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## **The effects of institutional changes on qualification processes: a survey at the french Institute for Denomination of Origins (INAO)**

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## **The effects of institutional changes on qualification processes : a survey at the french Institute for Denomination of Origins (INAO)**

### **SUMMARY**

This contribution aims to present issues from a survey carried on within the french institution "INAO" (Institute for Denomination of Origins), which is in charge of the implementation of the EC regulation about Protected Denomination of Origins. The main objective was to assess to what extent INAO is prepared to meet EC requirements on concepts codification in the overall framework of the european quality policy. The survey consists of asking agents within the institution to select some important concepts in their professional activity from a list of 64 ones and to define them. The homogeneously defined concepts may be easily codified in the future since agents agree and complete a kind of social control over their implementation. Nevertheless, several questions remain about some other concepts which are quite difficult to define on an homogeneous way such as "terroir" or "typicity". Therefore a research program has been built with INRA in order to objectivize the used concepts within the institution.

### **1. INTRODUCTION: THE EMPIRICAL CONTEXT**

This contribution aims to analyse the trends in the institutional registration process of Protected Denomination of Origin in France (attended by the institute INAO) in the general context of the EC regulations about product origin. This paper supports that INAO is to some extent able to suit its working methods to the EC requirements, while several concepts used by its agents at work are already codified and others might be codified in the future. When no consensus exists among them, we consider that a research process must be completed for reaching it so that codification can be possible. In this perspective, an enquiry has been carried on within the Institute for Denominations of

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Origin in France<sup>1</sup>. During the year 1995, the answers of 134 agents belonging to the institute have been studied (see questionnaire in appendix 1), in order to have a better view over their way of working for processing the registration files and assess to what extent these agents could be prepared to make their working methods to evolve according to the new EC rules.

The INAO is a public establishment with an administrative character. The INAO's main vocations are the products recognition in AOC, the production conditions consistent and the contribution to the AOC's defence against fraud, usurpation and counterfeiting that exist on the market. Divided in 5 regional divisions and 26 centers, more the central service situated at Paris, the INAO regroups 190 agents working on the whole French territory

The rules defining specific qualities are quite old in France. The first denominations of origin (AOC) have been defined in 1919 in the vine sector and the regulation body INAO has been created in 1935. In 1990, this institute is in charge of all food products. Then in the frame of the general agricultural 1960 law and of the statutory order 1965, the "Red Labels" has been defined in order to protect high quality products in certain agricultural sectors. These two systems have been applied successfully in two sectors :

Let us keep in mind that these regulations were created in the framework of an agricultural policy based upon high productivity increases and food industrialisation. Therefore, they remained quite marginal during the past decades, excepted for two sectors where they have been applied successfully : in 1995, the AOC vines had a market share of 50 % and the Red labelled poultry was up to 30 % of the market. Nevertheless, the quality policy had no significant extend in other sectors.

During the last years, several factors made the European policies to change, as consumers and citizens became more and more concerned with new social problems as pollution, food consumption related diseases (for example ESB), population drains out of less favoured areas (as mountains for example), declining of artisanal sectors, etc... The evolutions of the CAP, competition policy and quality policies in the EC have been undoubtedly influenced by such concerns. This evolution may in France be interpreted as a new legitimacy of former quality regulations (B. Sylvander, 1995).

Nevertheless, these evolutions have been possible because of well identified compromises between partners in the EC. Let us remember that northern Europe's partners do not have the same approach of quality than in the South : in their mind, quality is first based upon sanitary aspects and commercial excellence (concerning quality definition) and private branding (concerning quality identification). In this approach, sanitary inspection, commercial freedom and consumer information are supposed to solve most of the problems. The institutional protection of certain production forms and/or special production areas is perceived as a restriction of competition. The "southern approach" answers that industrial imitations of traditional product might threaten small production units especially if these imitations use the same denominations. This practice could also be qualified as unloyal competition.

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<sup>1</sup> We would like here to thank the colleagues who gave us a valuable help for this project : C. Beranger (INRA), A. Berger (former director of INAO) F. Casabianca (INRA), C. Bechet (INAO, assistant director), H. Briand (INAO, chef for department of economics) and to the INAO's agents who kindly answered to our questions.

