

Austrian Beer Makers and *Slow Brewing*: A Global Movement Fostering Local Commitment?

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DOI 10.18267/pr.2024.vol.2512.2

Abstract: *Slow Brewing* is a quality label for beer, distinguishing brewers in several European countries like Austria. This brewing method seems related to the Slow Food movement, launched in Rome in 1986 by Carlo Petrini. From a local protest action against the fast-food industry and the disappearance of local food traditions, it has become a global movement. From 2012, four Austrian brewers have been awarded the seal of *Slow Brewing*, which is meant to guarantee greater product quality and better taste. *Slow Brewing*, however, is not limited to the certification of beer quality, but also refers to the respect of ecological sustainability, participatory corporate climate, and professional and human development of employees. The results of the study show that the Austrian Slow Brewers borrow narratives from the Slow Food ideology, but that they also follow their own philosophy, adapted to local challenges. This article is the first academic study about *Slow Brewing*.

Keywords: Austrian beer, citizen-consumer, local commitment, slow brewing, slow food, sustainability

JEL Classification codes : L66 ; Q01 ; Q50

INTRODUCTION

Slow Brewing is a quality label for beer (Slow Brewing Institute), distinguishing 31 brewers in European countries like Austria, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. It signifies an evaluation process precisely defined, the same for all breweries. To qualify for the Quality Seal, „a beer should exhibit consistently superior flavour and character, the raw materials must be of the highest quality and the production process must adhere to strict standards.“ The *Slow Brewing* Quality Seal is nevertheless not limited to the certification of beer quality, but also refers to the respect of ecological sustainability, participatory corporate climate, and professional and human development of employees.

The evaluation is performed by auditors of the Slow Brewing Institute, and the quality and flavours of the products are analysed by the Weihenstephan Research Center for Brewing and Food Quality at the TU Munich. To guarantee the strict compliance with regulations and quality criteria, the assessment of the company takes place annually, beer quality is tested every month.

Slow Brewing seems to be focused on the factor of *time*. („Simply taking the time necessary to brew beer well is fundamental to the philosophy of *Slow Brewing*“ (Slow Brewing Institute) and distinguishes itself from accelerated industrial mass production. Since 2012, four Austrian

brewers have been awarded the seal of *Slow Brewing*, which is meant to guarantee greater product quality and better taste. Their companies are dispatched in three Austrian regions: the city and the region of Salzburg (Stiegl, Trumer), Carinthia (Hirter) and Upper Austria (Braucommune Freistadt).

This paper will study the impact of time on beer brewing, and the consumption of beer and food in locations linked with the breweries, and further explore how regional anchoring and traditional brewing methods answer global challenges like sustainability and citizen-consumer requirements. It will further examine if, and how the aims of *Slow Brewing* could be compared with the Slow Food philosophy.

The present article is a socio-semiotic investigation of the narratives of Austrian beer brewers. It is an empirical study based on a qualitative survey with semi-structured interviews and analyses of the company websites and firm documents¹.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

No peer-reviewed academic research articles about *Slow Brewing* have been published yet but given that the websites of the four Austrian breweries practicing *Slow Brewing* reveal certain similarities with the Slow Food movement, this paper will be based on research about Slow Food.

In the 20th century, Europe experienced profound transformations in the food sector, particularly starting in the 1960s. The spread of supermarkets, the rise of mass production, and increased standards of wages and living have led to new forms of consumption (Fontefrancesco 2018). Industrial products became not only fashionable and cheaper but were also considered less risky than artisanal products (ibid.; see also Roberts, 2006). This trend in the worldwide foodscape resulted in a „globalization and standardization of taste” and a positioning of the agrifood industry between „profitability and productivity” (ibid.; see also Begin, 2016). In the late 1980s however, a new interest for local products emerged, particularly in Italy, driven by the Slow Food movement which was popularized by the journalist and activist Carlo Petrini. Within the space of thirty years, Slow Food „expanded into a global grassroots organization” with more than 10,000 members and 1,500 local Presidia in over 160 countries (Fontefrancesco 2018). The engagement against „McDonaldisation” and the commitment to „good,” tasty, and healthy food, „clean” production with a reduced environmental footprint, and „fair” prices and working conditions became the key commitment of the Slow Food movement (Fontefrancesco 2018).

