

Hybrid knowledges in rural transition Georgian wine in the post- socialist landscape

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Country background

- 4,5 million people
- Georgia is a lower middle-income country (25% poverty)
- 1991 – independence from USSR
- Worsening relations with Russia since independence



Rural development

Rural development is coordinated efforts in a community to target, by means of formal and informal institutions, environments observed as rural, to put them on a collectively accepted path towards a future perceived as better (Van der Ploeg et al. 2000; Van Assche et al. 2013, 2014; Van Assche and Hornidge 2015).

Rural transition is changes in the countryside which are felt as significant, as a shift from one mode of organizing both people and space to another one (Pomfret 2000; Kornai 2006; Mollinga 2008; Spoor 2012).

Knowledge

'Knowledge' is regarded as everything that is perceived as such in and by society' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Expert knowledge restricted to specialized scientific knowledge or to the figures acknowledged to be in expert roles (often academic) (Van Assche and Hornidge 2015).

Traditional knowledge we interpret as knowledge that has been transmitted outside the academic system for several generations. **Traditional knowledge** does not have to be highly localized, as some concepts, narratives, beliefs, can be shared widely among cultures.

'Local knowledge' looks like a **complex construct** then. It is conceptualized as locally situated knowledge, held by a specific group of people composed of *current expert knowledge, old expert knowledge*, surviving in fragments in geographical pockets, *traditional knowledge*, and knowledge which we can call *local* in the most narrow sense, i.e., knowledge emerging out of very local adaptations to internal and external environments (Raymond et al., 2010; Fey 2016; Antweiler, 1998; Van Assche et al. 2016).

Knowledge/Governance Nexus

Governance is the sum of all organizations, procedures and institutions, through which decisions are made and implemented and through which authority is exercised (Grindle, 2007; Chibba, 2009).

Governance includes the governmental as well as the nongovernment sphere and covers formal (written) and informal (unwritten) institutions and practices (Hornidge et al. 2016; Van Assche/Hornidge 2015; Van Assche et al. 2014)

Knowledge does not exist as such, but is produced, filtered, and disseminated, instrumentalized, abandoned or mobilised by social actors, i.e. certain organizations, networks, institutions, procedures.

Agriculture & rural economy in transition

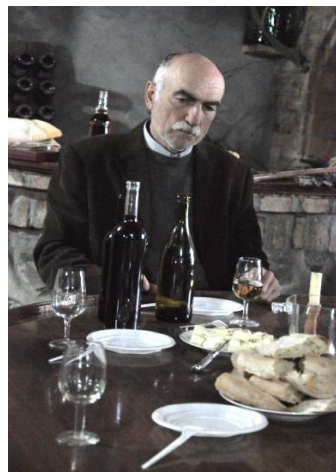
- ✓ Main products: hazel nuts, spirits, wine, mineral water, citrus and fruits
- ✓ 53% of population lives in rural areas
- ✓ Main employer -> more than half of the population is involved in agriculture;
- ✓ 9% to the GDPs
- ✓ Food security

Structural constraints:

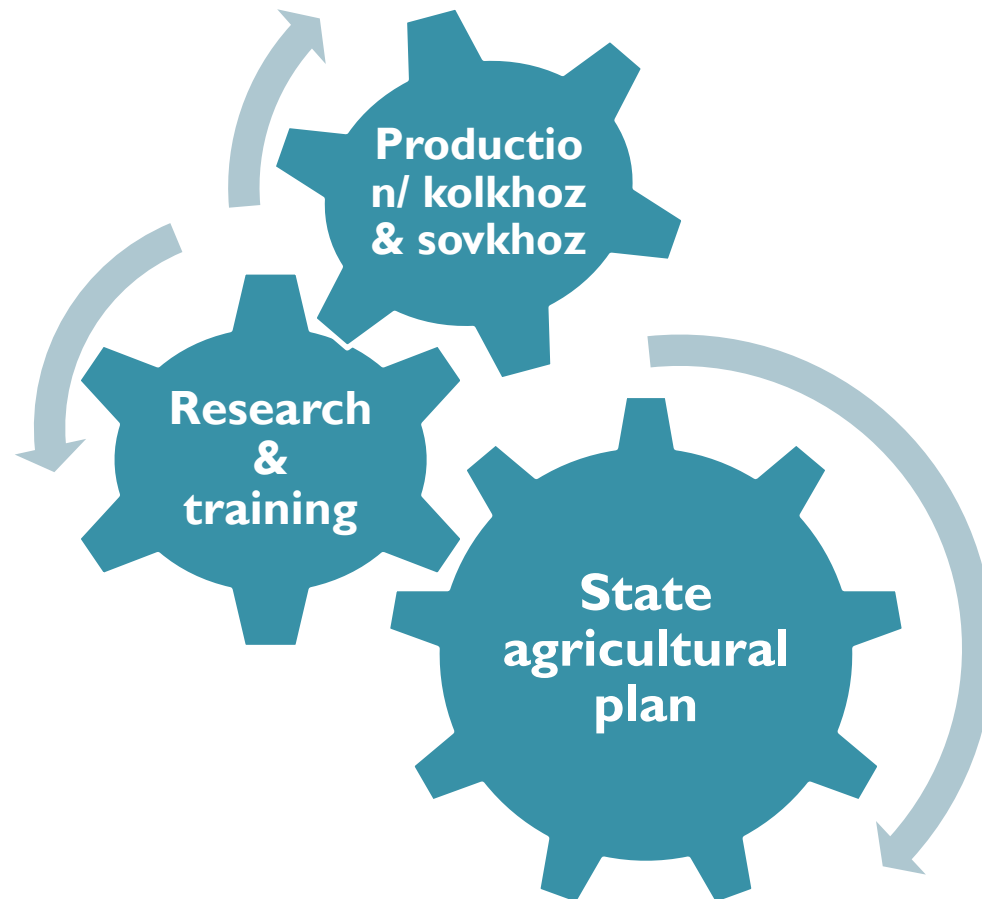
- ❖ Low productivity;
- ❖ Interest rate in commercial banks is high;
- ❖ Poor infrastructure for smallholders (storage, irrigation, outdated machinery;);
- ❖ A lot of agricultural import -> hampers local production;
- ❖ No farmers' associations -> weak political mobility;
 - ❖ Land decollectivization is incomplete;
 - ❖ Poor marketing and packaging of agricultural products;
 - ❖ Farm management knowledge/ underdeveloped skills in private decision-making on the farm level;
 - ❖ Poor outlook and negative view of agricultural livelihoods;
 - ❖ Agriculture is a populist cause in terms of modernization

