

Conventions and methods towards landscape quality: an application in the Douro (Portugal)

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ABSTRACT

Vineyards are one of the most recognizable icons of the Mediterranean landscapes and of its cultural identity. In Portugal, in the areas where the *terroir* are particularly adjusted to the vine culture (Appellation of Origin) important changes have been affecting the landscapes, as a result of both European Agricultural Policy and the international trade market of wine. In fact, important features of traditional vineyard landscapes have not always been taken into consideration as amenities or commodities to the regions development and the market of the wines.

The recognition of some wine regions as World Cultural Heritage by the UNESCO and the recommendations of the European Landscape Convention may be seen as great opportunities to set up innovative concepts into innovative actions towards landscape quality as a fundamental pillar to sustainable development and to the commitment of the different stakeholders in its implementation. The definition of Landscape Quality Objectives in a collaborative way could be seen as the starting point to the implementation of concrete actions targeting the protection, planning and management of the *winescapes* on a multifunctional basis.

A discussion on opportunities and constrains of spatial planning tools and sector policies, like tourism, will be made, to find out concrete and legal opportunities. A combined reflection amongst the wine producers and other local stakeholders, technical and administration entities, local population and tourists are needed, in order to better understand the relevance of landscape quality in the future development of the winegrowing regions. An example in Douro Demarcated Region will be presented, based on results of the project ORTE as well as of other recent perception studies.

Keywords: *landscape quality, perception, tourism, Douro Demarcated Region.*

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the meaning and relevance of landscape quality in the planning and management of rural areas and presents a case study in the Douro Demarcated Region (DDR). In Portugal there is still a lack of interrelation between landscape, especially on its cultural components, and spatial planning (Knieling and Othengraphen, 2009a, in Ferrão, 2011). In many cases, still prevail the indications of land use planning involving studies and actions regarding the soil regulation and transformation (spaces), without taking into account its qualification, particularly in terms of aesthetics and identity (places) (Oliveira *et al.*, 2011). For this to happen, it should reflect the interaction and cooperation between the public interest, the laws as regulation instruments and the coordination of the several territorial policies (governance), targeting a common prospective territorial agenda. Considering the plan as common ground were people and land interact, more cultural studies should be developed (Lavrador Silva, 2011).

The village of Favaios, in the Douro Demarcated Region (DDR), is used as case study concerning the use of the landscape in the development of winegrowing regions. In this locality, tourists were interviewed, whose opinions were compared with other community members considering their specific social and professional context and assuming an important role as both, social advisers and promoters of development proposals. Our research identifies

territorial elements, products and activities that are seen as crucial to the development of Favaios, a location whose name is adopted as a brand for the here produced fortified sweet wine – the Moscatel – served as aperitif all over the world.

2 UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING THE CONCEPTS - THE URGENCY TO LINK LANDSCAPE TO SPATIAL PLANNING

The link between landscape and spatial planning is the need to intervene on the land with the quality in mind, making sure that it happens in a participatory and collaborative way. This assumption is assigned in the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (CE, 2000), where *landscape* is defined as “an area as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. In Portugal the ELC has been transcribed for the first time into Portuguese legislation (Decree No. 4 / 2005 of 14 February). Also, the revision of the first generation of Local Master Plans is taking place, which opens up the opportunity to include landscape studies into the different stages of the existing Plans, according to a coherent and integrated methodology (Oliveira *et al.*, 2011). Other opportunity for applying the ELC approach is on the management of the cultural landscapes designated by the UNESCO, such as the case of the DDR. Considering the vineyard regions, the concept of *terroir* also links directly to landscape planning. In a strict sense, *terroir* results from the

combination of local physical conditions of soil and climate and the technical conditions developed over centuries by the local communities. In a larger sense, it also reflects the quality and authenticity of the landscapes – heritage, historical and ecological values – and the quality of the products, involving the requirements of a precision viticulture, controlling for eventual environmental risks and consumers' security and health, powerfully linked to the sustainable development paradigm. This aim may only be reached if the landscape planning takes the quality and the identity of each particularly region into account, as represented by the interests of local stakeholders (Fontevraud Letter, 2003)¹. Therefore, use of perception studies in the managing of the winegrowing regions is an important planning tool as: a) the perception of the quality of the wines is often linked to the quality, variety and authenticity of the landscapes where they are produced (Tempesta *et al.*, 2010); b) the combined exploitation of wines and landscapes is common in the enotourism context, as the motivation of rural tourists is frequently multifaceted (Kastenholz, 2010). Considering these arguments, this paper underlines the role of the landscape in the tourism experiences, based on individual interviews to the visitors of the village of Favaios (preliminary study of the ORTE project²). The results are related to empirical data obtained from other interview data assessing opinions of wine producers and specialized staff, collected through surveys (Costa, 1999; Rodrigues and Kastenholz, 2010; Lavrador Silva, 2005).

