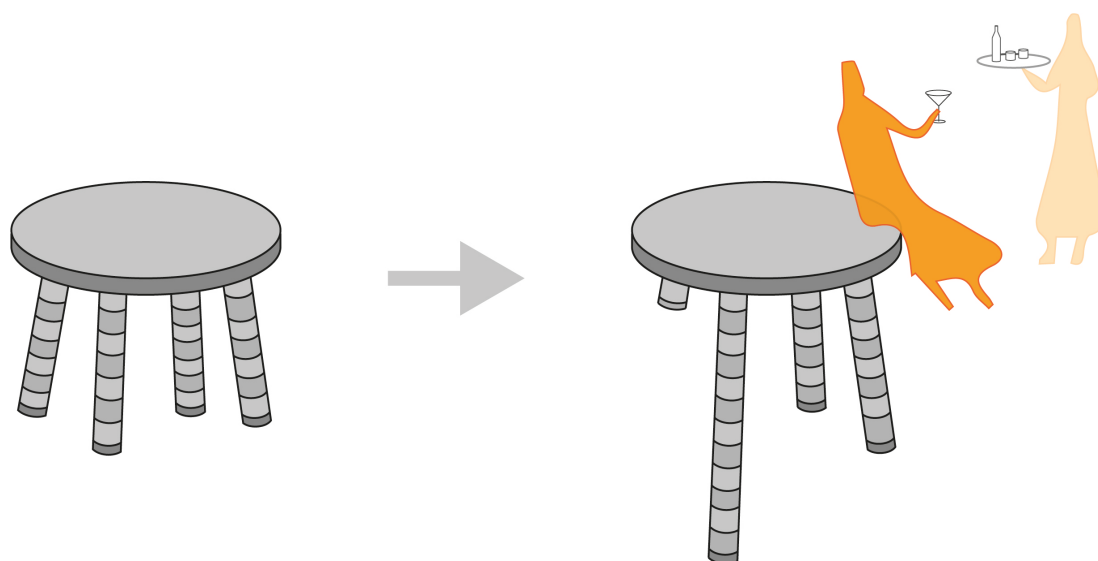


FIGURE 14 : EVOLUTION OF THE STOOL MODEL TO WHAT MAKES A DRINK GOOD

there are some community notions of authenticity, and it does not further elaborate on the experiencing of a work of cuisine.

Synthesizing the SCPs views on what makes a drink good I found five underlying ideas on goodness: apophatic, platonic, capitalist, populist, and meritocratic goodness. These ideas form the foundation of what made drinks good to SCPs. The ideas on goodness are not mutually exclusive or conscious beliefs; SCPs fluidly navigated from one idea to another, easily holding multiple ideas on goodness simultaneously. These ideas on goodness thus demonstrate primarily the multiplicity of goodness and reiterate the SCP view that 'a good drink is whatever hits the spot'.

From an ethnomethodological viewpoint, SCPs (re-)create social orderliness through their practices and knowledge-ways, thus also (re-)producing the insider/outsider dynamics of the flavour sublime SCP community, and (re-)creating the indexicality (understandableness to other insiders) of their practices. The ideas on goodness are thus constantly questioned and propagated in a fluid, multiple, subconscious manner.

5.3 Research limitations

I conducted a single embedded case study to explore this topic. The research was a revelatory case study, as I studied a common phenomenon that had not yet been academically studied (rare and unique cases do not study common phenomena) (Yin, 1994). This is not a particularly replicable research design, and as described in sections 3.4 and 4.1, not enough was known about the field to conduct discourse analyses of formalised SCP information sources. Full triangulation of the findings with multiple forms of data, such as (social) media, was thus not feasible within this thesis research. However, in the first step of the research: gaining background information, a broad range of information was covered. In addition, patterns of findings were reported rather than single findings; these patterns were continuously questioned in the iterative

TABLE 3: RESEARCH VALIDITY COMPARISON

Research validity aspect	Definition from Yin (1994, p. 33)	This research
Construct validity	<i>“Establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied”</i>	Due to lack of academic knowledge, concepts were described more than tested. This fits the selected ethnomethodological approach.
Internal validity	<i>“Not for descriptive or exploratory studies: establishing a causal relationship”</i>	Not applicable.
External validity	<i>“Establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized”</i> However, Yin also states <i>“case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes”</i>	Findings cannot be assumed to be generalizable; this research focused on flavour sublime SCPs views on goodness and cannot be generalized* to consumers or hegemonic drinks. Fieldwork took place from August 2020 to January 2021 in the Netherlands and Denmark; results cannot be generalized* geographically, temporally or culturally.
Reliability	<i>“Demonstrating that the operations of a study-such as the data collection procedures can be repeated with the same results”</i>	See the above cell; results are not generalizable geographically, temporally or culturally. Replication was beyond the scope of this research. See also section 1.6.4 Positionality.

*Without further research

research process. Yin (1994) describes research validity consisting of construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. In the below table I test the validity of this research.

As analysed in Table 3 research validity is low, due to intrinsic factors in the research design and constraints as to the scope possible in MSc thesis research. However, for a first, exploratory academic look at ‘good’ spirits and cocktails, this is not necessarily problematic. It also fits with the social structure-specific ethnomethodological approach. This research should be seen as a first small step towards greater academic understanding of ‘drink goodness’; exploratory, descriptive and leaving space for further research to more rigorously test the findings as generalized to theory. As described in section 2.2 Ethnomethodology, there has been criticism on the locality or specificity to the studied social structure of ethnomethodological findings; however, while these findings apply only to the studied flavour sublime SCP community, further research could show whether they apply to flavour sublime communities as a whole.

There is another note to be made on external validity; the generalizability of the research also depends on how representative the studied population was for the flavour sublime SCP community. As flavour sublime SCP demographics are unknown, ensuring representativeness was not possible. Mapping these demographics was out of scope for this research. In addition, ethnographic-inspired approaches such as the applied (neo-)ethnomethodological approach are not optimal for ensuring representativeness. I therefore cast a critical eye on the demographic composition of the research participants. With 10 participants self-identifying as male, 3 as female, and none as genderfluid, gender non-binary or otherwise explicitly genderqueer, the gender balance was not representative for greater society. Participants ranged from 22 to 52 in age with an average age of 31 years old. As I was studying professionals, not consumers, I did not enquire to socio-economic demographics such as education type and income; however, circa 75% of participants indicated that they had studied or were students in (applied) universities. Age and education type were thus not representative for the greater population. I did not enquire after race, asking only where participants were from; 85% of participants were from Europe with the majority being from Denmark. It is academically unknown whether this composition, leaning

towards youth, men, and more theoretical education, is representative for the flavour sublime SCP community. Studying demographics and inclusion/exclusion, or labour division, in the flavour sublime SCP community or flavour sublime professional communities in general is recommended for further research; for example, is there a gendered division between front and back of the house, or gender bias in culinary professions as described by Rachel E. Black (2021)?

Lastly, this thesis process took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. Evidently this has impacted the research process greatly, shifting a large part of the fieldwork to occurring online. While I did succeed in safely performing in-person fieldwork, this took place during the beginning of the second wave of the pandemic. Covid-19 was found to have a pervasive impact on SCP lives and livelihoods, and thus also on this thesis. As mentioned in section 3.6.4 Positionality, the pandemic situation heavily impacted the ways I could conduct this research safely. E.g., to ensure safety, busy places such as city centres on weekend days were avoided; this impacted which drinking spaces were and were not visited. Fieldwork in general was heavily adapted to ensure the medical safety of everyone involved; the researcher, the participants, and anyone else who interfaced with the research activities.

5.4 Conclusions

The research questions were: Firstly: Who are flavour sublime SCPs? (Section 4.1); Secondly: How do SCPs learn about good drinks? (Section 4.2) and Thirdly: What makes a drink good? (Sections 4.3-4.7)

Flavour sublime SCPs are Spirit and Cocktail Professionals who believe that objective goodness exists, and the sublime can be encountered through flavour. The belief in the existence of 'flavour sublimines' is what connects the research participants, the SCPs. SCPs were found to use heterogeneous information sources, triangulating multiple sources, and combining formal and informal sources. Both technical/theoretical and experiential/embodied knowledges were valued. A holistic combination of knowledges was seen as necessary to understand 'good' drinks.