An important step of its development was Petrini’s conference called *At the Table with the Italian Communist Party*, and his inaugural address in favour of „honesty and authenticity at the table” (Miroso et al., 2011). It cannot be happenstance that the *Slow Food Manifesto* was written and presented in Paris in 1989, the year of the bicentennial of the French Revolution. For Slow Food activists, it seemed possible that superior quality cuisine would be available to the masses. In the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, the Slow Food members realized that some products as well as their producers were „in danger of extinction” (Miroso et al. 2021). They created the *Ark*, „built on the biblical metaphor of Noah’s Ark which would save traditional and rare food species from the big flood of industrial foods” (ibid.).

¹ To facilitate reading, the German quotations are directly translated into English

With the establishment of a world meeting of food communities, called *Terra Madre* (2004), ethical issues for agriculture (sustainability, biodiversity, fair trade) and gastronomy were moved into the foreground, and key strategies to strengthen producers' organization and establish links between producers and consumers, „to preserve local traditional breeds, varieties, landscapes and practices in Presidia" were formulated (Mariani et al. 2021).

The movement's self-identity developed from Italian focused to internationally focused (Miroso et al. 2021), but wanted to „revive and preserve traditional methods of food preparation", to build „communal relationships between various stakeholders" (Chaudhury & Albinsson 2015), and to take „the time and making the effort of preparing meals from scratch, savouring nuances and flavours at a leisurely pace in a communal setting"). Food became more than a „simple product to be *consumed*: it is happiness, identity, culture, pleasure, conviviality, local economy, survival" (Chaudhury & Albinsson, *ibid.*).

The ethical perspective of food production and consumption is an important aspect of Slow Food. Williams et al. (2015) investigate the motives and experiences of people attending a Slow Food festival in Melbourne, Australia and determine that the appeal of such events for the participants is to mutually satisfy consumers' self-interest as well as altruistic concerns. Three key themes arise from their investigations: The search of people for virtuous lifestyles, the significance of co-production, and ethical consumer principles in everyday life. There is also the desire of participants to learn more about both the origins of food and their production methods and their political impact, better food quality, new tastes and health advantages. The support of local producers is part of the ethical commitment.

Several members of the Slow Food movement want to enjoy the simple pleasures of eating and drinking local produce in sharing some „homespun philosophies", whereas the movement itself has more ambitious goals (Jones et al., 2003), and is looking for a „citizen-consumer", practising consumption „with an eye towards the „greater good" linking „consumption and citizenship" in everyday life (Chaudhury & Albinsson, 2015). Food becomes more globally „politicized" including a large number of stakeholders like „farmers, lawmakers, public institutions, medical experts, retailers, manufacturers, communities, and consumers". Other researchers (Thompson & Kumar, 2022) equally scrutinize the role of the socially responsible consumer, expected to make the world better and fight against climate change. However, they criticize the fact that „political consumerism" is often falsely considered an efficient way to tackle environmental destruction and socio-economic disparity. They conducted 19 in-depth interviews with 19 participants of the Slow Food movement such as past and present chapter leaders, peripheral and low-income participants, and associate food producers (2022). Their interviews reveal that consumer accountability is „not regarded as a sufficient response to environmental crises," that ethical consumption is an elitist concept, and that consuming ethical goods can give consumers the impression that they are already doing enough regarding sustainability." The researchers further ascertain that Slow Food sometimes uses a nostalgic presentation of pre-modern traditions to conceive an alternative present.

We encounter other critical voices about food activists in Italy, and how food and language are used to construct meaning and value (Counihan, 2021). In studying the text of a menu prepared for a restaurant dinner for delegates to the Slow Food National Chapter Assembly in 2009, Counihan wonders what kind of activism could be promoted by these gastronomic meetings, and how the goals of good, clean, and fair could be attained. She concedes that the meal appealed to all senses, but regrets that foreign or „ethnic dishes, ingredients or spices, with the exception of black pepper" were absent, and asks herself how such events could reinforce food democracy and develop critical consciousness.

2 METHODOLOGY

At the beginning of the research, investigations included the search of websites of beer brewers practicing *Slow Brewing*, and it could be ascertained that in Europe there are 31 Slow Brewers, four of which in Austria. It was not possible to determine if Slow Brewers also work on other continents, but all interlocutors confirmed that *Slow Brewing* does not yet exist outside Europe. The study of the Slow Brewing Institute website gave detailed insights in the assessment criteria and processes for the obtention of the *Slow Brewing* Quality Seal, and the platform Trip Advisor provided precious indications about consumer aims and satisfaction.