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After years of negotiations, a compromise was reached in order to combine overall commercial freedom and quality protections. As the so called "new approach" (1985) stated four main objectives (health protection, preservation of the environment, consumer information and commercial loyalty), the EC regulation 2081/92 aimed to promote quality products related to specific areas and appears entirely consistent with the french AOC policy, although this policy must nowadays been related to an effective and impartial implementation according to EC reglement's article 10. In other quality fields as AOC ("Red Label", Product Conformity Certification), it has been decided that quality would be defined and inspected through an official certification process (according to the norm CEN45011). In such conditions and in order to survive, the french institute INAO has to adapt, more especially as it is since 1990 in charge of AOC registration in all the food sectors wich are not familiar to it as the cheese one.

The question this research intend to answer is to assess if INAO agents are prepared to changes their working methods. The first step in the research was to ask these agents about their working ways, by choosing and defining the most important concepts they are using (thus without asking them abreast about the necessary changes !). We will fist in this paper present the theoretical framework ; secondly, the methods will be explained, then the first results will be presented and discussed in the conclusions.

### **2. THE THEORETICAL APPROACH**

In a general situation where quality is uncertain for the consumers, the information asymetry can be a crucial factor for explaining how markets work. Thus Akerlof (1971) showed that this concept could explain why some markets in certain conditions do not work. Then, a lot of works intend to explains consumer's behaviours with regards to quality signals. These researches concern for example the roles of prices, publicity, reputation, brand etc... as quality signals. It has also been proposed, to fight against information asymetry, to use warranty systems, but in this case opportunism may occur : this was called "moral hazard".

#### *The "quality conventions"*

Concerning the quality question, let us notice that the neoclassical approach considers quality as exogeneously defined (see appendix 1). The assumption in this framework is the existence of a previous defined list of products, wich qualities are known by the producers. Therefore the information becomes the main question. On the other hand, the theory of conventions<sup>2</sup> assumes that quality is endogeneous in the economy. It means that the product definition process is a part of the economic activity and that actors are involved in this process. As mentionned by Orlean (1991, p.140): "*When goods are*

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<sup>2</sup>The convention theory is based upon Lewis work (1969 : « Convention : a philosophical study », Cambridge, Harvard University Press) and is expanding in France with O. Favereau, F. Eymard-Duvernay, J.P. Dupuy, R. Salais; L. Thevenot. See the special issue of « Revue Economique », n°2, 1989.

*heterogeneous, products can hardly be defined without regarding exchanges process ... Behind the nomenclature hypothesis an intense social process is hidden which progressively states an impressive set of defined goods and provide the structure of markets".* Therefore it is possible to assess that quality is the result of socio-economic adjustments between actors.

As in the global economy, the uncertainty on products quality is high in the food sector. Several factors increases this feature especially in this sector, among wich the variability of raw materials, the uneasy technical control on the processes and the lack of coordination between actors within the supply chains. This fact can be raised for explaining for example why consumers often lack confidence in the industrial enterprises concerning the hygienic quality of the products. Therefore it may be quite relevant to consider that economic actors must have the same idea on quality in order to be able to produce and exchange goods on the markets.

On a general level, L. Boltanski and L. Thevenot (1991) have proposed six different ways of coordination available for the actors :

- Interpersonnal links : actors know and trust each others about the product qualities ("domestic" or "interpersonal convention »)
- Reputation : actors take into account the reputation of the best known firms (opinion convention)
- Standards : actors asses quality by reference of technical defined and implemented standards (industrial convention)
- Innovation : actors refer to innovation rate to judge quality (inspiration convention)
- Society : actors assess quality in reference of the links with civic interests (civic convention)
- Market : actors are able to judge by themselves the product and refer to price (market convention)

### ***Application***

These conventions have first to be identified in the agents' actings, and then to be tested by what L. Thevenot calls "proofs" ("épreuves" in french), in order to verify how agents refer to them, so that they can be classified in one or another group. In the special case of an institutionnal registration process, INAO agents refer mostly to "domestic" conventions (when they trust economic actors defending their practices and the effects of their practices on product quality and typicity), to "reputation" when an assessment of it must be done for stating the producer's moral right to be protected, to "civic" convention, when a protection of the local production is supposed to be a crucial factor for it's surviving. So we have in this meaning to describe the main fonctions wich have to be fulfilled by INAO in order to qualify a product.