Using these knowledges, SCPs were found to categorise drinks by the ingredients, process, and (for spirits) geographical origin. This categorisation is hegemonic and formalised under E.U. law. Within the drink's hegemony, large, industrial alcohol companies hold power. With their focus on flavour, SCPs both reproduced and rejected this status quo. Surprisingly, the historical classification of drinks based on functionality was not reproduced by the interviewed SCPs.

To describe what makes a drink good I introduce the practice of drinking and propose that the drinker's experience of the practice of drinking is what makes a drink good. This reflects Lisa Heldke's (2005) description of authenticity as a property of an experiential work of cuisine. I argue that the practice of drinking consists of two aspects, namely: First, the practice of tasting, focusing on the experience of the drink itself and second: Enjoying, focusing on the drink in its experience, and on the interactions creating this experience

I describe how SCPs performed the learned, evaluative practice of tasting in their role as professionals. I use Hennion and Teil's (2004) four-legged model of the elements of tasting to structure, analyse and describe the various indicators of goodness SCPs use to evaluate drinks as 'good'. This shows the dominance within SCP practices of tasting of the social/collective element of tasting over the individual element of tasting, as well as giving attention to the way drinks are tasted using artefacts and processed through the body.

SCPs emphasised that while they do evaluate drinks, they find the drinker's enjoyment of the drink more important than its evaluation as 'good'. I used 'enjoying' to describe this multiple,

situational, fluid view on 'good' drinks. SCPs viewed ideas on what are 'good' drinks as temporally, geographically, and culturally embedded; as situational, and as ever-changing. To SCPs, 'good' drinks are valued as human interactions of care, mediated through a drink; 'good' drinks are those which are social, shared and fun.

I synthesized five underlying ideas on goodness which determine what 'good' drinks are, namely: apophatic, platonic (Plato's Drink), capitalist, populist, and meritocratic goodness. These ideas are not mutually exclusive and can be held simultaneously, showing the multiplicity of goodness.

I thus endeavoured to give a realistic, holistic description of how 'flavour sublime' SCPs view 'good' drinks, their own communities, and what knowledges they held.

Lastly, in the process of this thesis research, I experienced a shift in beliefs. Where initially I believed some drinks were objectively better than others, e.g., if drinks were more balanced and complex (better flavour), or if the drink production was less exploitative of its natural and human environments (more sustainable), I believed these drinks must be objectively better. Considering my previous experiences and 'member'-ness/unique adequacy in 'fine' food/drink fields, in hindsight this belief was unsurprising. As multiple participants had already pointed out: I also believed in flavour sublimines; I had experience working as a 'fine' food/drink professional; I was thus to some extent part of the flavour sublime communities. During the thesis process this belief in objective goodness rapidly shifted to a tension between on the one hand seeing 'goodness' as a community-specific social construct, and on the other hand wanting to believe in the existence of an objective goodness. At the end of the process, this shift completed; I now view 'good' drinks (as well as food, art, and music) as socially determined insofar as goodness being specific to the social structure in which the 'good' things are present. I do, however, believe in equity and inclusiveness as being objective goodnesses, so I haven't surrendered to the bleak, nihilist belief system I feared when letting go of a belief in objective goodness. This shift from assuming member's views towards recognising that they were member's views was a large part of the mental work done in this thesis process.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Interview guide; knowledge transmission & taste

First explain project & ask permission to record

1. Background information
 1. What's your name?
 2. What is your profession? What is your link to the spirits & cocktails world? How did you get into spirits and cocktails?
2. Info sources:
 1. How do you get information/learn about spirits and cocktails? Are there media sources that you use? [Prompts: magazines, television, cookbooks, newspapers.]
 2. How do you get inspiration for drinks? How do you learn about new techniques, ingredients, or drinks? [Prompts: books, bars, websites.]
3. Goodness
 1. What does a good drink mean to you?
 2. What do you find important when thinking about good drinks? [prompts: flavor, innovativeness, tradition, environmental sustainability, social sustainability, social equality, inclusiveness]
 3. Are there any specific things you do when drinking or tasting spirits/cocktails? [glassware, sniffing the drink, sipping vs big gulps etc]
 4. Could you tell me something about spirits and cocktails that you like? What's your favorite drink? And your favorite Empirical drink?
 5. And how about/are there any spirits/cocktails you're not that fond of, or that you wouldn't want to drink?
 6. How do you (at Empirical) decide to do a cooperation, or launch a new product/event?
4. People, prestige and perception:
 1. Who would you recommend me to further talk to?
 2. Who are people in the field that you admire/find good? Are there places you are inspired by? Events?
 3. Do you have an opinion about awards and rankings like the World's Best 50?
 4. Field over time
 5. What's your view on how the field of spirits and cocktails has changed over the years? And have your tastes changed?
5. Background: Where are you from [prompt: ethnicity]? What is your age? What is your gender?// Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your living situation? [Prompts: occupation, education, race/ethnicity, age.]

7.2 Appendix 2: Consent form



P.O. Box 8130 | 6700 EW Wageningen, The Netherlands | The Netherlands

Dear,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a research study on taste in spirits and cocktails. This research is being conducted for a Master thesis by Suzi Pijnenburg within the Rural Sociology Group.

The interviews and observations will be treated confidentially, and will be anonymised to the extent which you are comfortable with.

Company names will be listed when preferable (e.g. for case studies) for academic transparency; however, if you are not comfortable this please indicate this and we will discuss how to anonymise your company.

All observations will be anonymised.

As a participant you can choose to be anonymised or named.

If you choose to be anonymised, you will be assigned a nickname. Only the researchers will know your identity. If you choose to be named, you will be indicated using the name you provide in your interview (first name only).

Please indicate your preference in being named or anonymised as an interview participant in the thesis research:

I would like to be anonymised

I would like to be named

A transcript of the interview will be provided to you and you can, at any time, revoke a statement. The transcribed interviews will be saved on the secure Wageningen University and Research (WUR) drive.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. If you do so, all information from you will be destroyed.

The results from this study will be made public by WUR. In any presentation or publication, no identifying information to your name will be made. If you wish to receive a copy of the results from this study, you may contact the researcher below.

If you require any additional information about this study or would like to speak to someone involved, please contact Jessica Duncan at Jessica.Duncan@wur.nl or +31 317 485 253, or Suzi Pijnenburg at sapijnenburg@gmail.com or +31 (0)617129122.



I have read (or have been read) the above information regarding this research study on taste in spirits and cocktails and consent to participate.

Social Sciences
Group

DATE
September 28, 2020

SUBJECT
Letter of Consent: Taste
in spirits and cocktails
research

POSTAL ADDRESS
P.O. Box 8130
6700 EW Wageningen, The
Netherlands
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Wageningen University &
Research is specialised in the
domain of healthy food and living
environment.