In a second step, information on the internet allowed a familiarization with the philosophy of the Slow Food movement, the website of Slow Food Austria, and an E-mail exchange with the head of Slow Food Austria, and finally, the research on the EBSCO platform and on the internet gave access to academic papers about Slow Food and other sectors such as slow tourism, slow money, etc.

To the best of our knowledge, to date, there have been no academic publications about *Slow Brewing*. The present research will therefore study Slow Food theories to better understand the aims and functioning of *Slow Brewing*. It is part of a socio-semiotic investigation of the narratives (Bartel and Garud, 2009; Rinallo, 2020) of the four Austrian beer brewers awarded with the *Slow Brewing* Quality Seal. The study is based on a qualitative survey (Almeida et al. 2017) with semi-structured interviews, analysis of Slow Brewers' websites, Slow Brewing Institute and Slow Food websites and corporate documents, E-mail exchanges, videos, and the study of press articles. The research questions are:

1. To what extent do regional anchoring and traditional brewing methods answer global challenges like sustainability?
2. Can we consider Slow Brewing to be related to the Slow Food movement?

To treat these questions, the four Austrian beer brewers, the head of Slow Food Austria and the founder of the Slow Brewing Institute were contacted by E-mail. Three of the Slow Brewers (Freistädter Braucommune, Trumer Privatbrauerei and Hirter Privatbrauerei) responded positively, Stiegl Privatbrauerei, the largest of the four breweries, established the contact with the founder of the Slow Brewing Institute, but did not answer the questions itself. The three semi-structured interviews were conducted in February and March 2024 via the Teams and Zoom platforms and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The founder of the Slow Brewing Institute sent a detailed written response to the questionnaire. The interviews focused on three general themes and were all recorded and transcribed. The topics covered were:

1. *Slow Brewing* and Slow Food
2. The impact of time on traditional beer brewing and food consumption
3. Local anchorage as prerequisite for sustainability

Tab. 1 Interview Table

Company	Interlocutor (code)	Date	Duration
Braucommune Freistadt	Int 1	16/02/2024	60'

Hirter Privatbrauerei	Int 4	04/03/2024	60'
Slow Brewing Institute	Int 3	25/02/ 2024	Written responses to the questionnaire
Slow Food Austria	-	14/02/ 2024	E-mail exchange
Stiegl Privatbrauerei	Int 5	11/04/2024	Written responses to the questionnaire
Trumer Privatbrauerei	Int 2	16/02/2024	45'

Source: Semi-structured interviews and E-mail exchanges conducted from February to April 2024 (alphabetical order of companies, chronological encoding of the interview numbers)

For the data analysis, the narratives of the semi-structured interviews were scrutinized and compared question by question, while always focusing on the goal of answering the two research questions. The narratives of the company websites (with their restaurants), particularly based on selected data about food and time, in accordance with the Slow Food philosophy, were juxtaposed with each other, thereby providing an opportunity to more deeply analyze the *Slow Brewing* philosophy, beyond the official qualification criteria imposed by the *Slow Brewing* quality label. These data were completed by the analysis of visual and linguistic narratives of the Slow Brewers, represented in the form of logos, supplying insights in local anchoring, and historically based motivation for the local commitment. The most relevant data were synthesized in tables and reproduced in quotations in the 'Results' and 'Discussion' chapters.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Slow Brewing

It can be determined that in Austria the idea of *Slow Brewing* began with the founding of the *Slow Brewing* association in 2011. Since then, the core idea of „the best beer quality without compromise“ (Slow Brewing Institute, Int 4) has continued to develop until the creation of the „Quality Seal for Beer“, still applied to the current certifications. Slow Brewers are independent breweries, sharing a set of common fundamental values. They form „an entity with common ideals“ and „like to meet, exchange ideas and information and decide as a group“ (Int 4). The four certified Slow Brewers were awarded with the Quality Seal from 2012 on. They are well-known traditional private breweries (Privatbrauereien) with a long history, established in the country between the 13th and the 17th century, one in a regional capital, three in smaller towns.

