

What drives Indications of Geographical Origin protection and governance mechanisms in the U.S. and European contexts? A contribution of the social sciences

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Abstract. There are fundamentally two different ways in which Indications of Geographical Origin (IGOs) can be protected. The U.S. approach favors the pre-existing trademark system through collective marks (CMs), while the EU approach favors a maximalist approach via a *sui generis* system which promotes Appellations of Origin (AOs). A consensus however emerges regarding the fundamental protection of origin against misleading, confusing and dilutive uses. Previous literature discusses these competing IGO logics from historical, legal and international trade perspectives. In this paper, we depart from the field of social sciences, in particular from recent advancements in the well-established literature on proximities, in order to provide a reflection on the different logics underpinning the AOs and CMs systems. The extant categories of proximity (geographical, institutional, organizational, social, cognitive and personal) participate in building a ‘logic of belonging’ when interactions stem from shared rules and behavioral routines, or a ‘logic of similarity’, when interactions are facilitated by common representations. Expanding on this taxonomy, an intangible understanding of proximities was recently added via the concepts of ‘shared identity’ and ‘shared vision’ grounded respectively in a logic of belonging and a logic of similarity. We apply this conceptual approach in the context of IGOs, to explore the distinct intangible proximity logics behind AOs and CMs, despite their common objectives. We find that the underlying logics of belonging and similarity of AOs and CMs shape the identity construction processes of wine territories, as well as their respective governance mechanisms. We derive from our conceptual approach an enhanced understanding of different IGO protection systems, while at the same time stressing the untapped potential of introducing social sciences for analyzing the procedural dimension of IGOs.

1. Introduction

There are two different ways in which Indications of Geographical Origin (IGOs) can be protected. The U.S. approach favors the pre-existing trademark system through collective marks (CMs), while the EU approach favors a maximalist approach via a *sui generis* system which promotes Appellations of Origin (AOs). While a consensus emerges regarding the fundamental protection of origin against misleading, confusing and dilutive uses, the different approaches to IGOs can create substantial challenges in trade negotiations. For instance, in the case of trade agreements like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, IGOs were a critical point of discussion. The EU wanted the U.S. to recognize and enforce its IGO protections, while the U.S. pushed back,

arguing that such protections would harm American producers and restrict market access. The issue of IGOs in trade negotiations between the U.S. and the EU highlights broader tensions between different philosophies of intellectual property protection and market regulation. The EU’s emphasis on protecting regional products and their cultural heritage stands in contrast to the U.S.’s focus on market flexibility and consumer choice.

Previous literature discusses these dissimilar IGO logics from historical, and legal perspectives. In this paper, we depart from the field of social sciences, and the well-established literature on proximities, in order to provide a reflection on the different cultures underpinning the AOs and CMs as IGO protection systems. The longstanding tradition of agglomeration economics stresses the role of proximity in its different forms for knowledge spillovers to occur within a given territory. Until recently,

proximities were limited to a tangible understanding comprising geographical, institutional, organizational, social, cognitive and personal dimensions. The literature on proximities' latest advancements have enabled to include an intangible understanding of proximity, complementing the extant categories with the concepts of 'shared identity' and 'shared vision'. Shared identity signals a prevailing 'logic of belonging', when interactions stem from shared rules and behavioral routines. Shared vision is grounded in a 'logic of similarity', when interactions are facilitated by common representations. We apply this conceptual approach in the context of IGOs, to propose that AOs and CMs reflect the distinct intangible proximities that characterized the EU and the U.S. IGO protection systems from their inception.

In line with the analysis of other policy tools, we find that the AO and CM systems can be considered as similar substantive tools (i.e. with consensual objectives) for protecting IGOs, but with dissimilar procedural approaches which influence how they are deployed and calibrated. This 'cultural' dimension of IGO protection can be expressed in terms of intangible proximities: while AOs are inherently 'supply-oriented', reflecting their underlying logic of belonging, CMs are 'demand-oriented', consistently with their logic of similarity. These logics shape the identity construction processes of wine territories, as well as their respective governance mechanisms. We derive from our conceptual approach an enhanced understanding of different IGO protection systems, which enables us to identify both divergent and convergent aspects characterizing wine territories in the U.S. and the EU. At the same time, we stress the untapped potential of introducing social sciences for analyzing the procedural dimension of IGOs.

