

# Visualisation de l'origine du vin, de la qualité et du terroir par le paysage

## Visualization of wine origin, quality level and terroir by the landscape

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**Abstract:** The communication of the aims of a viticulture under the premise of terroir is presently discussed in a lot of wine-growing regions around the world. To encourage this discussion the differences in knowledge, understanding, and preference concerning wine and landscape should be regarded more closely: the wine should be perceived as a representative of its region and one of the most characteristic features of a region is the landscape. The basis of the concept presented is the integration of the landscape in the notion of terroir. The aim is the linking-up of attributes of the viticultural landscape with attributes of the wine in a system of increasing complexity: with increasing spatial resolution, the attributes and descriptors for landscape and wine increase, too. In a vertical line the landscape is regarded at different levels, from the region to the local territory to the vineyard site. It is assumed, that in the same manner, the sensory evaluation of wine is presented in an increasing complexity according to the increasing specification of the origin. In a horizontal line the typical of each level is described. This parallelism of landscape and sensory evaluation might contribute to a transparent communication of wine origin, quality, terroir, and sustainability to wine-grower and consumer.

**Key words:** communication, landscape, terroir, wine, origin

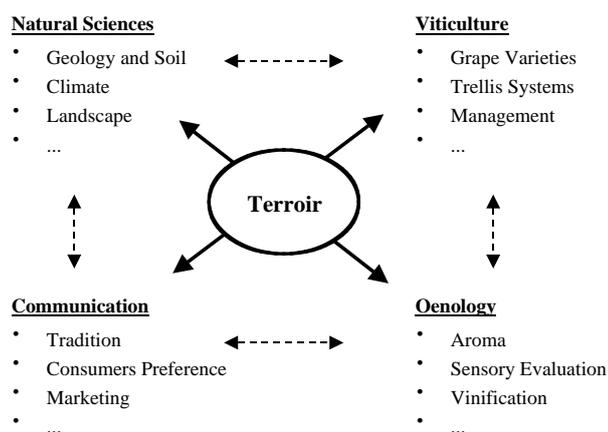
### Introduction

The notion of terroir and the communication of the aims of a viticulture under the premise of terroir are today discussed in a lot of different wine-growing regions with different traditional background. But which topics should be made a subject of discussion and combined with existing models of a high quality viticulture? Concerning this, two aspects are of particular interest: On the one hand, the resolution of the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV, 2004) regarding the development of a sustainable viticulture demands the revaluation of traditional, historical, cultural, ecological and aesthetical values. An important goal among others is the preservation and the revaluation of the viticultural landscape. On the other hand, the consumer is faced with an increase of products of global origin. Products with regional origin might represent an opposite pole. To communicate these aspects, the differences in knowledge, understanding, and preference concerning wine and landscape have to be taken into consideration. Therefore, the presentation of terroir should be closer related to the region which is described as well as to the consumers with their different levels of previous knowledge. Our aim is to propose a platform for the communication of wine quality in relation to the viticultural landscape in a system of increasing complexity.

### Disciplines of terroir research

Terroir is interpreted broadly by a range of scientific, socio-cultural, and economic disciplines. Examples of the main fields of these disciplines are given in figure 1. The natural sciences have followed manifold research concepts which have aimed to analyse the natural components of vineyard sites. The subjects are complex: variability of natural conditions, adaptation of the vine, grape varieties, composition of berries and wine, etc. Unfortunately, in the public discussion often only individual components of this complex system are singled out – one favoured example is the geology. The projects aiming to characterise vineyard sites deal predominantly with geology, soil physics, relief and exposition, micro and meso climate on the one hand, and the effects on the growth of the vine and the quality of grapes and wine on the other hand.

The whole range of work has been reflected e.g. in a multitude of presentations of five international symposia on « Viticultural Zoning » since 1996. In many of these projects, the vineyard site is regarded as the basic unit. With the concept of « Unités Terroir de Base » (MORLAT, 1996), the smallest homogeneous expression of site specific characteristics was focused upon. In general, the aim of scientific terroir characterisation is to analyze the differences of vineyard plots and to record the positive aspects, which should be promoted, and negative elements, which should be restricted. The results will enable the wine-grower to choose the most appropriate cultural practice for each terroir (MURISIER, 2004). The traditional viticultural systems reflect this continuous striving of man to manipulate the vineyard site and finally the whole landscape according to his ideas with the aim to augment the potential of the vineyard site through the production of an original product. This aspect of terroir created a cultural landscape of complex relations between the site, the vine and the wine-grower, which is represented and revalued by the wine (ROCHARD *et al.*, 2000).