According to C. Delfosse and M.T. Letablier (1995), two steps are required for the registration of an AOC :

- first an agrement has to be reached as a very local level within the interprofessionnal unions and between them and the local institutions about the codes of practices ("loyal and steady uses")

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- second, this agreement must be approved by INAO's national council, so as the product gains an existence at a general level. This second condition can be identified for every product on the market, because a general agreement about a well defined "product list" is one of the crucial condition for any market to exist.

These two steps involve a heavy and iterative negotiation process along the applied procedures, during which agents, institutions and economic actors have to make interpretations about the basic principles, the regulations and the implementations of inspections.

The same process occurs in other quality institutional devices as the Red Label for example. The French government chose in 1993 to entrust certification bodies to fulfill these functions, which have to meet 45011 norm's requirements: independence, effectiveness, competence and confidentiality. During the last years, all such bodies were obliged to get an accreditation for being authorized to deal with certification. On the contrary, the INAO do not follow this way, meaning that today internal procedures are able to reach the same issues as well. In fact, although they are internal and thus not submitted to external control, the procedures allow to get a kind of "social control" which could be opposed; following Max Weber, to the "societal" control implemented by the official certification. More concretely, when a local union presents a registration project at the local INAO office, a committee is nominated to examine it. This committee consists of professionals from other sectors or/and regions who have to verify if the new file is or not consistent with AOC's rules (internal and legal), so that AOC policy and productions will remain homogeneous. One could rightly criticize this procedure, arguing that professionals are not independent: they could use their power to limit artificially the amount and volumes of AOC goods. This doesn't seem to be the case as long as the market for AOC products has been expanding (on vines for example and some other products). On the other hand, AOC professionals have an acute idea of what AOC products quality must be and don't seem to make some compromise about it. Thus in the matter of facts, many AOC cheeses (registered before 1990) have been strongly criticized by vine professionals, who are now in charge of making these files more consistent and even sometimes of questioning their grounds for existence. Lastly, let us remember that procedures are almost public, as reports are presented and discussed at the national product committee and at the national council as well.

Although these reasons for justifying that this kind of social control can be a way to objectivity, INAO is now led to progressively change its working manner towards an "industrial" convention (B. Sylvander, 1997). It means that several concepts must be more and more codified in the procedures so that official bodies may be able to control INAO's work. The analysis of how INAO's agents define the principal concepts they use in their daily work can then be considered as a basis for assuming how INAO will or won't be able to make these changes. If some concepts are already codified, it is interesting to know why and how. If certain concepts appear as homogeneously defined, a codification will be reached more easily than if agents do not agree with each other (e.g. if the concepts are not homogeneously defined).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3-1 The investigation's two stages**

The first stage of the investigation was realised through a postal questionnaire. This questionnaire (cf. appendix) is built up to get the needed data :

- about the concepts considered by the agents as importants in their professional activity.
- about the way the agents explain the meaning of the concepts.

We sended this questionnaire on a representative population sample in the 5 regional divisions and the Paris center to cover the whole institute. 134 questionnaire have been sended, distributed to heads of regional and parisian divisions and their assistants, engineers, delimitation engineers, technicians, secretaries.

The second stage of the investigation will constitute a deepening of the first stage. It concerns a succession of talk from selected files, representative of AOC diversity. It will allow, by questioning the agents concerned by the postal questionnaire on concrete cases, to better understand the multiplicity of proper AOC's language realities and ability to evaluate.

#### **3-2 A quantitative and qualitative data processing**

The investigation's quantitative approach concerns the way agents made their choice in the proposed lists. The questionnaire includes 6 lists of concepts (64 concepts) among which the agents are asked to choose the concepts adapted to the different questions which they are asked for. A seventh list has been created where the agents indicate the concepts that seem important for them and which are not appearing in the 6 preceding lists.

The agents are then asked to answer three questions :

- Which are the main important concepts in your professional activity ?
- Which are the concepts you never use ?
- What kind of problems you meet in your professional activity when concretely using the concepts ?

The answer's comparative analysis (each concept's choice frequency) allows to identify the vocabulary used by INAO's agents and to value their cohesion on this point. The third type of answers were analysed through a quantitative processing (the concept's choice frequency) and a qualitative processing (analysis of textual data brought by agents).