2. Literature review

2.1. IGO protection in the American and European contexts

Differences in IGO protection between the United States (U.S.) and the European Union (EU) reflect the broader legal and cultural approaches of each region towards intellectual property and market regulation. While in the US, IGO protection is 'demand-oriented' in the sense that it is designed to prevent consumer deception, in the EU it is 'supply-oriented' by placing a high value on the protection of traditional methods and regional heritage.

In the U.S., IGOs are typically protected through collective marks (CMs) under the Trademark Act. CMs are a type of trademark used in the U.S. to indicate that the products or services associated with the mark originate from members of a collective group, organization, or association. These marks serve to identify the collective nature of the group by indicating membership in a trade association, rather than the specific source of the goods or services. CMs are registered with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) under the Lanham Act. The collective itself does not sell goods under a CM. However, it 'may advertise or otherwise promote the

goods or services sold or rendered by its members under the mark' [1]. The collective organization is responsible for controlling the use of the mark by its members to ensure that it meets the collective's standards. CMs therefore provide a collective identity that can be marketed and promoted, benefiting all members and providing a guarantee of quality and consistency to consumers. The U.S. system enables a variety of uses of geographic names, which encourages innovation in branding by allowing businesses to build a reputation around geographic names. However, trademark law combined with unfair competition law provides comprehensive protection against misleading or deceptive uses of geographic names leading to consumer confusion about the origin and quality of the product. The government of a region must control the use of that region's name, preserve the right of all persons, and prevent abuse or illegal use of the mark to which it has given authority. But the U.S. system also allows owners of CMs to take action at the first sign of infringement by a competitor or address unauthorized use.

The EU has established a robust legal framework for protecting appellations of origin (AOs) through various regulations pertaining to the *sui generis* system. The Lisbon Agreement of October 1958 for the Protection of Appellations of Origin and Their International Registration is the international reference for the phrase 'appellations of origin'. Article 2.1 of the Lisbon Agreement states: 'In this Agreement, appellations of origin mean the geographical name of a country, region, or locality, which serves to designate a product originating therein, the quality and characteristics of which are due exclusively or essentially to the geographical environment, including natural and human factors'. The regulation (EU) No 1151/2012 lays down the rules on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, including Protected Designations of Origin (PDOs) and Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs). It provides definitions, protection criteria, and procedures for registration and enforcement. The regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 specifically tackles the common organization of markets in agricultural products, including wine, and details the protection of geographical indications for wines. Producers or groups of producers apply to their national authorities with a detailed product specification, including the name, description, method of production, geographical area, and evidence of the link between the product and its origin. Once the European Commission has reviewed the application and published it in the Official Journal of the European Union, the registered names are protected against misuse, imitation, or evocation. Only products genuinely originating from the designated area and produced according to the specified methods can use the protected name.

IGO protection in the American and European contexts therefore emanates from different legal instruments which differ in terms of scope, level of protection and registration/enforcement. The EU has a more extensive and specific system covering a broader range of products with varying levels of protection, while the U.S. system is more flexible but less detailed. The EU provides higher and more rigorously enforced protection compared to the

U.S. Finally, the EU process involves both national and EU-level authorities, whereas the U.S. system relies on the USPTO with less centralized enforcement.

The wine industry's adoption of IGO systems in Europe and America reveals distinct approaches to appellation management and governance, rooted in their respective regulatory frameworks.

The European model adopts a more defensive stance, emphasizing compliance with stringent standards as a prerequisite for IGO membership. This supply-oriented or product-oriented approach prioritizes strict conformity to appellation specifications. Consequently, wine territorial organizations primarily focus on controlling, enforcing, and establishing standards. While market development is gaining importance, the system's primary concern remains product and producer protection, ensuring the integrity of the *sui generis* system. This explains why wine governing bodies in Europe derive their authority largely from their enforcement capabilities rather than their ability to drive strategic initiatives or market development.