**Figure 1 - Disciplines of terroir research**

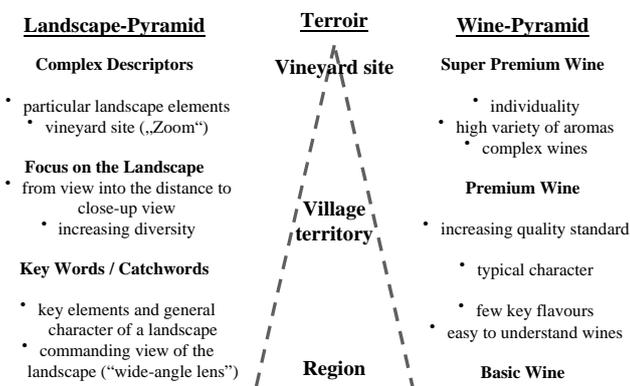
The link to the socio-cultural and economic disciplines is fluid. These disciplines mainly use descriptive methods: they describe and assess, analyse historical sources, carry out surveys, and also conduct statistical analyses of the market. The socio-cultural aspect of terroir is based on the local culture and on the independence of the region. It reaches down to the expectations of the wine-growers as to how this original product should taste (typical product), and to the cultural background of the consumer, which influences the winemaking (the style of wine). The wine-growers in a particular region have – or at least used to have – a certain idea how a good and typical wine of their region should taste. The same grapes can also be used to create a wine which is untypical for its region, but not necessarily of lower quality or less good taste. This wine would, however, not be perceived as a representative of its origin.

### **Parallelism of landscape and sensory evaluation**

In a generalised manner, the term terroir is used to describe the relationship between the quality and the origin of a product (DENIS, 1995). One of the most characteristic features of the origin is the landscape. Therefore, the aspects of the viticultural landscape should be more strongly integrated in a terroir concept to present wine as an authentic cultural object (REUTER and HARDT, 2005). The basic idea is to put different levels of the landscape opposite the levels of the wine quality to explain and visualize the terroir: with increasing spatial resolution the attributes and descriptors for landscape and wine increase, too (figure 2). The approach includes the definition of typical, unmistakable elements of the viticultural landscape at the different levels (from the region to the village territory to the vineyard site), as well as characteristic key flavours for the different wine styles (basic, premium, etc.). The characteristic landscape elements and key flavours have to be combined into communication units on the basis of comparable associations.

In figure 2, this approach is presented in the form of a pyramid. This means, that in a vertical line, the landscape is presented at different levels, from the region to the village territory to the vineyard site. Accordingly, the sensory evaluation of wine is presented in an increasing complexity. In a horizontal line,

that means within each level, the typical of each terroir and the differences between terroirs are described. This parallelism of landscape and sensory evaluation is the basis for a multi-scale approach for visualization of wine origin, quality level, and terroir.



**Figure 2 - The terroir pyramid – a multi-scale approach: linking-up of the elements to communicate the wine with the elements to communicate the viticultural landscape**

The key points are:

- Wine is the product of its origin, because it gives wine a sensory differentiation – a typical character. A certain territory (region) gives a typical taste characteristic to a grape variety and a wine, respectively. The basic wine and its terroir can be defined as **Regional Type/(Terroir)** and can be described with a few typical key flavours. The region itself is to be described with large scale landscape elements (natural geographic region, river course, mountain range, etc.). The typical wine defined by key flavours is represented by the landscape.
- At the level of premium wines the view gets closer to the village territory – the **Village or Local Type/(Terroir)**. The variety or diversity of the landscape becomes visible (relief, vegetation, geology, etc.). This diversity is reflected in the wine by an increasing variety of key flavours (e.g. because of different soil types).
- Further focussing on the landscape reveals the complex structure of the vineyard sites. Natural and man-made factors, which are unified in an optimum manner (e.g. exposition, construction of terraces), become transparent and have to be mirrored in the diversity and complexity of the super premium wines – the **Vineyard Terroir**. Beside the typical character, the individuality is placed into the foreground. This reflects the diversity within the unity of a region.

## Conclusion

The basis of the concept presented here is the integration of the landscape in the notion of terroir and the linking-up of the elements to communicate the viticultural landscape with the elements to communicate the wine. The landscape is indispensable as an identification tool. The elaboration of typical elements is helpful for the demarcation of a region. This means that in the context of the quality pyramid the basic wines are linked with a few and easily understandable, large scale (spacious) characteristics of the landscape. The sensory evaluation does this in the same manner by defining a few concise wine attributes (the view and the taste of an inexperienced person). With the rise in the quality pyramid the view approaches the diversity of the landscape: small scale structures become visible. Finally the view focuses on single vineyard sites – on typical and exceptional sites in the same manner. The broad range of the terroir-components are presented. This focus is again followed by the sensory evaluation: the increasing complexity of the wines is placed into the foreground (the view and the taste of an experienced person). To carry out this sequence of different views, an analysis of the viticultural landscape, a definition of key flavours, and a profound study of the consumers’ preferences and expectations are necessary. Such a handling might contribute to a transparent communication of quality, terroir, and sustainability to wine-growers and consumers in the sense of the above mentioned OIV-resolution.

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