The investigation's qualitative processing primarily concerns the second part of the questionnaire. Each agent is asked to explain the meaning of the "important concepts" he had chosen among the 64 and in the seventh list. The way the agents explain the meaning of important concepts is a main indicator

- of the homogeneity, clearness and specificity of used concept within the Institute
- and of the capacity to establish a codification of the concepts in order to adapt to the EC policy



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First of all, each analysed concept has been individually studied to determinate and understand the way the agents explain its meaning and use it. Each definition was analysed. Then each agent's interpretation was codified in themes. This first stage done, an other analysis has been completed to codify again each definition from the first thematic classification.

This stage of codification allowed a quantitative analysis work (which are the recurrent themes ? May some categories of population be identified by particular interpretations ?). Then, the analysis is completed by a qualitative processing.

### **4. THE INVESTIGATION'S RESULTS**

#### **4.1. A common background**

First of all, let us mention that agents have been highly concerned by the survey : 112 agents answered the questionnaire (a 84 % respondent rate).

##### *4.1.1. The agents' cohesion*

Through an analysis of which concepts agents selected and chose to explain, we are able to identify a quite good consistency within the institute on important concepts. The choice characterises a specific lexical scope, representative of the INAO's background and spirit. The agents' cohesion can be identified on two levels : the survey compare "important" and "never used" concepts (cf. diagram 1 and 2) and the citations' frequency distribution of the "important concepts" in the agents' professional activity.

The comparative analysis of the two dispersion's graphics ("important" and "never used" concepts) shows that, for the most frequently selected concepts , there is no cross checking between these two questions. The important concepts' distribution (citations' frequency : diagram 1) let appear several « stages » with a strong choices concentrating upon the following 8 concepts (selected by more than 50% of agents).

**Table 1 : the most often selected concepts**

Terroir <sup>3</sup>	Typicity	Production conditions	Notoriety	Denomination of origin	Tradition	Local Practices	elimitation
98	95	63	89	79	71	62	62
86.7%	84.1%	82.3%	78.8%	69.9%	62.8%	54.9%	54.9%

Even though 149 different concepts were chosen by agents, only 27 were selected in a significant way, that is to say by more than 15% of questioned agents. So, under dispersal

<sup>3</sup> TERROIR : This French concept have no good English translating. In France, this concept is defined in the following way : « Territory presenting some characters that distinguish it, in an agronomical point of view, from adjoining territories ». This definition characterizes a geographical entity where the dialogue between men and nature shows a loss in space of special ground utilization.

appearance of the number of selected concepts to characterise internal language, the agents have concentrated their choices upon a restricted number of key terms. These most important concepts qualify in a global way INAO's philosophy as well as the notion of "Denomination of origin" on its different dimensions. These concepts, even though very frequently used in daily activities, are indicative of internal and external communication language (and so of cultural background) more than purely technical scopes. This observance has been confirmed by the high amount of concepts which directly concern the agents' professional activity, compared with the least frequently selected concepts (vineyard, variety of vine, produce etc.).

#### 4.1.2. *The partial cohesion in interpretation of concepts*

After having selected "important concepts" of their professional activity, the agents were asked to explain their meaning. Among the 149 selected and defined concepts, 32 concepts were analysed by us in a systematic and extensive way. The choice of these 32 concepts is based upon several results and hypothesis developed in the previous paragraph. So, the set of 32 analysed concepts consists of :

- The greatest part of the most frequently selected concepts (25 concepts) : cf. diagram 1
- Some concepts selected by less than 10 agents, but wich takes in our opinion a certain importance in the agents' apprenticeship process facing the activity diversification of INAO (farmhouse, industrial, artisanal, norm, standardisation, traçability, homogeneity).

The analysis of 32 concepts definitions is based upon three questions :

- When agents use any word, do they use the same language ? Do they refer to the same objects ?
- What are, from the definitions brought by the agents, the particularities of the work within the Institute ?
- How new concepts of the language have been integrated by the agents ? Did the diversification of activities lead to an alteration in the interpretation and using of some concepts ?