Who is the farmer?

1. 640,302 farmers, 90% of farmers have less than 1 ha of land;
2. Low productivity
3. No money
4. 50% of population
5. Little to no expertise



Soviet agricultural knowledge system



Knowledge infrastructure

1. Decline in Russian technical assistance;
2. Deficient support from governments towards agricultural knowledge systems resulted in a collapse of many Soviet knowledge organisations. There is a risk in losing knowledge produced during a long time;
3. Academy of Agricultural Sciences: knowledge are outdated and the experts are not mobile;
4. Eroded links with applied research;
5. Decline in research livelihoods (i.e. low salaries);
6. Unattractive for the young scientists to work in the Agricultural University & research;
7. Hurdles entering international English-dominated scientific community;
8. Unattractive for students to study there.





Georgian wine making & knowledge production



Ancient and imperial periods

- Wine making dates back to 4000 to 3000 BC (Glonti 2010; Elkana 2011);
- Winemaking technology is based on the use of *kvevri*
- Produced mostly from local endemic grape varieties (525 documented)
- Kvevri cottage industry
- 19th Century: Tsarist regional wine export



Soviet period

The **1936** Decree of the USSR on 'Development of viticulture and quality winemaking in GSSR' was a trigger for the expansion and scientific support for viticulture and winemaking in the Georgian Soviet Republic.

1930-1932 – Georgian Wine Institute was the main one on wine production in SU


1970s - Soviet authorities greatly expanded wine production and thus a lot of knowledge have been produced in this period;

- ✓ the wine institute had around 600 employees.
- ✓ Both grape knowledge and wine production knowledge were cultivated;
- ✓ kevekri were integrated in factory wine production in Soviet Georgia.

Parallel production sphere:

- ✓ (1) mass production,
- ✓ (2) brand wine,
- ✓ (3) family industry





Independent Georgia: Introduction of *selling knowledge*: Reshuffling of knowledge and production landscapes

- Rise in small/medium-scale enterprise and continuation of cottage industry
- Production: Organic viticulture, Grape emphasis, Explicit terroir, Wine tourism & mixed strategies
- Decline in Russian technical assistance, hurdles entering international English-dominated scientific community, and decline in research livelihoods
- Expertise comes from international development organisations, NGOs, private input providers
- Due to Russian embargo (2006), started to export wine to Europe-> quality increase
- International standards and orientation are contemporary phenomenon (i.e. quality, taste, price)
- Big problem: branding, marketing, distribution!

Concluding discussion:

What is there and can be used for development?



Knowledge

- Marketing knowledge has reshuffled all the other forms of knowledge, since a new and binding goal entered the equation: selling!
- Knowledge loss in transition;



- There are very little good wine experts (i.e. Wine making skills, business and natural scientists) left in Georgia;
- Disconnectivity of all knowledges and marketing knowledge;
- The importance of rural governance to amplify any insights gained locally or flown in from abroad.

Contemporary Georgian wine sector

- Wine as a driver for rural development because of cultural importance and the respective value attached to it;
- Wine and its linkage with a heritage, a landscape and a cuisine raises the potential to join the global progressive food sector
 - Traditional, local, organic, geographically-indicated, slow food
 - Domestic-oriented cottage industry of wine is increasingly trendy in the West
- Without Soviet large-scale orientation, potential exists for medium-scale export-orientation and other differentiated strategies;
- Intersection of global wine culture and great wine tradition as an avenue for rural development and heritage product preservation in Georgia

Thank you for your attention!



→ **Recently published** : Hornidge, A.-K., Shtaltovna, A. and C. Schetter (editors) (2016)
'Agricultural Knowledge and Knowledge Systems in Post-Soviet Societies',
Peter Lang. ISBN: 978-3-0343-2006-1. Bern Switzerland.

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AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE
IN POST-SOVIET SOCIETIES

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