In contrast, the American system embraces a less defensive approach. Here, standards and specifications are tailored to highlight the unique characteristics of the region, enhancing the adherence to the collective identity. Market considerations are invariably a key factor in IGO development, reflecting the free enterprise culture prevalent in regions like California. This perspective extends to North America, including Canada, and to a lesser extent, Mexico. As a result, American wine territorial bodies place less emphasis on enforcing specifications or defensive measures (except in cases of perceived attacks on collective trademarks) and more on market dynamics, team building, and territorial strategy formulation.

These contrasting approaches illuminate the distinctive ways in which appellations are managed on both continents, shaped by their underlying regulatory philosophies and cultural contexts.

2.2. A 'proximities' understanding of territorial identity

The literature on proximities, departing from the seminal works of the French School of Proximity in the early 1990s [2], considers that space should be endogenized within economic theory [3]. The notion of proximity later moved away from this narrow understanding of geographical proximity, to include other types of socially constructed proximities, whether institutional, organizational, social, cognitive or personal [4, 5].

A recent contribution from the authors of this essay [6], expands this taxonomy of proximities to explore the preponderant role of socially constructed proximities in the creation of territorial identity. IGOs, whether demand-oriented as in the case of the U.S. or supply-oriented in the European context, are paramount in the construction of territorial identity. Therefore, the different logics underpinning the distinct legal instruments for IGO protection in the American and European contexts can

benefit from this latest development in the proximities literature.

Grimbert et al. (2023) consider that socially constructed proximities can be discriminated according to their tangible/intangible nature, given their respective influence on the construction of a shared understanding of the basic industrial, technological, social and institutional features of a territory. For example, geographical and institutional proximities are very much tangible as they involve administrative rules, whereas personal and cognitive proximities contain strong intangible aspects due to personal behavioral patterns. To gain further understanding of tangible and intangible proximities, the authors then relied on prior literature which had identified a 'logic of belonging' and a 'logic of similarity' as the 'partly complementary and partly substitutable' [7, p. 49] underlying features of socially constructed proximity. In a logic of belonging, interactions stem from shared rules and behavioral routines, whereas in a logic of similarity, interactions are facilitated by common representations.

Based on this distinction, two novel intangible proximities were introduced to reflect their contribution to territorial identity construction processes. They are labelled 'shared identity' and 'shared vision', respectively anchored in a logic of belonging and a logic of similarity [6, p. 3]. Overtime, a 'shared identity' fosters *convergence* between the members of a territory, by offering a unique set of characteristics recognized and shared by its actors, enabling their identification and acting as a delimitating/differentiating tool. A 'shared vision' leads to increased *adherence* into a collective brand building process that engages the territorial actors towards the expression of a common vision, as a complement to their private trademarks [6, p. 6].

3. Conceptual framework

Legal instruments for IGO protection can be considered alternatively as substantive and procedural policy tools [8, 9, 10, 11], depending on whether they affect outside of an organization (substantive tool) or inside the organization (procedural tool). Bali et al. [12, p. 298] define procedural instruments 'as those policy techniques or mechanisms designed to affect how a policy is formulated and implemented. This includes administrative processes and activities for selecting, deploying, and calibrating substantive tools'.

The *substantive* dimension of IGO protection, aimed at shielding the origin from misleading, confusing and dilutive uses, offers relative consensus in different contexts and is therefore beyond the scope of this essay. However, adopting a *procedural* standpoint to IGO protection holds the potential of enhancing the understanding of how decisions are made, how policies are put into action, and how compliance is ensured in the American and European contexts. We adapt the framework developed by Grimberty et al. (2023) to the context of IGO protection, as depicted in Figure 1 below.