At first time, the concepts have been classified in terms of the variability of their definitions : Are the definitions of concepts homogeneous or not ? If the definitions are heterogeneous, is there a dominating interpretation or not ? So, the concepts have been classified in three clusters :

a. The concepts defined in a very homogeneous way are the following ones :

FARMHOUSE TRACABILITY
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b. The concepts defined in an homogenous way, with some small differences of interpretation are the following ones :

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DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP PROTECTION RECOGNITION PRODUCTION CONDITIONS SENSORY ANALYSIS	TRADITION LOCAL PRATICES INSPECTION HOMOGENEITY STANDARDISATION REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	IMAGE NOTORIETY PRECEDENCE AREA DELIMITATION
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c. The concepts defined in an heterogeneous way (no dominating interpretation) are the following ones :

TERROIR ORIGIN PATRIMONY IDENTITY DIVERSITY	KNOW HOW ARTISANAL INDUSTRIAL NORM	TYPICITY SPECIFICITY CHARACTER QUALITY
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There is a certain cohesion of the agents for a little bit more than half of the analysed concepts (19 concepts / 32). On the contrary, 13 concepts were defined in an heterogeneous way (refer to paragraph 4.2.). The second cluster's concepts may be interpreted on two ways. Both types of interpretation can be separated (one definition gives one interpretation) or joined within the same definition.

- The first interpretation refers to the technical sight of the agents' professional activity on the ground.
- The second interpretation refers to the proceedings and textual dimension of the agents' activity and reflects the qualifying procedure of products.

For example, « *local practices* » has been defined as « *some habits inherited from the ancients and well tried by a long practice in a small area* » (technical definition) or as « *local practices are the very foundations of the denomination of origin notion ; without these local practices more or less ancient, it is nearly impossible to delimit and define the production conditions* » ( proceeding and technical definition) ; The definition diversity of these concepts is linked to INAO's cultural wealth. Both interpretations clearly refer to the same objects.

*4.1.3. The defined concepts reflect the qualifying procedure of products*

The synthesis step allowed to build up the diagram \*\*\*, that describes the relative position of concepts and their links to the qualifying procedure of products. That means the agents have well interiorized the procedure. The construction of this diagram allows a better understanding of the investigation results and shows that agents have, through their own choices in the selection and definition of concepts, showed a real internal background. Then, even if some concepts were defined in an heterogeneous way, each agent agrees with it's role in the qualifying procedure within the institute. As the concepts haven't been selected with the same frequency, this diagram should appear open to

criticism. It means however that whatever the word frequency of selection, its interpretation by the agents is consistent with the qualifying procedure of products.

This diagram is built from the informations brought by the definitions. They have different natures. Considered concept by concept, informations refer to procedure or to technical features. On the other hand, we may consider the links between the concepts within their definitions. The synthesis allows to put each analysed concept in clusters. The clustering technique of concepts (enclosed of the diagram) is the following one : we group concepts by making reference to 4 criterion, concepts belonging to the same cluster have to fit at least two of the following criterion :

- the concepts are defined in the same way : *typicity* and *specificity*
  - the concepts definitions make straight links from one word to another, there is a « looping » : *local practices*, *tradition* and *origin* or *area*, *delimitation* and *production conditions*
  - the concepts definitions refers to the same object : all the concepts of *typicity* cluster refers to an intrinsic characteristic of one product.
  - definitions mention concepts codified list within the qualifying procedure of products : *area* and *delimitation* are that way in a separate cluster from the *terroir* one because these concepts belong to the *production conditions* and to the codified qualifying procedure of products. A similar reasoning can be led for *sensory analysis* with regard to the *typicity* cluster and « *control* » or moreover *local practices* with regard to *production conditions*.
- In return, respective position of each cluster in the diagram is defined from proceeding and technical inquiries brought by definitions in terms to two complementary logics :
- The proceeding logic for obtaining one AOC : it is on one hand all the stages which allow a product to obtain one AOC and on the other hand the induced effects from this AOC to the local or the national area.
  - The internal functioning logic of one AOC : it is all the stages linked to the product elaboration : *production conditions*, *product qualifying*, *inspection of production conditions*.

The diagram's reading can be done according to the following order :

- The previous and necessary conditions to the starting and obtaining of one AOC. This part essentially comprises concepts about the non codified qualifying procedure of products.

LOCAL PRACTICES TRADITION KNOW HOW ORIGIN PRECEDENCE	TERROIR
NOTORIETY IMAGE	TYPICITY SPECIFICITY CHARACTER IDENTITY

- The codified stages of obtaining and qualifying one AOC. This part comprises the whole concepts of the official procedure to obtain one AOC as well as the concepts related to the daily life of one AOC.

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PRODUCTION CONDITIONS DELIMITATION AREA HOMOGENEOUS FARM HOUSE ARTISANAL INDUSTRIAL	TYPICITY  SPECIFICITY DIVERSITY QUALITY CHARACTER IDENTITY
RECOGNITION	INSPECTION SENSORY ANALYSIS TRACABILITY
DENOMINATION OF ORIGIN PROTECTION COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP	

- The induced phenomenon by obtaining and daily life of one AOC.