DATE
September 28, 2020

PAGE
2 of 2

Printed Name

Signature

Date

With kind regards,

Suzi Pijnenburg

7.3 Appendix 3: Coding and data processing

7.3.1 Coding methodology

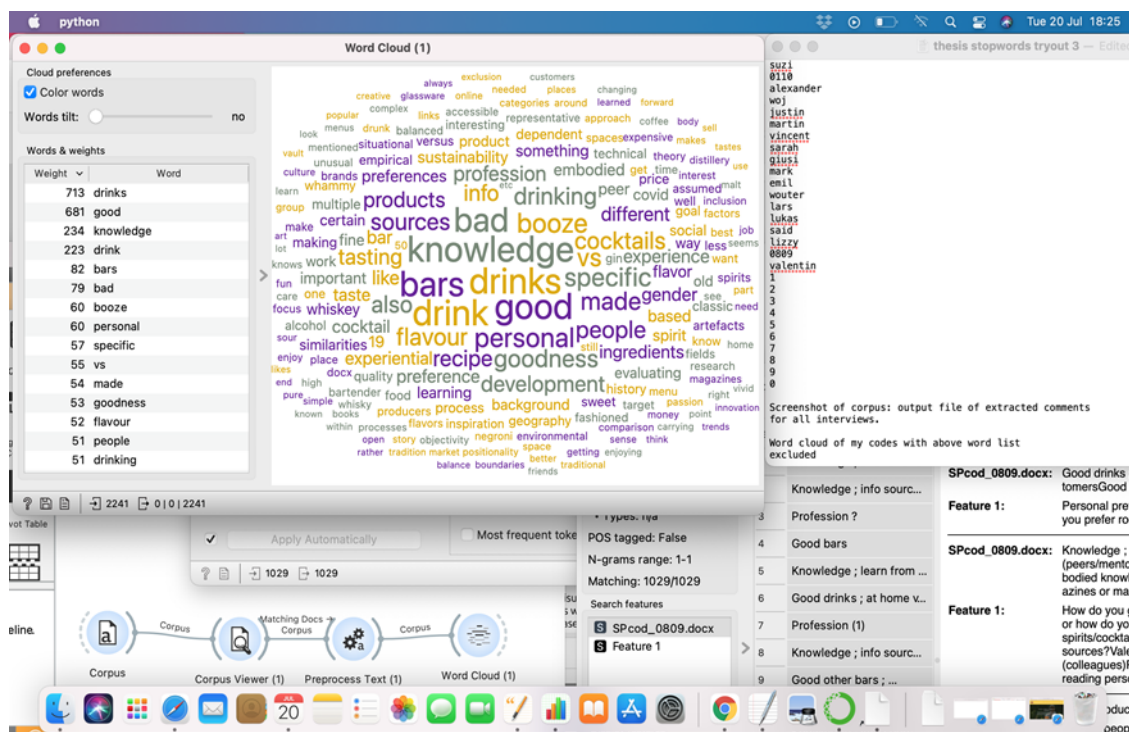
I chose to code inductively, seeing which codes emerged from closely reading the interview data rather than working from a partially *a priori* codebook. I coded manually by adding comments on the interview text in Pages (Mac version of Word). The comments combined codes with memos; as coding continued and categories of codes became clearer, the comments were structured as “code; subcode(s); memo”.

7.3.2 Processing the comments

I then used a comment extraction script in Spyder (Knoch, 2020) to extract all comments and their respective interview snippets into a.csv file. This resulted in 1030 rows, of individual comments and file names.

I further processed this data in Orange, an open-source data analysis programme, and Numbers (Mac version of Excel). In Orange I created word clouds of the interview snippets + comments (figure 1), and of the interview snippets themselves (figure 2), to get a first look at often-occurring words in the comments and coded interview sections. See figures 1 and 2 for the workflow, excluded wordlist and wordcloud.

In Appendix 3, Figure 1, it can be seen that the words drink(s), knowledge, good, bars, and bad frequently occurred. These approximately correspond with my main codes: Knowledge, Good drinks (also covers bad drinks), and how to drink



APPENDIX 3, FIGURE 1: WORDCLOUD OF COMMENTS (CODES + MEMOS)

Other frequently occurring words fall into the main codes, are used as subcodes, or correspond with minor codes.

`=IF (ISNUMBER (SEARCH (C$1; $B2));1;"")`

In this formula, if the extracted comment contains the keyword, the formula result is 1. If not, the cell remains blank.

I could now calculate keyword occurrence in the comments and see how often my keywords occurred in the extracted comments. This gave an auto-categorisation success rate of 66% in the extracted comments of Anna's interview. After manually checking the accuracy of the auto-categorisation, the accuracy rate was 69%. As 'miscellaneous' codes should not be auto-categorised, accuracy was higher than success, which only checked for whether any keyword had been found in a comment. As Anna's interview had been one of the first interview I coded, I expected keyword accuracy to be similar or higher in later coded interviews.

I used the same approach in my csv/Numbers file of extracted comments and interview snippets from all 15 coded interviews. I used the following keywords, adapting keywords and adding keywords that frequently occurred and corresponded with main codes, sub-codes, or minor codes as keywords. To evaluate whether keywords should be added, I maintained that keywords with >22 occurrences (2.2%) would be less effort to add for auto-categorisation than to manually add. After some tweaking, auto-categorisation success rose to 85,6%. See Appendix 3, Figure 2, table left for keyword occurrence.

This gave a table with a column of interview snippets and my comments, in the order in which they occurred in the interviews. I added a column with the interviewee's names and with the order in which the comments occurred interview snippets occurred to make sure I could easily trace back each piece of data to its origin and context. This context is especially relevant as I am using discourse analysis, looking not only at what interviewees say but also at how they say it and in what context. The table also contained 14 columns of keywords and whether those keywords were relevant to each interview snippet. I wanted to add a column with all applicable keywords for each interview snippet summed up and delineated with commas to simplify categorisation. For this I used the following formulas, repeated for each keyword cell I wanted to add:

`=D2&IF(LEN(D2) ×LEN(E2&F2)>1;" , ";"") &E2&IF(LEN(E2) ×LEN(F2)>1;" , ";"") &F2`

This formula means: copy the contents of cell D2 into this cell. If cells E2 and F2 contain anything, add a comma and a space. If cells E2 and F2 are blank, add nothing. Repeat with cell E2 and F2.

In this case the formula works for copying and delineating the contents of 3 cells into 1 cell; I had 14 keyword cells per row. To avoid overly long calculation times, I broke the keywords into 3 types: Firstly, Main keywords (Knowledge, how to drink, good drinks); Secondly: Sub-keywords (goodness, Tasting, Gender, Learning, Recipe, Good bars); and Thirdly: Miscellaneous keywords (Similarities, Profession, Background, Covid, Miscellaneous)

I then summed up the contents of those 3 cells into 1. Categorisation using Numbers gave 93 categories, or 93 unique combinations of keywords. Categorisation on main keywords, then on sub-keywords, then on miscellaneous keywords showed that at times, multiple main keywords were applicable on the same interview snippet. However, this gave a more structured overview. I then used Miro to visualise how the main keywords, sub-keywords and miscellaneous keywords interacted.

7.3.4 Coding trees

To visualize the structure found in my data using categorisation, I first mapped out the main keywords → sub-keywords → miscellaneous keywords structure. I used Miro's mind maps

they have low value in predicting the *next* keyword level categorisation. Ideally a coding tree is clear, with little overlap between codes; so, each code level is predictive for the next code level, as the codes are mutually exclusive. This is not the case in Figure 3; thus, the structure was not useful with the categories used. Reworking the categories to test this methodological step was out of scope for this research.

I then manually restructured the mind map based on insights from the research and coding process, creating the final coding tree. This was an iterative sense-making and structuring process suitable for the grounded theory-style coding.

To verify the structure of the coding tree, the plan was to use Orange's artificial intelligence visualisation tool Free Viz to visualise the categorised data. This as Orange also has text processing tools which can be useful to analyse underlying structures in texts. However, as the categories/keywords were not sufficiently accurate (see above), this was out of scope for this research.

7.4 Appendix 4: Detailed results for categorisability

7.4.1 Spirits

Spirits were defined by their process, ingredients, and geographical origin. This categorisation allowed SCPs to understand differences and similarities between various spirits. An example of process being used to define products was given by Giusi when she explained how different stills used in distillation can lead to different flavours and how the barrel and time for aging defines whiskies.

They [Welsh whisky distillery Penderyn] distillery the spirit in a unique way that is called Faraday still, it's like a, and it's a column still. So, the spirit has to go through a lot of stages before it's actually ready. And that makes it extremely light."

And when describing Kilchomann's Am Burach whisky:

"Kilchoman recently released, um, Am Bùrach, which means in Gallic 'a mess' cause by mistake the... um, the man that was responsible for the casks mixed like the, the basic release, the Machir Bay, together with the Port Matured, which is like this super high-end whiskey entirely matured in port casks..."

In whisky, the type of wood the whisky is aged in and the length of time it is aged are used to define and identify the whiskies. Penderyn even named some of their whiskies after the cask types they were aged in, e.g., Portwood, Sherry wood and Madeira. (Penderyn 2021) However, this aged/unaged definition of spirits extends to rum, tequila, jenever and moutwijn; it is globally used to define spirits and communicate something about the flavour and quality of the spirit.

Spirits are also defined by their ingredients. When discussing tequila, Vincent expressed distaste over tequilas not made from only agave:

"Vincent: That's basically... that's not proper tequila, right. I don't think- I don't even think that is made from 100% agave. Suzi: No, it's not, like because according to the designation of origin for tequila, it has to be made from I think, at least 51% agave. Something like that. Vincent: And also it has to be made in [specific areas]."