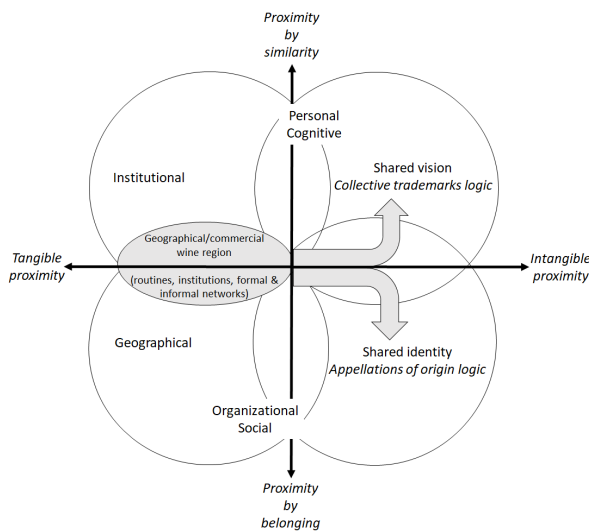


Figure 1. Conceptual approach.

A wine territory can emanate more or less from proximities by belonging (geographical, organizational, social) or proximities by similarity (institutional, personal, cognitive), or a blend of both types of logics of proximity. *Geographical* proximity refers to the physical closeness between two or more locations. *Organizational* proximity concerns the closeness between entities within the same organization or network, typically defined in terms of structural or hierarchical relationships. *Social* proximity represents the closeness between individuals or groups based on social interactions and relationships. This can include friendships, professional networks, or community ties. *Institutional* proximity describes the extent to which entities share similar norms, values, habits, and rules governed by formal and informal institutions. *Personal* proximity involves the emotional closeness or personal bond between individuals. *Cognitive* proximity is defined as the closeness in the way individuals or groups think or understand the world, including shared knowledge, beliefs, and technical skills.

AOs and CMs are pure intangibles since they represent non-physical assets in the form of legal designations that hold significant economic value due to the reputation, quality, and public perception associated with them. They reflect the tangible attributes of a wine territory into an intangible understanding of proximities. If a wine territory is strongly grounded in a logic of belonging/similarity in terms of tangible proximity, the same logic is mirrored as regards its intangible counterpart. As a result, the American and European IGO protections are emanations of their tangible distinctiveness.

Proximity by similarity. In the U.S., the administrative intervention of the USPTO does not take into consideration the characteristics of the producers or of the product beyond how the sign (the CM) is perceived by the public. Given the liberal approach of the U.S. trademark law, according to which nobody can claim an exclusive right over a geographical name, the geographic term must come to be recognized by the public as identifying the goods or services of a particular source, rather than merely describing their geographic origin (*cognitive proximity*). Notably, the U.S. makes limited use of a *sui generis* system

for wine AOs in the form of American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) under the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. Historical AVAs such as ‘Napa Valley’ have developed into several sub-AVAs with unique variations in climate, elevation, and soil types, which significantly impact the wine produced in those areas. For example, in the case of the ‘Paso Robles’ CM, the extensive legal and regulatory journey to delineate the borders of the new sub-AVAs involved climatologists, geographers, and geologists who provided critical data. The reason is that, while the EU AO regime requires a detailed product specification following a strict legal template, in the U.S. system, the exact content of the specification is left entirely to the applicant (*cognitive and personal proximities*). In addition, the CM approach is a protection system based upon a private tool involving the self-policing of private rights and interests, in the sense that CM owners are responsible for regulating the use of their trademarks (*institutional proximity*). For example, a vintner that is a member of a collective owning a CM can use it as long as the requirements for the membership of the collective are met (*cognitive and personal proximities*). Therefore, CMs are considered a more flexible, less intrusive from the State and business-friendly device than AOs.

