

Terroir ‘tale of two glasses’: localness vs. de-territorialization in Nemea and Basto wine regions

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Contextualizing the research problem:

Nemea (Greece) and Basto (Portugal) are two high quality wines regions under the protection of labels of origin that have commonly the format of Geographical Indications (GIs). Recent discussions have emerged on the re-construction of local/traditional knowledge and thus on the re-construction of both regions terroir's. Therefore, those discussions arose challenges to rural development of the regions between the preservation of localness (implicit on the protection by labels of origin) and the threats of de-territorialization. Between the knowledge and power negotiation dynamics of all involved actors (from winemakers to farmers, local authorities and other stakeholders like local cooperatives) there is a need to question if the current rural development strategies based on local food production qualification schemes (under GI's) are being implemented towards the extended development of the region, its local community and therefore to the fully protection of wine terroir¹ on a broader sense than only origin and quality. This need to question comes along with recent renewed interest on the notion of terroir, where discussions emerged about the preservation/re-creation of terroir on the ongoing process of history (Barham, 2003) and also the discussion on

¹ When vine growing and producing are translated into a concept like terroir that is embedded by geological and climacteric, territorial, social and cultural characteristics of a rural region, the wine bears a ‘signature’ present on the ‘natural’ and ‘unique’ taste regionally identified that is protected by certified labels of origin.

the extent of GIs capacity to protect terroir as history, heritage or 'patrimoine' (Wilson, 1998)².

Methodology:

Considering the topic of the research, we decided to support it on qualitative methods. Therefore it has been planned and worked through five steps: Data collection; Interview guide; Choice of the sample; In-depth interviews and data analysis. Data collection has focused on research's main concepts: Terroir; Geographical Indications; regional foods and rural development and also on both wine regions existing literature. Semi-structured interviews were carried out under a framework of two main sections: the evolution of terroir between local knowledge and expert knowledge and the regional and local interprofessional network. The sample was selected accordingly both convenience sampling and snowball sampling and taking in consideration two criteria: origin of the winery and market orientation(local/domestic or international). In total, 20 interviews were made, in both regions in equal, number to winemakers, wine associations and cooperatives, political/agricultural authorities.

Results and discussion:

In Nemea, the discussion among the winemakers concerns the establishment of sub-zones. Therefore, if formally established, there will be included on the bottles (besides the general Nemea PDO label) certified labelling of the specific rural community (inside Nemea region).

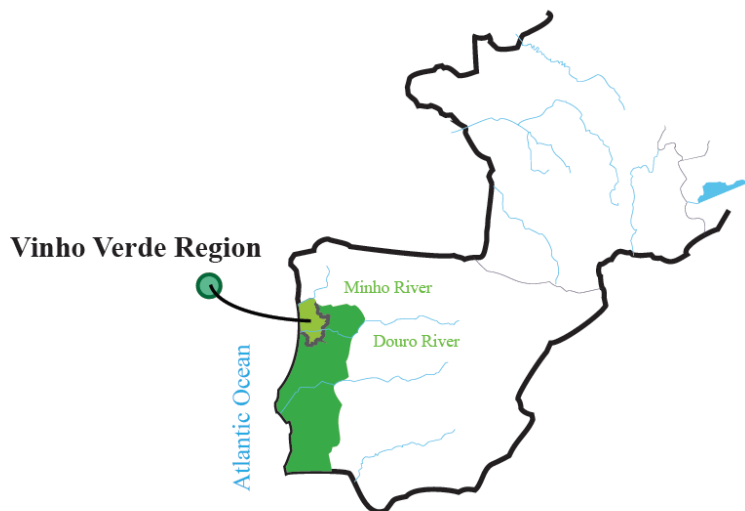
² Regarding terroir: *"Beyond the measurable ecosystem, there is an additional dimension – the spiritual aspect that recognized the joys, the heartbreaks, the pride, the sweat and the frustrations of its history."* (Wilson 1998 cited by Barham, 2003).



We observed that may result into different status of quality accordingly to different of rural communities of Nemea wine appellation. The opposers³ believe that this changes will have impacts on property values and also confusion between consumers regarding Nemea wine will be brought. Besides, the non-participation of Nemea Wine Cooperative on the local association of winemakers and thus on the main table of the discussion about the changes on the terroir of Nemea, constitutes a problem on the chain of Nemea network. It establishes, at first, a non-communication between the two most important stakeholders in Nemea – the private wineries and the cooperative. Second, it constitutes a real possibility for, not only the rural community be set apart from the discussion as a important stakeholder, but also an overall consensus over the discussed changes will be almost impossible. This can create a ‘climate’ of distrust and driven the discussion through non-localized ‘arenas’ and thus to de-territorialized decisions.

In Basto there are, increasingly, closer relations between wine producers and bigger companies located elsewhere than between themselves. This is related with a conflicting competition for stronger network and status, making discussions on common strategies for Basto rural development very difficult to take place.

³ Few private wineries, the Cooperative and thus the majority of the farmers (vinegrowers).



The predominant relation between producers is characterised by individualistic positions. However, we observed that those positions are augmented by the distrust within the local interprofessional network: struggling for the same potential clients; to buy (grapes) from vinegrowers with better price/quality ratio; conflicts for better social and political status on the relation with the Vinho Verde Commission⁴. Furthermore, the lack of institutional active intermediation (municipal authorities and Vinho Verde Commission), the inexistence of a Basto wine producers association or even the inexistence of a local cooperative has leading to the sub-promotion position of Basto on Vinho Verde promotion schemes in comparison with others sub-regions (Lavrador, 2011). It was also evident from the results that the changes on Basto's wine sector have been stimulated from outside (in response to international markets needs) and barely from within – once more, non-localized 'arenas' and thus de-territorialized decisions.

There is indeed a needed 'spark' for all involved actors and local authorities to come together – a necessity of localized governance networks Winter (2003). Therefore, in both wine regions, the existence of localized governance is essential to prevent the negative effects on terroir's identity and wine production localness through

⁴ The commission responsible for Vinho Verde wine certification. Vinho Verde is the designation of the (broader) wine appellation being Basto one of its sub-regions.

strategical planning involving all stakeholders and political authorities both at local and regional level.

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