Giusi expressed how amazed she was, learning that (Scotch) whisky was made using only barley. Sake is famously made from rice. Gins are defined by the botanicals used to flavour them, just as the above-mentioned jenever must be flavoured using juniper extracts or berries.

Lastly, geographical origin plays a role in the definition and differentiation of spirits in the E.U. context I studied. As Vincent said, there are legally defined areas (Commission regulation (EU) 2019/335) where Tequila can be produced; the same goes for Scotch whisky, as Giusi explained:

“Only whiskey that has been distilled, matured, and bottled in Scotland can be called scotch. Everything else is not scotch. You can distil it and mature it there and then bottle it... somewhere else? It's not scotch anymore.”

Wouter also mentioned regulations around Calvados production. On a less regulatory note, Lars remarked on the geographical dispersion of people who like liquorice-flavoured booze (The Dutch and the Danish do, many other do not) and Vincent commented on countries where people do or do not home-distil schnapps (eau de vie). Vincent, Giusi and Wouter all referred to the same type of geographical origin protection; the European PDO/PGI system. The tendency to categorise spirits by origin, ingredients and process is formalised in this legal structure, defining what characteristics drinks must have to be allowed to use a certain name.

7.4.2 Cocktails

Similarly, to spirits but without legal definitions, cocktails were also categorised by their production process and ingredients. For example, cocktails can be shaken, stirred, blended, clarified *et cetera*. The ingredients used are what differentiates a Bee's Knees (gin, lemon juice, honey syrup) from a Gin Sour (gin, lemon juice, simple syrup); ratios between ingredients are also used to define categories of drinks.

The combination of ingredients (products) and techniques (processes) define various styles or typologies of drinks. Yet the Malt Vault's Shahrazad cocktail of mezcal + D.O.M. Bénédictine is also categorised as an Old-Fashioned variation, since it follows the same ingredient ratios and methods, as Giusi explains:

“I didn't want to make like another version of the Old Fashioned. Which at the end of the day, that's what it still is, the drink that is there. Cause is, is not necessarily with syrup, but it's with liquor, liqueur. So that makes it sweet. It's like instead of making syrup, you have alcohol and syrup together. That's basically what we did. But I didn't know anything about that back then. (Laughs) And [colleague] Valentin was kind enough to tell me, 'This is a mezcal Old Fashioned. You're not using a syrup, but you're using a liqueur, and it's sweet and that's your sweet component. And that's what you did.' It's the same ratio, is the exact same ratio.”

Giusi demonstrates here the concept of 'riffing'; an often-used approach to new drink development. 'Riffs' are variations on existing cocktail typologies, often on classic cocktails, with the same ratios and techniques but with ingredients swapped out. This concept came back frequently in my conversations with SCPs as a good way to develop new recipes without re-inventing the wheel or making drinks overly complicated to make.

7.4.3 Function

Historically, it is common to categorize drinks by function. However, this was not [frequently] mentioned in my interviews or observations and is apparently not in vogue among Netherlands-

and Copenhagen-based SCPs belonging to flavour sublime communities. This may be different in countries like France and Italy, where aperitivo and digestif cultures may be stronger.

7.4.4 Flavour

However, at the same time as this categorising system is reproduced, it is also subverted. Empirical was one of the first companies distilling category-defying products; there are now several booze producers making drinks that do not fit into any of the historically grown categories. This shows the categories of drinks can be defied/subverted. At the Malt Vault, whiskies are not explained and sorted in the menu and bar shelves based on geographical origin, as is generally the case in specialty whisky bars, but on flavour. This makes it less necessary to have extensive whisky knowledge to know which drink you should order - if you know you like lighter, delicate whiskies and dislike smoky flavours, there is no longer a need to memorise geographical areas and producers who tend to produce that whisky style. Both Empirical and the Malt Vault defy the categorisation system on primarily product, process and geographical origin, instead categorising drinks primarily on flavours. At the same time, technical knowledge - understanding of how processes and ingredients influence flavour - is highly valued among SCPs. On the one hand, by focusing on flavour, the barrier of knowledge needed to access and feel comfortable in drinking spaces is decreased. On the other hand, knowledge is still highly prized in flavour discussions, together with interest in flavour. This reflects a tension between reproducing and subverting the hegemonic drinks categorisation system in the E.U.

A similar tension is visible in the social indicators of product and process goodness. SCPs rejected industrial, artificial processes and products. This focus on 'purity' and dislike of artificiality shows a rejection of the dominance of global spirits companies. SCPs spoke about how, in the hospitality industries, often a few large companies have enormous market dominance and power. By propagating social indicators of goodness that reject these large companies, SCPs pushed back against this existing power structure. This rejection of global, industrial companies fits with the food zeitgeist. This is similar to the current post-Michelin world of fine dining.

7.5 Appendix 5: Detailed results for the practice of drinking

7.5.1 Tasting, Bodily aspect,

7.5.1.1 Flavour: sweet drinks

My interviewees universally indicated they disliked overly sweet drinks. As explained in the section 4.1.3, sweet drinks are associated with feminine and juvenile drinking, as well as overly sweet drinks being made to hide the usage of 'bad booze', low-quality spirits. However, there were exceptions to this dislike of sweetness. Giusi and Woj both indicated a preference for sweet cocktails, without worry but with some irritation about the gender and age stereotypes surrounding sweet drinks.

7.5.1.2 Flavour: Spirit forwardness

Drinks with a strong spirit presence, colloquially referred to as spirit-forward drinks, were often juxtaposed to sweet drinks. These tended to be preferred by the SCPs I spoke to. Anna, for example, when asked about drinks she liked, stated:

“Anna: I - love an old fashioned... made with, um, preferably like slightly peaty whiskey, to give it some character. Yeah. Or like an old fashioned but made on mezcal, is also super nice, to give it a bit of smokiness? ... I think where you're just - I prefer cocktails where you let the spirit speak for itself, and where the spirit is just enhanced.

Suzi: So very spirit forward cocktails rather than - ?

Anna: Yeah, I mean, it could also be - it could also be something that's - it doesn't have to be spirit forward. I just think that the spirit should be able to stand in character, like it would be there. Like I really enjoy a Negroni as well. Because both the vermouth and the gin get to have a big say and gets to be forward. Um, and if you have a really nice gin and vermouth, you can really taste the difference, like that there is... like there's fruit-forward cocktails. A lot of the times it doesn't matter if it's a good gin or bad gin and because the other flavours are going to take over right like and they're going to shine. Where it's really difficult to make a nice Negroni on shitty spirits.”

However, this preference for spirit-forward drinks does not mean SCPs do not enjoy other drinks. Lars stated:

“Lars: I sort of became, like, as, sort of like as I've grown older in the industry, it becomes more of those... boozy, drinks because I think they like, they have to kind of last longer and it's more intense on flavour, you get like your Negronis, your Old Fashioneds. I still sort of adore anything that contains absinth because that's my favourite spirit. It does not treat me well, but I do like it. Suzi: Hmm. Okay. How would you say that [your taste for drinks]'s then evolved, over the years, kind of? Lars: It's definitely like. Probably to start with it was more of those like, as I'd say like lemonade-y drinks like going, those, the Daiquiri styles. More of the like fresh, like refreshing, fruity, like now I get, like I get a Daiquiri, and I still immensely enjoy a Daiquiri but it's down in two sips.”

Lars still enjoys less intensely spirit-forward drinks, but he does indicate his taste changed as he gained more experience as an SCP. This hints at ideas of spirit-forwardness, and ingredient/product use in general, which are shared and socially transmitted in SCP communities. I elaborate further on good products in section 4.5.2.4 on social/collective indicators of goodness.

7.5.1.3 Flavour: Balance and Complexity

SCPs indicated that no matter whether the flavour of the drink is spirit-forward or sweeter, it must be balanced and complex. Every ingredient in the drink must be discernible, and good drinks have multiple layers of flavour. These flavours must be balanced to create a harmonious composite flavour where none of the flavours overpower other flavours, as **Anna** explains when asked what would make a Gin-Tonic excellent or truly good:

I think the combination. Of... of the flavours going together, I'd say you want the bitterness, the sweetness, and the acidity to be balanced and to complement each other. And I think as soon as you start noticing one thing more than the other and it overtakes the flavour, so if it's like, super bitter, it's super sour, then we stop having excellent, right, because then we focus on things like... You shouldn't - have to focus on anything in particular, it should just be like, well-balanced. I think that's the main thing. When something is excellent, that's it's balanced. It's always gonna be balanced. Cause as soon as you start noticing odd things out, then someone didn't do their job well, right.