Tab. 2 Austrian Slow Brewers (alphabetical order)

	Braucommune Freistadt	Hirter Privatbrauerei	Stiegl Privatbrauerei	Trumer Privatbrauerei
Year of foundation	1363	1270	1492	1601
Year <i>Slow Brewing</i>	2017	2013	2013	2012

Quality Seal awarded				
Head Office location	Freistadt (Upper Austria)	Hirt/Micheldorf (Carinthia)	Salzburg (city)	Obertrum (Salzburg region)

Source: Company websites (table realized by the author)

The Slow Brewing Institute emphasizes the assets of *Slow Brewing* what means that „Fewer fermentation by-products are created when the beer is brewed at a slower pace, that is, over the course of unhurried fermentation, maturation and lagering processes” (Slow Brewing Institute; Int 4). At Hirter private brewery, „each beer is brewed according to its own recipe and composition and, after a long maturing period, is preserved using double filtration” (Hirter Bier; Int 3). Trumer private brewery and Braucommune Freistadt emphasize „longer maturing times, colder fermentation temperatures,” and no high gravity brewing (Int 1 and 2). Consumers can be assured that the beer they purchase „is held to high standards of quality and has an excellent flavor” and „has been brewed in a fair-minded and conscientious manner” (Hirter Bier). Slow Brewers equally guarantee „sustainability and environmental practices in their respective regions” (Int 3). *Slow Brewing* certified beers promise „enjoyment and convey a positive feeling” (Int 1, Int 3), and „increase beer lovers’ quality of life with their exceptional beer and mindful business practices rooted in integrity” (Int 1). They treat employees fairly and honestly and always keep in mind future generations (Int 1 and 2).

3.1.2. Slow Brewers’ restaurants

The four Slow Brewers not only manage their breweries, but also run regional restaurants. Two of them openly display links with the Slow Food movement: Stiegl is partner of Slow Food Salzburg, and Hirter has been awarded with four Slow Food Snails (as recognition for the respect of high food quality) (Int 3). It will be interesting to study the narratives of the restaurants of the four Austrian Slow Brewers and identify, how their philosophy resembles the Slow Food movement. The following table presents the characteristics and philosophy of the restaurants, regionality and sustainability of the provided food and the assorted beer, and the factor „time” in its different dimensions.

Tab. 3 Slow Brewers and their restaurants

	Braucommune Freistadt	Hirter Privatbrauerei	Stiegl Privatbrauerei	Trumer Privatbrauerei
Restaurant/Name	Freistädter Brauhaus	Hirter Braukeller	Stiegl-Gut Wildshut (Krämerladen Wildshut)	Trumerei (since 2014, now leased out);
Location	Freistadt (Upper Austria)	Micheldorf (Carinthia)	Close to the city of Salzburg	A <i>city dependence</i> in Salzburg
Characteristics of the restaurant	Very regional, beer garden	One of the most traditional restaurants in all of Carinthia.	A combination of farm estate and brewery near the Salzburg state border, and Austria’s first beer farm (own organic farm);	A new mix of craft-beer bar and Trumer beershop. A free space that embodies an open spirit.

			circular economy: use of old wood from the brewery for the restaurant floor etc.)	
Food +beer	Lunch menu/one vegetarian menu, seasonal menu monthly dinner: beer meets cuisine; regional farm products.	Regionality =important for the raw materials. Varietal diversity of barley and beer. Nature is the cornerstone of all their beer products.	Exclusively organic food. Tasty and precious food; use of heirloom grain varieties; organic beer to go with the dishes; food from nature, according to the seasons, from farmers in the surrounding area; preservation of the diversity of regional flavors.	„Globally local” cuisine, boundless regional cuisine, vegetarian cuisine; the taste of the regions, regional identity, homeland in the beers.
Philosophy	Common Good Balance Sheet (a good life for all living beings and the planet: human dignity, solidarity and justice, ecological sustainability, transparency and consensus.	Hirt Manifesto: Real life, real pleasure, real beer. Regionality and sustainability are important to us; the world belongs to those who enjoy it (Giacomo Leopardi); awarded with 4 Slow Food snails (Slow Food Travel Guide)	Partner and sponsor of Slow Food Salzburg: conscious enjoyment of natural and sustainable products from the region. A sense of responsibility, health and environmental awareness. Slow brewing = synonym for pleasure, the art of enjoying life.	Common Good Balance Sheet. Beers that are a declaration of love for life and that make us feel alive. Philosophy of <i>generational thinking</i> . „Einfach leben („live simply”) - the gastro- philosophical forum.
Time factor	We give our beer the time to mature. Brewed slowly, enjoyed quickly. Never a <i>Turbo beer</i> . Acting in the now, thinking about tomorrow. We don't think in trimesters but in generations. A future worth living	<i>Herbstkult</i> (autumn worship) beer speciality = only limited availability.	We take time for the production of food and for enjoying it. Time is our fifth ingredient. Take your time, get in touch with what's on the plate; the clocks function fundamentally differently here;	More time to age. Good beer takes time. Today's beer for tomorrow. A slower life starts with slower brewing. ...take time to consciously enjoy it. A culture for people who take the time.