Proximity by belonging. The EU AO system unequivocally bases the legal protection on a one-to-one correspondence between the product and the physical characteristics of the place - also known as *terroir* - defined as a geographical area with its own geological, agronomical, and climatic characteristics (*geographical proximity*), as well as particular human traditions in order to get the best from the land. The proof of the existence of a traditional technical know-how linked to the geographical area constitutes a historical element in AOs used to establish a link between product and place (*social proximity*). Besides, the functioning of the *sui generis* system requires the involvement of several public administrations, both national authorities and the competent unit of the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the EU Commission. The intervention of this public bureaucratic system is justified in two ways: first, AOs do not have a specific owner but only users within an organization responsible for the application (*organizational proximity*), therefore public authorities ensure the monitoring and the enforcement of the rights conferred. Second, as expressed in the Preamble of Regulation 1151/2012, AOs are meant to serve superior goals regardless the national/local institutional setting, such as the promotion of agricultural diversity and the fostering of rural development.

4. Discussion

Our conceptual framework sheds new light on IGO protection and governance mechanisms in the American and European contexts, by considering that their procedural differences can be understood through the lenses of proximity. In the following section, we discuss the traditional supply- vs demand- orientation divide in terms of intangible proximities, and the implications in

terms of IGO governance mechanisms and IGO protection in international trade negotiations.

4.1. Supply- and demand-orientation as intangible proximities

As expressed earlier, EU IGO protection reflects strong cultural emphasis on preserving tradition, heritage, and the local specificity of food products. In the U.S., the culture underlying IGO protection is more consumer- and innovation-driven, where the emphasis is often on product innovation, branding, and marketing strategies rather than geographical origin. Translated in terms of proximities, this 'cultural' dimension of IGO protection can be mirrored by the intangible proximities developed in our conceptual framework.

The logic of similarity, anchored in common representations, leads to territorial actors expressing a *shared vision* through a collective brand building process. Implicitly, the construction of such a territorial identity is customer-driven as exemplified by the Napa Valley success story. Originally, after the first commercial vineyard was planted in 1858, the Napa Valley produced cabernets and chardonnays on relatively small vineyards owned by families. In the early 1940s, the Napa Valley Vintners Association began to discuss common production issues and later to promote Napa wines, formalizing cooperation efforts. The Association, then composed of seven wineries, radically altered the techniques used in the production and the marketing of California wines, promoting Napa's reds and whites as world-class wines good enough to compete with their European counterparts. By the 1970s, Napa wines had elevated themselves into the premium wine market, under the well-known impulse of Mondavi and his colleagues, whose tireless promotion changed perceptions among the American population about the quality of California wines as compared to European ones. In the words of Hira [13, p. 67]: pioneers such as Gallo and Mondavi 'seemed to share a vision of something that did not exist yet'. Personal interactions were therefore central to Napa Valley's competitive advantage, with the efforts of a handful of entrepreneurs working together to build technological and commercial leadership. As Hira and Swartz express, Napa Valley has built a 'reputational capital, as more wineries see the benefit of collective action' [14, p. 48] by relying on strong organizations, well connected with their members, which have contributed to maintain low transaction costs. The Napa Valley Vintners, as the primary wine industry organization in Napa, displaying a 99% membership rate, focuses on maintaining a strong yet delicate sense of similarity. Among their main goals, two stand out as particularly significant: (1) Positioning and championing Napa as a world-leading wine region and (2) Providing leadership to address and resolve wine community issues. In addition to these objectives, the organization consistently invests in member engagement. This involves disseminating the core elements of their shared vision and encouraging its continuous evolution, with a particular emphasis on involving the next generation of industry leaders. This approach ensures that the collective vision

remains dynamic and relevant, adapting to the changing landscape of the wine industry while preserving Napa's status and fostering a cohesive, forward-thinking wine community. In proximity terms, the original personal and cognitive proximity of a few pioneers have acted as the foundation of an institutional proximity grounded in a shared vision for the region.