While Anna focuses on balance as the main indicator of goodness, she also emphasises the complexity of a good drink. As my participants generally found both balance and complexity important, and found they must complement each other, I combine the two aspects into a combined indicator of goodness. A complex drink is not good if unbalanced, just as a balanced drink with zero complexity is not good.

7.5.1.4 Flavour: Aftertaste

After sipping and swallowing the drink the aftertaste remains. The evaluation of the drink's flavour on the palate makes way for considering the aftertaste. A pleasant, lingering aftertaste is an indicator of goodness, though this was mentioned more as assumed knowledge in passing, and as something some drinkers do like while others do not. Giusi explains this with smoky aftertastes:

"...some people don't like a long finish. That's quite traumatic for some people when they try smoky whiskey for the first time... I personally like the feeling of 'like I smoked a cigar' after having a smoky drink- whiskey- for six hours during the day. Some people hate that. And they're like, 'I felt like an ashtray in my mouth' (laughs). I personally like long finish, some people don't."

Aftertaste preferences are quite individual, but the presence of a distinctive aftertaste, like the presence of a good 'nose' or scent, is generally viewed by SCPs as an indicator of goodness.

7.5.1.5 Bodily Effects: Toxicity

He touches upon the idea that good drinks are less bad for your body than bad drinks. This was mentioned by several SCPs. Improperly distilled alcoholic drinks can contain methanol, a highly toxic compound (Barceloux et al., 2002; Kruse, 1992).

"Methanol ingestion is an uncommon form of poisoning that can cause severe metabolic disturbances, blindness, permanent neurologic dysfunction and death." - Kruse, 1992

However, in general alcoholic beverages sold within the E.U. market do not contain methanol. A search for hazards detected in alcoholic beverages sold within the E.U. via the RASFF portal, a European food safety alert system dating back to 1998, yielded zero alerts concerning methanol-containing alcoholic beverages. The bad effects SCPs refer to were more related to the bodily effects of alcohol consumption in general, though they did refer to presence of congeners and other fermentation by-products which should be distilled out in a good spirit. This impacts the bodily effects of the drink, and as Giusi explains, also the flavour and mouthfeel:

"...after you distil it, you get three different parts... basically you have to discard the first and the last [distillation cuts], and just keep the heart, which is the very nice good quality spirits and the rest of has to go and sometimes they don't let it go, when it's not a... a nice whiskey, they all- they also keep the part that should be discarded for a... high quality, top quality spirit. And that also makes the way taste is a little bit more burning and not as smooth and delicate on the palate. And that's also why sometimes 40% results in a, in a much more, um, harsh, um feeling then a 65 or a 58 [% ABV] or cask strength one in general... [good whisky / good spirits] also doesn't give me the headache that fermented grape do (laughs). So yeah, distilled [drink]s is better for my body, and stomach, I guess."

7.5.2 Tasting, Social/ Collective aspect,

7.5.2.1 Process: Technical skill

Vincent, a 23-year-old bar manager in Copenhagen, states on what makes a drink good for him:

"I think it's important that the bartenders know, what they're doing, when they're doing it. They don't have to have like, a huge knowledge. But they need to know why they're dry shaking it, for example. If you're using, if you're doing like, a whiskey sour, I want people, I want a bartender who thinks for themselves, who knows the drink, who would know what, what they themselves would prefer. So, I think it's important that it's made by someone who has an understanding of what they're doing. Who knows their ingredients, to some extent, they don't have to be like a huge whiskey nerd. But they have to know what's going into it and what's the difference between, what- what the different things are doing for the cocktail"

This focus on the why of using certain techniques - ingredients are described in the product section, 4.5.2.4.2 - is also visible in articles such as Punch Magazine's technique articles, describing how techniques such as dry shaking, different shaking motions, blending, and stirring impact the final flavour, look and mouthfeel of drinks as well as what impact the techniques can have on the bartender's body (e.g. how much do different shaking techniques strain the drink maker's wrists). In essence, the process- the techniques used- are impacting the bodily experience of not only the drinker, but also the maker of the drinks. The processes/techniques used should be selected deliberately, consciously and based on both formal/ technical/ discrete knowledge and experiential/embodied knowledge.

7.5.2.2 Process: Labour

Drinks should also be made in a way that minimises unnecessary labour. While a long, complex, and/or involved process of drinks-making is not necessarily seen as bad, a complicated process just for the sake of complicating matters is not appreciated; (Lars) explains how a complicated process is fine, but only if it is what he feels the drink needs.

"...a mentor of mine gave me like a really good thing I'm still going with, when I make cocktails, which is, you should make a cocktail. Like, if you can't taste all the ingredients, you should rethink [whether it] really should be there? [later in the interview] ...if I have a cocktail that I think needs to be super complex and needs to do- I need to go through a lot of hard processes to - come to the result that I want. Then I kind of have to do that, to get to where I want it to be. First/plus to my whole process like, I think I talked to you about it, when you were in Copenhagen, that me and a really good friend came to the conclusion just like, you just have to be ready to accept that no one cares. Like no matter how [much time and effort] you spent [on] this cocktail, how, like, intricate your thought process have been, how much time you spent tasting and perfecting it, or how long it takes to prep? At the end of the day, you're just going to serve it to someone, and they're going to like, taste it and go 'Ah that tastes great'. Cool. Like, that's a month of work. and ten-hour prep. But it's not- like- but as a guest, like, it's not your responsibility to be 'Oh, wow, that's so interesting. Tell me everything about it'. You're just supposed to taste it and hopefully think it tastes good. So, you kind of have to accept, that, all of like, the decisions you make it that intricate, and that hard? That's all on you. Like you can expect nothing back from it, apart from hopefully people being happy with, with the result."

Where Lars indicates that a complicated process is fine, as long as he feels it is necessary to deliver his aimed-for drinking experience, Martin prefers simpler processes.

“Also keep it simple, because like, if you go too fancy fancy, then... Well, you have eight ingredients per cocktails. And that's too much for a small bar. And you can do it actually the same with three ingredients...Preparation, et cetera [increases how labour-intensive drinks are to make]. And we're not really a cocktail bar, we're more like a restaurant focused place. So, we tried to like, keep it as work efficient as possible.”

7.5.2.3 Process: Freshly made

My interviewees indicated a general dislike for pre-mixed drinks like canned cocktails; when one pre-mixes a drink, the adaptability of the drink to the consumers' preferences decreases. At the same time batching (creating a larger batch of) ingredients, to facilitate the drink-making process, or even batching entire drinks, was seen as perfectly acceptable and a good way to make the process of drink-making less labour-intensive in a bar. Empirical, the before-mentioned Copenhagen flavour company, even created a range of high-end ready-to-drink alcoholic drinks in cans, and Punch Magazine describes pre-batched and chilled Martinis as 'genius' (Frechette, 2016) and 'a long-standing trend' (Simonson, 2021), noting famous drinks writer Kingsley Amis' love of batched 'freezer Martinis' (Punch Staff, 2018); all the while stating that pre-made cocktails are controversial:

“...batched cocktails can be controversial—many people are attached to the ritual of a bartender making their drink on the spot, particularly when it comes to the Martini.” - (Simonson, 2021)

Pre-mixed cocktails' contested reputation was reflected in my participants' opinions on them; they often named pre-mixed drinks as drinks they did not like. **Lukas, a 27-year-old trained waiter, bartender, certified wine trader and qualified enologist from Austria trained as a hospitality professional**, stated:

“...a bad drink for me is like the majority of pre-mixed drinks which are just, which you don't have to mix yourself, but you just get ready to use in the bottle and then you/they just pour into a glass and give that to people. [the reason being] I honestly haven't tasted any so far which tasted as nice as freshly made ones. Although I have to admit that I typically used superior products for that comparison so not exactly comparable.”