This part comprises the concepts which are not belonging to the qualifying procedure of products, but which are important in the spirit and philosophy even of the INAO agents though the local participant. These concepts can be a goal (*regional development, notoriety*) or a consequence of the local production valorization (*patrimony, identity*).

NOTORIETY IMAGE	REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
	PATRIMONY IDENTITY

The diagram analysis follows the preceding bench order. Its reading is based upon some definitions of the agents.

There are four previous necessary conditions before obtaining an AOC :

- The *notoriety* of the product
- The *terroir*
- The *typicity* of the product
- The *local practices*

• The notions of *local practices*, *terroir* and *typicity* are intimately connected and constitute the non codified foundations of AOC's production conditions. *Terroir* is the geographic foundation of the AOC. It is considered as an homogenous geographical entity (including physical factors and / or human factors). It is the frame of practices acquired during history (« *tradition* »). The integration of these *practices* with the *terroir's* characteristics provide the product with its *typicity*. This trilogy *terroir, local*

*practices* and *product typicity* constitutes the particularity of the AOC system. The identification of realities refereed by these concepts allow the valorization of a product's *precedence*. This precedence is, as well as notoriety, one of the necessary condition to obtain one AOC.

- All these conditions completed, the codifying work can be done by stating *production conditions*. *Production conditions* concerns the whole product processing : area delimitation, supply chains, requirements on raw materials, final product processing. The area delimitation for the AOC production constitutes the codification of the *terroir*, it is a more or less empirical action seeking after two aims : homogeneity of the product characteristics and homogeneity of geographic area.

*Local practices* contribute to formalise production conditions, e.g. the technical rules to be respected. These rules are based upon the existing practices and the product typicity. Then the building up and the application of an inspection schedule is necessary to the AOC recognition. This inspection schedule is a main vector of the system's credibility and involves inspection means applied on product identification at each stage of its processing (traçability), on production conditions and on the final product, according to defined aims (typicity, quality, specificity). All of these stages carried out, the product can be recognised in AOC.

- Lastly, the diagram describes the induced phenomenon expected from the AOC. First of all, AOC may contribute to value a positive image of the product for the consumers as well as it's notoriety. Then, the protection of one geographical denomination and particular practices associated to a product processing are perceived by the agents as a patrimony protection. This local or regional patrimony protection involves the maintain of identity and particularities of this area along the AOC processing. Lastly, the AOC takes part more or less straight in the regional development policy. It is a way to fix the supply chains on one specific territory. It's particular processing system allows to market differentiated products, generating, in principle, a value enhancement which should contribute to the maintain of the local activities.

**4.2. In spite of a strong cohesion upon the internal background, some notions are heterogeneously interpreted.**

*4.2.1. The diversity of definitions*

Let us remind here that 13 notions were defined in an heterogeneous way without any dominating interpretation. These 13 notions are the following ones :

TERROIR ORIGIN PATRIMONY IDENTITY DIVERSITY	KNOW HOW ARTISANAL INDUSTRIAL NORM	TYPICITY SPECIFICITY CHARACTER QUALITY
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Let us take some examples to illustrate the interpretation diversity of these notions.

### • **TERROIR**

The way agents define the terroir appears quite ambiguous, especially concerning the question of the part of natural and human factors in the AOC characterisation. Two interpretations of this notion must be distinguished :

- Terroir is defined as an homogeneous geographical entity founded on natural factors (climate, underground, ground, exposure, topography, hydrous conditions etc.) :

*« Surface characterised by the nature of its ground, its microclimate, its exposure »*

- Terroir is defined as a geographical entity characterised by a general natural and human factors (agro-pedo-climatic unity + general local practices).