Conversely, the logic of belonging, stemming from shared rules, creates a *shared identity* among territorial actors identifying themselves to a unique set of recognized characteristics. Here, territorial identity construction is mostly supply-driven, aiming to preserve traditional production methods, ensure economic benefits for local producers, maintain high quality and authenticity, and prevent fraudulent use of geographical names. In the EU, IGO protection has been used as a tool to maintain regional cultural heritage and to support rural economies by promoting local products, thereby helping to sustain local communities and preventing rural depopulation. *Sui generis* systems are therefore more preoccupied with defining methods of production and facilitating supply chain coordination than preserving the coherence of the sign in the marketplace, as is the case the U.S. trademark law. A sustainable production model, with product specifications designed to respect local know-how, with an inclusive coverage of the supply chain, and with the sustainability of local resources in mind, is complemented by marketing supported by public policy interventions. While the EU IGO protection system effectively verifies the attributes of origin, quality and authenticity, it is assumed that such attributes are being conveyed to consumers by acting as a credible signal in the marketplace. In proximity terms, geographical and social proximity are conveyed by organizations who govern IGOs to promote a marketable shared identity acting as a delimitating tool.

4.2. Historical and Cultural Influences on U.S. and EU Wine Governance Systems

From a corporate strategic perspective, the disparities in IGO application and protection between the U.S. and EU reflect distinct organizational and cultural approaches towards governance and operational systems, rooted in their historical logics of proximity.

From its inception, the U.S. system, characterized by its 'demand-oriented' approach, has prioritized market considerations and necessitated agile, responsive management. Its organizational culture centers on meeting members' and communities' expectations. While these elements are not absent in the European system, they were not originally integral to the governance culture, which primarily focused on regulatory definition and guideline defense [15].

This fundamental cultural distinction explains the persistent differences in approaching IGO issues. In Anglo-Saxon cultures such as the U.S., Canada, and Australia, territorial industry governance is typically managed by privately funded organizations with voluntary membership. This model necessitates a focus on member

satisfaction and engagement with business issues. While this non-compulsory system has potential drawbacks, particularly during periods of low membership, it underscores the cultural divergence between the two approaches.

In contrast, the European model requires compliance with rules and regulations as a prerequisite for participation in the territorial governance system. From a stakeholder perspective, this represents a markedly different cultural approach. Furthermore, in Europe, industry organizations tend to internalize aspects of viticulture and enology, either by fully integrating R&D components or by dedicating staff to these activities in partnership with selected institutions. While collaborations with research institutes exist in the U.S. system, R&D is not typically considered a core activity of such wine organizations, leaving these responsibilities primarily to university laboratories.

This cultural gap highlights a dichotomy: on one side, a culture emphasizing adaptability, innovation, and empowerment to promote a *shared vision*; on the other, a culture historically focused on error elimination, consistency, and replicability of a *shared identity*. As strategic management theory suggests, culture significantly influences organizational structure and management style [16]. The demand-oriented approach of the U.S. system encourages rapid directional changes, reduced bureaucracy, and risk-taking in pursuit of innovation.

The distinct cultural and organizational approaches of the U.S. and EU wine governance systems lead to divergent strategic goals, despite their shared fundamental objective of ensuring wine territory competitiveness. The U.S. system's market-driven, flexible approach contrasts with the EU's regulatory-focused, standardized model. These differences shape how each system addresses challenges, pursues opportunities, and ultimately strives to maintain the competitive edge of their respective wine territories. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for effective cross-cultural collaboration and for developing strategies that leverage the strengths of each approach in the global wine market.

4.3. International trade negotiations: from divergence to convergence

Considering the procedural implications, for IGO protection, of the distinct tangible and intangible proximities between the U.S. and the EU, also explains why it tends to be a contentious point in trade negotiations. Both the U.S. and the EU, as members of the World Trade Organization, have agreed on the general definition of Geographical Indications (GIs) provided by Art 22(1) in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs): ‘Geographical Indications are, [...] indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a Member, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin’. Furthermore, the TRIPs Agreement

provides a specific rule, under Art 23(1) to grant wines and spirits a higher level of protection, even in cases where no confusion or deception may arise.

While this agreement reflects the consensus around the *substantive* nature of IGO protection against confusion, unfair competition, false indications and free riding, latitude is given for the *procedural* aspects of IGO protection. It leaves the door open to different approaches and makes the contrasting views between the U.S. and the EU, based on their systems, clearly understandable. In particular, the procedural specificities of IGO protection in the American and European contexts are reflected in their trade negotiations with third parties.