Here it is clear that pre-made drinks are associated with not being fresh, not reflecting care for the people receiving the drink, and with low-quality ingredients; products will be discussed in the next set of social/collective indicators of goodness. **Sarah** stated when asked if there were cocktails or drinks, she did not like:

“Pre-prepared cocktails... [which you would buy as] Yeah, a bottle or a can or something. What- if you can even call it a cocktail, it's more like commercialised product, right. But I usually think that has... First of all, it takes away from the experience. Second of all, the longer it stays in, like, together, it changes the flavour, and I think it's really difficult to make it... like premade stuff. It works for some things, like if you can make, like, a punch, or if you can make like something similar to that, but... Definitely, I'm, I don't really order stuff like that, and I'm kind of sceptical about it in general (laughs)... Yeah. I didn't actually get to try so many. But I think it's because I have this critical approach that I, I would rather go and have the experience than... have something premixed, but... maybe it is possible. I did go to one bar in Warsaw that actually

specialises in premixed cocktails. And that, I must say it- it was nice, but I all- I did think it was not as nice as... regular cocktails. That's the best... effort I've tried. But I don't know. [I then mentioned Empirical's cans as an example of pre-mixed drinks] Ah yeah, the Empirical. Yeah, but... I actually wanted to try those, like cause... Well, they do care so much about flavour, so..."

Sarah indicates a degree of ambiguity about pre-mixed drinks. Apparently when the drinks are made by people she views as caring deeply about flavour, as part of the fine flavour / flavour sublime community, she has more trust that the drinks can be good. This ambiguity is also seen in Lukas' caveat that the quality of products he normally uses in freshly mixed drinks may play a part in his comparative dislike of pre-mixed drinks. Pre-mixed or not fresh drinks being made with care, in a deliberate way; made by people who care; can still be good according to the SCPs I spoke with.

7.5.2.4 Product: Specificity

I use the word specificity to describe uniqueness, specialness, different-from-other-products-ness. This specificity can come from process or ingredients; it is often linked with rarity and norm-breaking, with being out of the ordinary. Exactly copying a drink developed by another SCP is viewed as, paraphrasing Justin: *"If someone else is already doing it, I don't find it fun anymore. You just need to come up with your own ideas."*

Originality and norm-breaking increases drink specificity and are prized in the SCP flavour sublime community. To recognise specific products as being norm-breaking, one must of course be familiar with the norm; thus, how specific, special, or unique a product is, is dependent on the drinker or drink-maker's experience with it. Yet there are endless variations on products; not only in spirits or liqueurs, but also in all other elements that go into a cocktail. Even the ice used in drinks has ranges of quality and strong opinions (Liu, 2019; Lazor, 2019; Parsons, 2017; Simonson, 2019) on what kind of ice is best for which application! So how can SCPs evaluate whether a product is likely to be unique, specific, or good? Often the indicators price and producer/seller are used. As specificity, price and producer/seller are so intertwined, the below sections describe these 3 indicators and the ways SCPs related them to goodness and to one another.

Giusi, when asked about drinks she liked, described a number of different distilleries with processes and ingredients she found fascinating and good; often these products were highly unique and specific. An example is how Giusi describes distillery Springbank:

...they roll the barley during the germination by hand. Um, at Springbank they have malting floors, cause usually you buy malted barley from bigger companies? At Springbank they do it themselves, which is extremely dangerous, because the- not, not necessarily dangerous for people just dangerous for the production. Because the risk of mould on a malting floor... is very high. Is very high. And of course, as soon as you have mould it just spreads, and you have to start again (laughs)... and, and that of course will affect- affect the price. But yeah, I mean I, I would be willing to have three bottles instead of six bottles of whiskey and have them to be... you know. To have a passion and a story and a purpose behind it.

Showing how process and product are intertwined; the ingredient she described to be used by Springbank distillery is malted barley, but the malted barley becomes more unique and specific by the distillery malting it rather than buying industrial malted barley.

7.5.2.5 Product: Price

[The malted barley becomes more unique and specific by the distillery malting it rather than buying industrial malted barley]. This also increases the price, a sentiment mirrored by Martin:

Martin: the higher end quality the whiskey, the... um, more expensive it's going to be. And the less you will get from it. Like the less batches are made. So, let's say you buy a bottle of one and a half thousand euros whiskey. Not saying that that's an incredibly great whiskey; it's an incredibly expensive whiskey. And from experience, I would say that there's not that many bottle of that whiskey available. Because it usually was like, when they sold to that price, it's probably a very, very well renowned distillery. With a very, very, like, special distillation process for that whiskey, maybe special casks, whatever. And so, they made one cask of liquid for that batch, and that was it. And that's why it's so expensive

Generally, a higher price was seen as an indicator of specificity, specialness, and quality, especially in smaller, artisan producers. Perhaps these are seen as being more honest and less marketing-focused when increasing prices. Anna also mentioned price as an indicator of quality:

Anna: Especially when you work with good spirits, right? If you then pour some shitty tonic into it. That's really sad. So, like, if you've been out and you've like, spent a lot of money on a really beautiful gin, or like, one of Empirical's bottles or whatever... And then you go home, and you pour Schweppes tonic into it, I think it's really... it's just like disrespectful to the product

7.5.2.6 Product: Producer/ Seller

Anna views good, or excellent, products as something the producers put a lot of labour and care into, which must be respected. She indicates that for a drink to be good, all products used must be good in themselves. She juxtaposes good products with industrial products, as seen from her reference to Schweppes tonic. This dislike of industrial products or producers is corroborated by Giusi:

Kilchoman in Islay ...is very good, and once again they're totally independent. They are independent from the big Diageo monsters that wanna (laughs) own everybody. And you can taste it. When a distillery is independent, you can taste the character in the whiskey and, um, sometimes they- not necessarily Kilchoman, but... they do take some risks, in a way... Kilchoman recently released, um, Am Bùrach, which means in Gallic 'a mess' cause by mistake the... um, the man that was responsible for the casks mixed like the, the basic release, the Machir Bay, together with the Port Matured, which is like this super high-end whiskey entirely matured in port casks, which is by the way delicious, we had it once it's so good. And yeah! They, they- of course, if you mix two liquids of the same kind together, there's so much that you can do about it. So, they decided to wait couple of, you know, more months or weeks or years, I'm not sure. And then they bottled it as 'a mess'. 'Kilchoman; a mess' (laughs). Yeah. And it's- it's- it's interesting. I've never seen anything like this from other... distilleries, that everybody knows of, as, um, you know, Laphroaig, Glen Dronach, Glen Grant... all of those. Glenfiddich... and it's quite refreshing'

In these quotes from Giusi, she expresses a clear preference for unique, specific products; at the same time, she indicates a dislike of industrial, large-scale production (**Diageo is a multinational drinks company covering various brands' this is common in the alcohol industry**). She prefers

artisan, in-house made products, from vertically integrated production chains like Springbank's peated barley, and uses in-house-made ingredients as well as small-scale barrel aging in making drinks at the Malt Vault. This increases specificity of products used in the drinks:

'...we wanted to do something spicy, like with um... So instead of doing a syrup, we made honey with cayenne pepper, and you get the peppery thing and then lime juice instead of lemon juice, because it's quite sour, but also slightly more sugary...'

Products are chosen with deliberateness and care, for what they can add to the drink. A product should add something to the bartender's repertoire, as explained by Lars:

"Yeah, like working bars there's like two or three guys coming by a week to go 'Here is...' Let me guess, a new gin? I got so fed up with gins at one point, so if people came in, I was like, 'All right, listen, I have this many gins on my back bar, all because either it's a recognisable brand or because I feel that flavour wise it delivers something special in it. So, like if you can't write/right [???] one of the two. I'm not going to put you on the shelf.'"

Lars describes good products as either known/recognisable, or as having a special flavour/being specific. He refers to the current gin boom in Western Europe, with many new gins flooding the market; thus, Lars' number of available options to select a gin has increased drastically. The more popular a drink, the more options available for that drink, the more specific / picky you can be. Yet this doesn't work in all alcohol market sectors. Said provided a sharp contrast, explaining that in the world of single malt whiskies, there is always a scarcity of good products from good distilleries, and that these bottles sell out fast. With his bar the Malt Vault focusing on high-end, highly specific, often single-cask whiskies, he and Giusi are dependent on what they are offered by the seller. They rely heavily on historical reputations of good whiskey producers, relying on known good producers to continue making good products.