	for future generations		one deliberately renounces Wifi.	
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Source: Company websites (table realized by the author)

3.1.3. The logos, expression of regional anchoring and local commitment

After processing the outcomes resulting from the interviews and analyzing the self-portrayals of the companies on their websites, the study of their logos provides further insightful information for the paper. In fact, names, calligraphy, slogans, colors, visuals, and dates may be relevant indicators for their self-presentation. This chapter will therefore first present the company logos in the context of regional anchoring, and then evoke some evidence for the local commitment of the Slow Brewers.

Illustration 1: Logo of Freistädter Bier



Source: <https://www.freistaedter-bier.at/>

Above the name of the brewery „Freistädter Bier“, written in green in traditional font (symbolizing the green landscape of the Mühlviertel, where the brewery is located), we can find the coat of arms of the city of Freistadt represented in the red-white-red bandage shield of the ancient dynasty of the House of Babenberg (today still the colors of the Austrian flag). The brewery itself gives explanations about its logo and the role of the regional origin and local roots: „Our myth has roots, and these are inextricably linked to our brewery in Freistadt“, and „We are committed to the Brau-Commune historic site (Freistädter Bier).“

Illustration 2: Logo of Hirter Bier



Source: <https://www.hirterbier.at/hirter-gruppe/logo-download>

Hirter also uses traditional calligraphy and insists on „Real Passion“ (Echte Leidenschaft) for its beer. As proof of longevity, it specifies its founding year (1270), and places in the center the bishop's coat of arms of the diocese of Gurk, where Hirter brewery was first mentioned in a document (about 70 kilometers far from the current company headquarters in Carinthia). In this context, the purple color of the background can be considered as a liturgical color and reference to the role monasteries played for beer brewing in history. Note that the German word „Hirt“ means shepherd, an allusion to the rural origins where the firm is located, as well as to the biblical „guter Hirte,“ the „good shepherd.“

Illustration 3: Logo of Stiegl Bier



Source: <https://www.stiegl.at/en/the-brewery/service/media-downloads/>

Also here, ancient calligraphy has been conserved. Above the name, Stiegl emphasizes its origins in Salzburg, ancient residence of prince-archbishops. The steps below symbolize the old brewery restaurant in Salzburg „Haus Bey der Stiegen“ (house by the stairs), and the name „Stiegl“ simply means little stairs, the stairs which, in former times, led from the brewery down to the Almkanal, where the brewery got its water supply for brewing. The characteristic traditional red color is called „Stiegl Rot“.

Illustration 4: Logos of Trumer Pils



Source: <https://untappd.com/TrumerPrivatbrauerei>

Trumer has two logos, one for the Obertrumer product range, and one for the Pils line (Int 2). Both of them show a smiling waitress with curly hair, dressed in a typical Austrian Dirndl dress, carrying two big beer mugs with plenty of foam (designed in 1934 by the famous German poster and graphic designer Ludwig Hohlwein for the grandfather of the current CEO). The foundation date (1601) is mentioned on both of them, and the name of the beer and the company is added in a traditional writing for the Obertrumer line, the regional line, and in a larger and more modern print style for Trumer Pils, the international product line (Int 2).

When we compare the logos of the four Slow Brewers, we find several common denominators, demonstrating the regional anchoring with their Austrian roots (Freistädter), and their efforts for the preservation of the region and traditional products. The century-old existence of the breweries quoted in the logos (Hirter, Trumer), the reliance on Christian founding documents (Hirter), the reference to former brewery buildings (Stiegl), or the recourse to the drawing of a traditionally-dressed waitress (Trumer) convey the impression of continuity and stability, and seem to be intended to procure a sensation of happiness, pleasure and conviviality, as advocated both by the Slow Food and the *Slow Brewing* philosophy. The logos can therefore be considered as a connecting link between the global Slow Food ideology, and the expression of regional anchoring and local commitment.