On the one hand, the EU incorporates, in its Free Trade Agreements, the IGOs that it would like its treaty parties to protect, in exchange for the protection of their IGOs in the EU, thereby guaranteeing authenticity of products, safeguarding cultural heritage and stimulating rural development. The European Union's strategic integration of GIs into trade negotiations reflects a broader diplomatic agenda. This approach not only demonstrates the EU's commitment to protecting and promoting its cultural and economic assets but also serves as a tool for expanding its influence in global trade relations. As Josling [17] argues on the politics of geographical indications, the EU's promotion of GIs in international forums has been part of a concerted effort to establish a global system of protection for these designations.

This strategy extends beyond mere trade facilitation; it represents a calculated move to export the GI concept to commercial partners worldwide. The EU's diplomatic network actively advocates for the benefits of GIs to both existing and potential partners. This persistent promotion is underpinned by the recognition that harmonization of intellectual property standards, including GIs, serves as both a facilitator and a prerequisite for smooth trade relations. Consequently, the EU views the exportation of the GI concept as a critical component of its trade strategy, aiming to create a more favorable global environment for European products and to reinforce its position in international markets.

On the other hand, the U.S. incorporates IGO protection via CMs in its Free Trade Agreements, stressing that this method is a precondition for innovation and competition within global trade unlike protectionist, trade-restrictive devices such as AOs. The differing positions of the U.S. and the EU are a reflection of their underlying logics of similarity and belonging: the commercial use of names in a leveled playing field, promoted by the former, collides with the cultural use of names building on *acquis communautaires* encouraged by the latter.

However, examining the procedural facet of IGO protection also evidences that some dimensions of proximity examined earlier can represent possible convergence points between the U.S. and the EU. In the European IGO protection scheme, the existence of PGIs to complement PDOs serves to relax geographical and social proximity in favor of institutional proximity. As stated earlier, PDOs must demonstrate geographical and social

proximity to a place. But the PGI quality scheme admits that the origin link can be established with elements that do not attempt to make a physical link between a product and its place of origin, but rather prove a link based on market reputation and the historical element. According to the reputational link, a product is related to a specific area if consumers associate the product with its geographical name. The historical element expresses how the history of a product links its image to a specific place and not to another. In both cases, the link is established through the notion of common representations, typical of the logic of similarity. The product is expected to share the norms and values associated with a place, and this should be understood by the marketplace. Interestingly, the PGI is already the predominant quality scheme in the EU and, over the last ten years, it has been preferred also by countries with a strong PDO tradition.

Conversely, American Viticulture Areas (AVAs), which designate zones with certain physical features and a certain degree of homogeneity, embody a growing recognition of the concept of *terroir* in the U.S. as well [18]. Since the 1990s, the originally rudimentary AVA system has shifted towards a more rigorous analysis of the geographical data to ensure coherent natural characteristics. As a result, there is a recent proliferation of sub-AVAs displaying increasingly stringent standards and recalling the EU regime of protection by demonstrating a logic of belonging. Besides, AVAs are based on public intervention and investment for reaching public goals in a way that procedurally evokes European IGO protection, demonstrating the shift of elements of U.S. IGO protection towards geographical and organizational proximity.

5. Concluding remarks

The conceptual approach to IGO protection systems developed in this essay calls for further validation in different contexts. In particular, a comparative case study between emblematic American and European wine territories could enhance our understanding of their respective logics of proximity. An interesting research avenue could also consider the challenges posed to international wine region alliances in shaping a regulatory environment that concomitantly protects wine origins and promotes fair competition, through the lenses of intangible proximities as suggested here.

For example, the Wine Origins Alliance (WOA), a unified coalition in the global wine industry, includes many renowned American and European wine regions such as Champagne, Napa Valley, Jerez, Willamette, Porto, among others, working together within the Alliance to advance common goals and protect their singular wine identities. Such a global network of cooperation presents a unique opportunity to observe how territories with competing logics of proximity must navigate their procedural distinctiveness in terms of IGO protection to reach common substantive goals.

6. References

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