7.5.2.7 Product: Purity

SCPs wanted products to be pure. This means both representative of specific, often natural flavours, and not being artificial or fake. Anna explains this preference using grapefruit soda as a reference:

I think, products that are as pure as they can be to the flavour. So, like, if you have a grapefruit soda, and it just tastes sweet, I get really annoyed. Because grapefruits are not just sweet, they're super bitter, and it's delicious, and they're acidic, and... That's why you choose grapefruit, right?

SCPs often described flavours, of 'anything that's tasted' (Anna), in a vivid, detailed manner, breaking flavours down into various aromas, mouthfeels and basic tastes. They strongly disliked artificial aromas, viewing them as a reduction of the real flavours, even going so far as to view **this mimicking** as disrespectful to other good products. Products that are representative of certain flavours are lauded; in my observations, I spoke to customers and SCPs who lauded Empirical's Yalla Habibi - a limited-edition shiso-flavoured ready-to-drink bottled cocktail (the proceeds went to a befriended bar which was hard hit in the Beirut harbour explosion). The drinkers of Yalla Habibi were astonished at how Empirical's R&D had captured the nuances of shiso in a drink, praising how representative of the flavour of fresh shiso leaves it was. This dislike of artifice was linked to a dislike of industrial products; my interviewees associated industrial or bulk ingredients as artificial, fake, and impure. A good example is sour mix, as explained by Vincent:

Vincent: Really, um... I would maybe say, the pureness in the drink. It's like, once again, talking about how it shouldn't be disguising itself as something that it's not, right. Most important- most important of course is the flavour. That it tastes nice. And I think also, it is important to know, the ingredients behind it. So, like, if I order a Whiskey Sour, then I - I want to be sure that, I want to know which whiskey they use in it. Not necessarily because I know the whiskey beforehand, but because I want to know, what does this whiskey do for a Whiskey Sour, as well? And also know, do they use a sour mix, for example? Because if they do that, I won't order it. Like I want to know... Suzi: Are people still using that? [sour mix] Vincent: Yeah. Probably not in most cocktail bars, but... Suzi: In some places, they probably still do. Vincent: Exactly. Suzi: What is sour mix actually? Vincent: I don't know exactly what it is. It's like this stuff and it makes it fluffy and sour and sweet? Sour mix is instead of taking lemon juice and sugar syrup, it's a... it's a premixed stuff of that. I think. Of course, it's not real lemon juice. I'm pretty sure I've never worked with it myself. I've never seen a bottle of it. But it's like, you know, premixed, factory made. Yeah, fake stuff, right.

SCPs associated premixed, industrial products with bad drinks; drinks made using sour mix and overly sweet drinks were the most named bad/disliked drinks. There is a clear collective sense of dislike of sour mix, associated with its use in the 90's styles of cocktails:

Suzi: ...Then you have like the kind of 90s, neon, sticky, super artificial cocktails. You've got like the appletini...Anna: Ugh. Suzi: the porn star martini...Anna: The Cosmo Suzi: The Cosmo is a huge cocktail of the time, like the appletini, espresso Martini, which just tasted, like, fake as hell back then. The porn star Martini- like the best example of that shit. Anna: Oh, my god.

Around the 2000s, as a reaction to the brightly coloured, sweet, artificially flavoured drinks of the 90s, the craft cocktail movement started. With strong emphasis on good processes, good products, and artisan or in-house-made ingredients used to make classic cocktails, the craft cocktail movement has had a lasting impact on how we drink and what drinks are valued by SCPs; many SCPs I interviewed had views which aligned with the craft cocktail movement. These preferences are mirrored in the interest in 'good food' as viewed by foodies; there is a strong crossover between the culinary and boozy fields, as Lars told me:

... the cocktail bars are just like a few years behind of the food trends. Because like, what's kind of really up in food trends is usually what kind of spirals down and hits the cocktail bar, a little afterwards.

Interestingly enough, while there is a strong dislike of sour mix and other such artificial ingredients, Punch Magazine describes a rising interest in using purified acids instead of fresh citrus juices to use as the sour components in drinks. According to these articles (Dao, 2019; Jaworska, 2017; Newman, 2020; Newman, 2019) reasons for preferring industrial compounds like citric, malic, or tartaric acids over fresh juices are more control over the level of acidity and sustainability. The articles argue that fresh products are more prone to variance in flavour, cost more environmental resources to produce, spoil faster, and create more waste than pure acids. Even the White Lyan team, a highly celebrated now-closed London bar praised for its innovative, sustainability and flavour-driven approach, promoted the use of 'citrus stock'. Perhaps even in industrial, artificial, or fake products the care and deliberation behind the drink, the *raison d'être* of the product, can make a product good even when it is quite removed from its raw ingredients.

As mentioned previously in this section on product-related indicators of goodness, SCPs indicated a strong preference for small-scale, vertically integrated, artisan or DIY products; these are also viewed as being more 'pure'

7.5.2.8 Sustainability: Environmental

My SCPs named environmental sustainability-related indicators of goodness more than social sustainability indicators. Lukas indicated he associates organic products with being better than conventional products, which was seconded by Anna:

"This is where the sustainability comes in for me, I think. Like in terms of like... if I have to have it in my body, I would prefer it to be organic, in terms of things that's been growing outside, at least, like not in terms of like, the spirits and like, that's been heated to a certain point. But like, if I were ever to get like lime zest in my cocktail that's not organic, and just like... it kind of ruins it, right? Because you think about like, what it's been sprayed with?"

Anna associated conventional produce with pollution of her body and didn't have this association with spirits. She reasoned spirits had been distilled and thus heated/purified; this shows how organic is associated with purity, a product indicator of goodness (see above). In this manner, indicators of goodness tended to be intertwined in SCP discourses. Giusi, in contrast to Sarah, does mention whiskey producer Benromach's organic releases; she found the organic certification important also in spirits. Yet Giusi focused more on locality, both as increasing specificity (see above) and to improving environmental drink sustainability by reducing food miles:

"...there are couple of other distilleries popping out, um, Wolfburn is quite, um, sustainable as well, they use- um, they- and also Kilchoman, they try to use as much as they can everything from nearby the distillery, so they have the like 100% Islay with all the products coming from the place, nothing imported. Barley from Islay, water from Islay, yeast from Islay, everything from there."

Giusi manages a niche whiskey bar focusing on high-end single-malt whiskies; she focused more on local, vertically integrated production by distillers. She has little power to change a recipe, making it more sustainable, when most drinks served in the Malt Vault are neat whiskeys; she therefore selects organic whiskey producers. Wouter, similarly, mentioned taking organic certification of Calvados (a French apple brandy with Protected Geographical Indication status) into account. Sarah, Lars, and Mark Emil have more input in developing drinks as (former) bartenders and drink producers. Sarah indicated she liked using local, seasonal produce in drink recipes. Lars, from his experience as both a chef and a bartender, developed drink recipes by asking the kitchen for waste products and building drinks around these waste streams. He thus reduced waste within a venue. This circular, no-waste approach was also employed by Empirical. Mark Emil explained:

"I really want to do a spirit that's based on regenerative agriculture, right? But also, one- in one of these under-utilised species that, farmers need to use? But it's also, don't have a, have a- or in order to regenerate that soil? And that, basically, can survive anything? But also, should be able to... to wield very delicious results...I'm very, very, very excited because it's also very scalable. And it's by pursuing something that is, has a slightly lower price point, where- it's both the, uh, a spirit but you can also take then the, the rest of that constituency and turn it into other things. Right. So, it needs to have a holistic approach. So. Yeah, I think we- you know- our products are, you know, organically certified and it's all of those things, we don't put it on the bottle because I

think that when you talk about good that needs to- in the future of good that needs to be... implicit in any good product, is that of course it's made the right way. Uh, it needs to avoid any sort of environmental, or social, injustice in its making."

Mark Emil associated sustainability and good products with regenerative agriculture, a 'holistic' approach which is similar to zero-waste / circular product and process design, and with organic production. However, where Wouter felt becoming certified as organic would be easy for his very traditional Calvados producers as they had never converted to conventional farming, Mark Emil explained that many of Empirical's suppliers were small producer communities who did not have the means to gain organic certifications. The production methods, and the producer communities' social sustainability, were thus more important to him than the certification.