3 THE IMPORTANCE OF LANDSCAPE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOURO DEMARCATED REGION - THE CASE OF FAVAIOS

The village of Favaios is located within the limits of the Douro Demarcated Region (DDR), a demarcation with over 250 years of existence, whose emblematic, unique and varied landscapes allow its inscription as living and evolutionary World Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2001). Located in the sub-region Cima Corgo, where the most remarkable steep slopes of the DDR exists, Favaios has a particular landscape on the border of the demarcation, where the shale of the Douro Valley contacts the involving granite rocks, on a flattened terrain at 650m height, with particular characteristics of soil, climate and vegetation. These physical features benefit a *terroir* very well suited to the cultivation of the muscatel variety, which is at the

origin of the most recognized quality product of the village, a fortified wine branded as Moscatel of Favaios. The fame of this brand, associated to the quality and the typicality of the Moscatel are important flags to the (eno)tourism development, yet scarcely implemented (the local Cooperative is important but some competition might improve the promotion of the Moscatel of Favaios). The village integrates, with five other villages, the project *Vineyard Villages*, initiated in 2001 that pretends to stimulate the local economy, to regenerate the heritage values of the Douro region and to promote the quality of live of its residents³, even, some studies prove this project has brought few benefits until the present (Cristóvão *et al.*, 2011). The village of Favaios has important heritage monuments; some recovered, like the Museum of the Bread and the Wine, beautiful manor houses, religious buildings, places of pilgrimage and walk for residents and tourists. Besides these potentialities, specialized evaluations (Bianchi-de-Aguiar, F., PIOT, 2001) refer constraints to the village development that continue nowadays scarcely improved, namely: very sparse accessibilities, reduced number of accommodation units (the nearest is about 3km, in Alijó), few restaurants or cultural (except for the theatre group OFITEFA, which develops an interesting activity in the village of Favaios) and environmental activities.

The interviews realized in the context of the ORTE project identify the landscape and the wines as important motives for the visiting the village, referring to the observation and participation in the harvest activities as most interesting. Also are stressed: the experience of direct contact with Nature, the strong emotions associated to the views of the Douro's landscape, its colours and sounds. However, only two visitors have mentioned the particular *winescape* of Favaios village: the vineyards cultivation in the plateau. These outstanding qualities are also recognized by landscape planners who even suggest the further improvement of landscape qualification, in particular stressing manor house, and the importance for tourism development of particular quality products like the Moscatel and the bread. The results of this preliminary study are similar to others based on larger samples, namely: a) wine cellars visits and wine tastings have been mentioned as motivations for seeking an enotourism experience (Costa, 1999); b) walks in Nature where landscape assumes a special relevance were found as relevant attractors of rural destinations (Rodrigues and Kastenholz, 2010); c) the relieve, the vineyards, the wine quality and the long history of the DDR are additional attractors (Lavrador Silva, 2005).

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The ELC has introduced an approach based on the principle of action with concrete results in the landscape in terms of quality, through the measures adopted by social, economic and institutional

¹ *Charte Internationale de Fontevraud*, 2003 – Aims at the protection, improvement and management of the vineyard landscapes, being signed by the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development, the Institute of Appellation of Origin, the Mission of the Loire Valley and the International Office of the Vines and Wines.

² The first author collaborates, as researcher, in the project ORTE - "The overall rural tourism experience and sustainable local community development", financed by FCT (PTDC/CS-GEO/104894/2008), started in 2010, coordinated by Elisabeth Kastenholz, Research Unity GOVCOPP, University of Aveiro, Portugal. <http://cms.ua.pt/orte>.

³ Project Vineyard Villages of the Douro http://www.aldeiasvinhateiras.pt/sobre_projeto/index.php

stakeholders based on landscape quality objectives. The implementation of the ELC is also an opportunity for the adoption of new measures and management models which, together with the development of a civic and participatory approach, allow a good integration of the landscape in the process of spatial planning. In this direction, the results of this preliminary perception study in the vineyard village of Favaios (DDR) show the great value of landscape of the Douro Valley World Cultural Heritage for the touristic attraction. Also shows, still many landscape dimensions are missing or scarcely explored in tourism, namely, its particular qualified wine, the Moscatel, should be better promoted and articulated with its particularly landscape (as suggested by a visitor). Other tourism initiatives could be developed: itineraries in the vineyards and the cellars; with working experiences and experts explanations; traditional meals with which these wines may be combined (there is only one, however, remarkable tourism offer in the Quinta da Avessada); visits and events in the Museum of the Wine and Bread (nowadays closed most of the year), creation of new marketing products combining landscape and wine and its dissemination by the worldwide web.

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Collective management for landscape and biodiversity conservation in viticulture: The Life + BioDiVine project

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ABSTRACT

Environmental awareness is globally rising among scientific community, politicians and general public. Biodiversity conservation is becoming a concern for farmers. Wine growers have to face new environmental challenges, both through new regulations but also for communication and marketing. Indeed customers and consumers are more and more demanding “green” products, and this also applies to wine. Among the different environmental issues (reduction of pollution, pesticides ...) often seen as negative constraints, biodiversity management appears as a positive action, and thus a motivating aspect to work on.