3.2. Discussion

In this part of the paper, we will try to answer the two research questions, first recalling the essential theoretical statements in relation to each of the two questions, followed by some corresponding narratives of the four Slow Brewers.

3.2.1. To what extent do regional anchoring and traditional *Slow Brewing* methods answer global challenges like sustainability?

In his publication about the global Slow Food movement, Fontefrancesco (2018) emphasizes the commitment for „good“ (tasty and healthy) food and „clean“ production with a reduced environmental footprint, and Miroso et al. (2011) mention the creation of the Ark, to save traditional and rare food species and protect food cultural biodiversity for future generations. Jones et al. (2003) underline, that exceptional quality, the provenance of local raw materials, and the relationship with the local region are often „indicated by a place name“.

Similar themes emerge in the discourse of the Slow Brewers, as we will see in the following analysis. The *Slow Brewing* Quality Seal presents a guarantee of quality „from the raw materials to the beer served“ (Stiegl), „from the field to the glass“. Freistädter Bier uses, similarly to other brewers, only local ingredients: The beer is made with „primitive rock water from our own deep well, 100% Austrian malting barley that comes from natural, controlled cultivation“ from the Mühlviertel (the region of Upper Austria surrounding their brewery), and from the 30-year-long collaboration with sustainability committed farmers of the Erzeugergemeinschaft Zistersdorf (EGZ) (in the north of Vienna). One hundred percent of the hops come from 37 hops farmers cultivating 14 different types of hops in the region (Freistädter Bier). Trumer, located in the region of Salzburg, near the Bavarian border, uses raw materials from Bavaria, much nearer than certain regions in Austria, and of excellent quality (Int 2). On their own organic farm at Wildshut, not far from Salzburg, Stiegl „nurtures the soil“ and cultivates „long -forgotten ancient grains“ (Stiegl). The recourse to „cutting-edge technology“ enables „beer production that respects the environment“ (Stiegl).

The cooperation with local suppliers and the short transport distances enables more sustainable production and transport and provide complete transparency and traceability (Hirter). Slow Brewers would never have recourse to GMO technology (Freistädter; Int 1), because „nature“ is the „main pillar“ of all beer products (Hirter). Sustainability means, that we „don't consume more than we need“ (Stiegl), and measures are undertaken like „waste prevention“ (Hirter) by using reusable glasses and barrels and recycled material (Hirter), the production of beer cases made from 75% regranulate (Stiegl), the use of electric trucks (Stiegl), and the own production of photovoltaic energy (Freistädter, Hirter).

3.2.2. Can we consider *Slow Brewing* to be related to the Slow Food movement?

Jones et al. (2003, 297) ascertain that many members of the Slow Food movement seek the simple pleasure of eating and drinking local products, whereas the movement itself seems to have more ambitious and far-reaching goals. Thompson & Kumar (2022) note that consumer-responsibilisation is „not regarded as a sufficient response to environmental crises“, that „buying ethical goods can give consumers the feeling that they are already doing enough in terms of sustainability“ and that „ethical consumption is an elitist concept“. Chaudhury and Albinsson (2015) introduce the term of the „citizen-consumer“ who practices consumption with an eye towards the greater-good, linking „consumption and citizenship“ in everyday life, whereas Counihan (2021) attends a Slow Food National Assembly while studying the gastronomic narratives of the celebration dinner menu with a critical eye.

To answer the second research question, we will rely on the narratives of the Slow Brewers about their four restaurants. Three of them do not seem to pursue a particular philosophy for

the proposed meals, besides highlighting arguments about regional and vegetarian cuisine: *Freistädter Brauhaus* offers vegetarian and seasonal menus, and a monthly dinner proposing beers matching cuisine with regional ingredients. *Hirter Braukeller* emphasizes regionality, and *Trumerei*, „a new mix of craft-beer bar and Trumer beershop“, „a free space that embodies an open spirit“, dedicated to „globally local“ cuisine, boundless regional cuisine or vegetarian cuisine, reflecting „the taste of the regions.“ The term „globally local“ cuisine is interesting to observe, because it demonstrates a certain international openness whose absence Counihan (2021) finds is lacking during her Slow Food National Assembly.