7.5.2.9 Sustainability: Social

Social sustainability was mentioned markedly less than environmental sustainability. Often when social sustainability of the alcohol industry is considered, focus is laid on the harmful effects of alcohol consumption rather than production (Mialon & McCambridge, 2018). Alternatively, the well-being of SCPs themselves is considered; for example, Sarah shifted to working as a barista in part due to the late hours required for most bartending jobs. Several SCPs spoke about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their social and professional lives. As the hospitality industry was often one of the first industries to be shut down and one of the last to open, COVID-19 had a large impact on SCPs jobs and lives. SCPs who took an activist stance to improve SCP wellbeing were spoken of admiringly. This can be seen as a push towards social sustainability for bartenders. Social sustainability of alcohol production and producing communities has been academically studied, for example in the case of tequila (Bowen & Zapata, 2009), yet it was not named often as an indicator of goodness by the SCPs I interviewed. When discussing good and bad tequila specifically with Vincent, bodily indicators of goodness such a flavour came up, as did social indicators of product goodness such as purity and price. However, no mention was made of social sustainability issues around Tequila production, as found by Bowen and Zapata. This lack of awareness around social sustainability, compared to environmental sustainability, is reflected in the relative unpopularity of FairTrade certification in spirits and cocktails. While FairTrade certification is in no way by the only or best way to improve social sustainability, I use it as a comparison to organic certification; a proxy for 'SCP interest in social sustainability'. FairTrade certified coffee is well-known, with 646 FairTrade coffee brands linked to the online FairTrade USA portal ("Fair Trade Products - Coffee", n.d.). In comparison, 5 'adult-beverage' brands were listed, of which four were producers ("Fair Trade Products - Adult Beverages", n.d.). The fifth brand was Target - and FairTrade liquors, cocktails or other spirits were not found on their website. On the FairTrade international website, wine is named as a leading FairTrade product, yet cocktails or spirits are not ("Fairtrade Products", n.d.). When searching for beverage producers via the World Fair Trade Organization, I found none ("WFTO Supplier Search - Beverages", n.d.). I unfortunately did not manage to find lists of organic certified spirit and cocktail producers. However, the absence of FairTrade certified spirit and cocktail brands plus SCP awareness of organic certified brands, as well as my observations tell a clear story: organic certification is far more common in distilled drinks than FairTrade certification. This aligns with my findings of SCPs being more aware of environmental, than of social sustainability.

7.5.3 Enjoying, Goodness is multiple, situational, relational

7.5.3.1 Temporal aspect

Alexander, a South African/Dutch liquor store owner (Dutch: slijterij) from a hospitality industry family, spoke about how the availability and perception of different drinks changed drastically in the Netherlands after the Second World War.:

“Back then in liquor stores you could find jenever, and not as great a variety as is available now. Perhaps a few ‘exotic’ drinks like classic French drinks; pastis, sherry, port, a few different wines, and that’s all. Locally a few herbal bitters... Post WW2 the drinks landscape started shifting in the Netherlands, in Western Europe, with the variety of drinks offered steadily increasing. The real whisky invasion in the Netherlands got started in the 60’s, 70’s - and if you look at the current popularity of gin, I think that’s something from the last 10 years. 10-15 years ago, as I said earlier, you just had Gordon’s and Bombay, perhaps a lost/misplaced [NL: verdwaalde] Gibson or a Beefeater in a bar, a Brokers, kind of the standard London Dry gins. The same for vodka, in a way; you had Smirnoff and perhaps a misplaced Stolichnaya if someone had been to Eastern Europe, but other than that... I think the transition to mixed drinks, to cocktails, let’s take a wide timeframe; that started around 20-30 years ago. The 60’s-70’s, that time normalised, kind of, everyone doing their own thing. Of course, the hospitality industry has always been innovating, but well, what did you drink at a bar back in the day? A beer, a borreltje [small spirit drink], a Vieux [aged Jenever] and the women drank port, sherry, wine and otherwise another sweet drink. The bitters [e.g., oranjebitter, these are Dutch bittersweet liqueurs], perhaps sometimes a Campari, but - you also had the lemon [aromatized] brandies and lemon jenevers that were generally drunk a lot by ladies. To come back to gendered drinks, as you mentioned. So, you do see- it’s funny to see- the way that that differentiation between masculine and feminine drinks is decreasing over time.

7.5.4 Enjoying, ‘More than just the liquid’

7.5.4.1 Carrier of care

SCPs, especially bartenders and bar managers, emphasised how to them their jobs were fun because of the human interactions happening there. This also led to struggles during the Covid-19 pandemic, as Lars described:

“Yeah, the world’s a weird place at the moment. I’m just looking forward to liking, getting back, and serving people. It’s like, I’ve been a workaholic all my life, like this is the- this has been the worst year of just me being taken away that one thing I enjoy doing (laughs). You know like, at my birthday, my aunt looked at me, was like, like, ‘You gotta be really hard hit’ because like, she knows that like my job, and my hobby, was like the same thing. Like I’ve dedicated like the past decade plus of my life to solely doing this, (laughs) and then someone went ‘Nah, you can’t do it. In any way, shape or form bud.’... It’s like ‘Both of us [Lars and friend/colleague] are workaholics. This is literally the worst’. Like both kind of extroverts, both, like both workaholics, this is- like this is horrendous... I have a very social job.”

As Lars stated in the above quote, for SCPs their jobs become a large part of their social lives, making bar closures during the pandemic an often lonely, frustrating experience. To the SCPs the social aspects of their jobs are what makes it fun. Giusi, when asked why she liked her job, stated:

“... it's a beautiful moment when you can help people finding what they like or, and more on a person-to-person point of view. Like if somebody I don't know come, like this guy, these guys were coming and he was like, 'I will leave the flowers here because I will go and ask my girlfriend if she wants to marry me. And then if we come back, you have to come with the flowers because if we come back, she said yes.' You know, these types of things! And just giving them a very nice and pleasurable evening it's just. It's good. It's beautiful. It's- I like that. It makes you feel human... we are not just there working and being robots and doing things, and then- It's more than that. It's more than that. It's, it's horeca [hospitality]. (laughs) It's, you know, you're welcome to be here, and. It's like, if you were to come to my place, I want you to feel comfortable. I want to offer you, whatever it is that I'm here to offer you and just. Yeah. Have a nice time... it's like when a person cooks for you, in a way. I do see them- I do see the two things in a very similar way. Maybe it's my being from the south of Italy, that I see everything as this nurturing gift, that we do to each other (short laugh).”

Just as Giusi views helping people find drinks they like as a nurturing gift; Sarah viewed the craft and showmanship (showpersonship?) of making drinks (and coffee) as an essential part of the experience of drinking.

Sarah: I think mostly when you get a good cocktail it's about the whole experience, right. So, like, the attention to detail is super important. And, for me, it's like- that's part of what drives me in it because it's like, it's kind of a show you put on and you do a little bit the same with coffee, right? When you stand in front of the customer, and you're preparing it, and they can see the attention to detail that the bartender or the barista puts into it. That's when you know that it's a good drink. And it also adds to the experience of drinking it afterwards. So definitely, that plays a huge [emphasis] part of it, for me. That's also what I really like. Suzi: Yeah? I think it's kind of part of the thought and craftsmanship, right? That you're really making something with consideration. Sarah: Exactly. Suzi: And that it's a, a human interaction. Mediated through a drink. Sarah: Yeah.

7.5.5 Ideas on Goodness:

7.5.5.1 Plato's theory of Forms

Plato argued that we, as people, recognise things by their being a reflection of a platonic ideal version, the Form. We cannot define a cookie, or a chair, but we can recognize a great variety of cookies and chairs. But how do we recognise what is a cookie and what is not? Plato's metaphysics argue that we recognise cookies as cookies because they reflect cookie-ness. They are similar to a shared platonic Form of a cookie. However, we - living humans - cannot fully define and know everything a cookie could possibly be. The Form of cookie is unknowable to living humans. We can only recognise and know cookie-ness by encountering cookies in our life. When we die, our soul passes through the world of Forms, where we come to know platonic ideals of everything that exists. We are then reborn without conscious memory of these Forms but recognise their real-world reflections when we encounter them. In the cookie example: before reincarnating our souls knew cookie-ness through knowing the Form of cookie, so when we encounter cookies in life, we recognise them as cookies.