*« Particular natural conditions conjugate with an original and ancient know how »*

This main interpretation difference for « terroir » is important in the way to conceive the notion of denomination of origin for several reasons. As a matter of fact, about 1/3 of the agents have defined « terroir » by mentioning that terroir confers to the product its particular characters. Half of them estimate that the natural characters of the terroir confers to it its typicity (*« area where notions of ground and climate contribute to give to the product which are coming from it some original characterises »*). The other half integrates human factors (*« general human and natural factors which contribute to make a particular product »*). This partition of the terroir qualifying can be found again about the product characterisation (*typicity, specificity*), and also for *denomination of origin, area and delimitation*. The recurrence of this point can be explained by the link that exists between these concepts. Let us take the example of the notion of *denomination of origin*. The area delimitation is in a certain way a codification of the « terroir ». Now, the delimitation is for part founded on product characterises that one look up to obtain. So, two elements are determinants : on one hand the « terroir » and on the other hand the product characteristics. Then two questions can be raised about the product qualifying in AOC :

- Is the area delimitation only founded on natural factors or do'es it integrate local practices ?
- Is the product typicity based upon the link between the product and its « terroir » (natural factors) or from the complex integration of natural and human factors ?

### • **TYPICITY / SPECIFICITY**

The definitions of these notions raises a real problem for the agents because typicity and specificity are frequently mistaken one for the other. These two notions are both defined as a product proper characteristics. The agents meet actually some difficulties to perceive the generally accepted distinction between vertical and horizontal dimensions of the two notions. : « *Typicity* » characterise the product in its vertical dimension : the product is

typical of the AOC, typical of the « terroir » where it come from (« *general characters originated from the terroir* »). On the contrary, « specificity », characterises a product according to its horizontal dimension : the product is specific to a category as a whole (« *Single expression of the AOC product, distinguished to the other products from the same gamut* »). However, these two notions are either defined as synonymous, or distinguished but with a frequent confusion between the two dimensions : (typicity : « *organoleptical characteristics which distinguish the AOC product from the others* »; specificity : « *proper characteristics of a product in terms to a terroir, product non transferable in an other place* »). Thus, the distinction between typicity and specificity is not clear for the most majority of the agents.

Lastly, some notions like *quality*, *patrimony* or *origin* were defined in a very diversified way because the agents have mentioned the semantic plurality of these notions. For example, the variability of definitions of the concept *quality* reflect, at some different degrees, the constraint variability about the food product processing in general (« *general factors which makes the product able to be consumated. So it is a minimal quality that must meet the sanitary norms. It is necessaryfor the marketing of one product.* » ; « *It is the recognition of a good product, it expresses the superiority of this product to an other one* » ; « *characteristics of one product* »). « *Quality* » also refers to some more specific points of the general denomination of origin like typicity and conformity of the product to the pre-established conditions (« *For one AOC, it is moreover a typical product* » ; « *notion of one product susceptible of obtaining a recognition* »).

In a very different way, the example of « *tradition* » is also interesting. *Tradition* has been defined in a homogeneous way by the agents. However, some agents have made some commentar about this notion that made us to distinguish three types of interpretation for it. The first one is purely descriptive (« *techniques and know how which come from the experiences acquired during the past* »). The second one is conservative, while agents evoke that maintaining traditions is necessary to the AOC's future development (« *respect of the local practices or ancient processing whichhave never been altered by time or human being* »). The third one is more evolutionist : the notion of tradition is not rigid and some innovation can occur (« *The word tradition do'es not exclude a certain accommodation to evolutionary practices* »). In fact, these three types of interpretation reveal very different conceptions among the agents and may question the ability of the professionnall practices to evaluate.

#### 4.2.2. *The interpretation heterogeneity of the concepts is partly linked to their ability to be codified (cf. diagram 4).*

A codified notion within INAO is an inscribed notion, regulated in the qualifying procedure of products. More broadly, these notions square with some practices, some specific functions well delimited in the working of INAO. Inversely, the non codified notions do not square with these criterion. They can be distinguished in two categories :



### *The effects of institutionnal changes on qualification processes*

- The notions are not codified within INAO because the agents do not feel the requirement to do it : a codification is possible because these notions square with some well integrated practices in the qualifying procedure of products.
- The notions are not codified within INAO because their codification raises some difficulties.

Diagram 3 reveals the factors of interpretation diversity. None notions defined in an heterogeneous way is codified within INAO, while these notions are for most of them quite difficult to be objectivized. On the contrary, most of the notion defined in an homogeneous way are codified notions within INAO. All these notions are able to be objectivized. 6 notions defined in an homogeneous way are not codified. These notions (*local practices, notoriety, traditions* etc.) square with straight integrated practices within INAO. These notions could be codified if it must be done. So, there is an important link between heterogeneity of interpretation and the codified character of the notions within INAO.