For Stiegl-Gut Wildshut, partner of Slow Food Austria, the parallels to this organization appear more relevant: The restaurant suggests „conscious enjoyment of natural and sustainable products from the region“, dishes matching with organic beer, food from nature according to the seasons, „exclusively organic food“, an „art of enjoying life“, and invites its guests to take their time „and get in touch with what’s on the plate“. Time is the „fifth ingredient“, and Wi-Fi is not available in the guesthouse. The interior of the restaurant respects the circular economy, by using reclaimed wood from the brewery for the restaurant floor, etc.

When we compare these descriptions with the reviews left by customers of Stiegl- Gut Wildshut on the platform Trip Advisor during the last years, we realize that several guests obviously appreciated the atmosphere and style of the premises, the possibility to relax, and the quality of regional and organic food, but that they complain about high prices, little food on the plate („you shouldn’t be too hungry“), and the small number of guests and consequently lack of life („life is missing here“). They even make fun of the fancy names of organic beer creations like „Hopfenherz“ (heart of hops), „Gmahde Wiesn“ (in Austrian dialect, something like mown meadow), or „Malzreigen“ (round of malts) and ironically ascertain that „GRETA (Thunberg) would like it“. Some of them regret that the transmission of the philosophy of the restaurant to the guests does not really function, and that the visitors would need to inform themselves before coming, to really appreciate it.

CONCLUSION

Research has shown that *Slow Brewing* is a brewing style (and philosophy), combining traditional brewing methods with high-performance modern technology, lending a typical, local character and high quality to the products. Slow Brewers are medium-sized companies, whose managers and employees are very involved in the whole production process and feel proud to express their emotions when it comes to their work (Int 2). They are connected to their region and its inhabitants and committed to „natural cultivation“ and strong relationships with their raw material suppliers („farmers are friends, relationships that are good for the grain and the product,” Int 1). Beer is brewed for local consumers, and the managers are not trying to expand their sales to a larger area (Int 1). Approximately 95 % of the total production is sold in Austria (Int 2). Beer prices are situated slightly above average („quality may also have a price,” Int 1), but these producers must be aware of the mentalities and financial capacities of the surrounding rural population.

The study of the semi-structured interviews and the analysis of the company websites have demonstrated that it is not only the global Slow Food movement that motivates the Austrian Slow Brewers, but also the conviction of the necessity to improve local beer quality, and to preserve the environment for future generations. The idea of a rapprochement with the Slow

Food organization could interest some of them on one side (Int 1) but would require a significant commitment during a period when other questions are becoming more urgent (Int 2). A Slow Food recognition would furthermore constitute a less strict qualification than the *Slow Brewing* Quality Seal (Slow Food deals with several kinds of food, whereas *Slow Brewing* is specialized in beer assessment; Int 2). Slow Brewers and their consumers are not activists, and their *Slow Brewing* philosophy is not politically oriented, but concerns our society as a whole (Int 2).

Slow Brewers use their own documents like the Common Good Report of the Freistädter Braucommune, or the Hirt Manifesto, adapted to their philosophy and everyday challenges. Incidentally, Freistädter Biercommune has already been implementing practices it claims are for the common good for 250 years. As early as the Middle Ages, every house in the old town of Freistadt had the privilege of brewing its own beer. However, in 1770, a devastating fire destroyed the whole city, leaving only two small brewhouses. Thanks to a close alliance of 149 homeowners of the old town, a new brewery was built outside the city walls, called Braucommune, bestowing a particular legal form to this brewery. Today, Freistädter Braucommune is still in the hands of the citizens of Freistadt, a symbol of efficient and long-lasting local solidarity (Int 1).

On the other hand, we should be cautious, when tempted to generalize that „more regional is more sustainable“ (Int 2), and when situating „local“ within national boundaries. The example of Trumer Bier and its cooperation with Bavarian hops providers, cultivating their fields just across the Austrian-German border, proves that a clear commitment to the region must go hand in hand with open-mindedness, and must remain focused on common sense.

For future research, it could be interesting to carry out comparative studies with breweries in other countries to further validate the findings. Additionally, expanding the investigation to consumer perspectives on *Slow Brewing* could provide deeper insights into its market impact.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere acknowledgements go to my interlocutors from Freistädter Braucommune, Trumer Bier, Hirter Bier and the head of the Slow Brewing Institute, for having taken the time to answer my questions despite a very busy schedule. Many thanks also to the head of the Austrian Slow Food organization for having provided precious information.

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