### CONCLUSION

The survey showed that most of the used concepts were defined on an homogeneous way. Most of them (11/18) are codified in the AOC procedure. 7 concepts were defined homogeneously but are not codified. The homogeneity may reveal that agents have the same daily practice and thus the existence of "social control" in the whole system, wich may be somehow as efficient as certification. If necessary, these concepts could be codified through a research process. Thus, a transition from a "domestic" and "civic" convention to an "industrial" one could be thinkable.

On the contrary, agents do not agree about some concepts, wich are obvioulsy not codified, although they are important in the AOC qualifying system (*typicity, terroir*). Here the "industrial" trend may be quite difficult to deal with in INAO and would require great efforts to be faced. Agents are actually conscious of these question ("When your are to state if a product is or not original or typical, these point is quite subjective, especially if you have to argue during a sensory analysis : is this vine typical or not ?", "It is quite difficult to assess the influence of the terroir on quality and on the product's character"). On this point of vue, the research programm initiated between INAO and INRA will in the future allow the agents to verify their assumption and provide them with codification tools.

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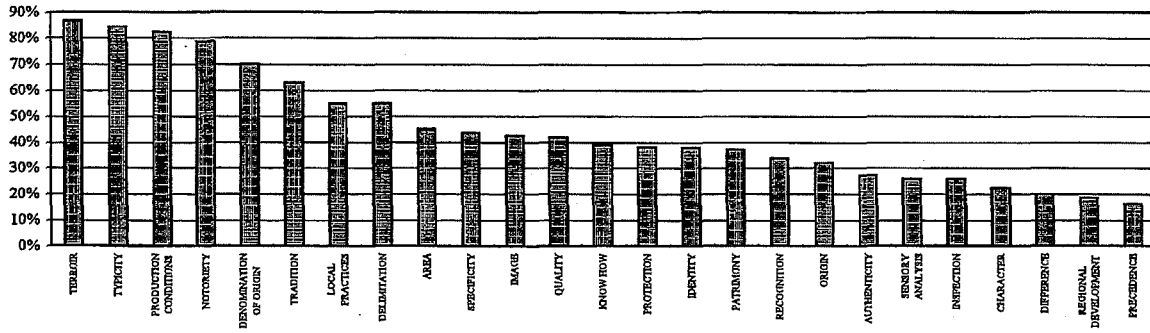
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Diagram 1

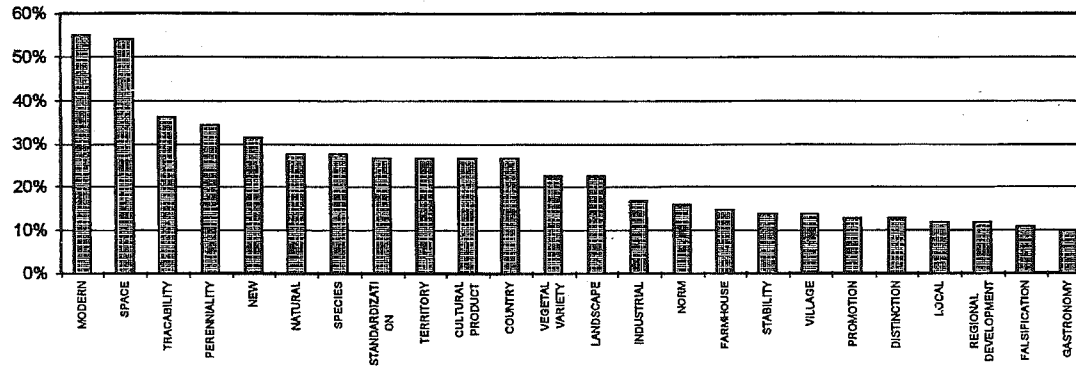
**THE 27 «IMPORTANT CONCEPTS» MOST FREQUENTLY SELECTED  
BY THE AGENTS / 149 DIFFERENT CONCEPTS (% base 112 agents)**



READING OF THE DIAGRAM : TERROR HAVE BEEN SELECTED BY 86.7% OF THE AGENTS

Diagram 2

**THE 26 « NEVER USED » MOST FREQUENTLY SELECTED CONCEPTS  
BY THE AGENTS / 54 DIFFERENT CONCEPTS (% base 102 agents)**



READING OF THE DIAGRAM: MODERN HAVE BEEN SELECTED BY 54.9% OF THE AGENTS

**Diagram 3**

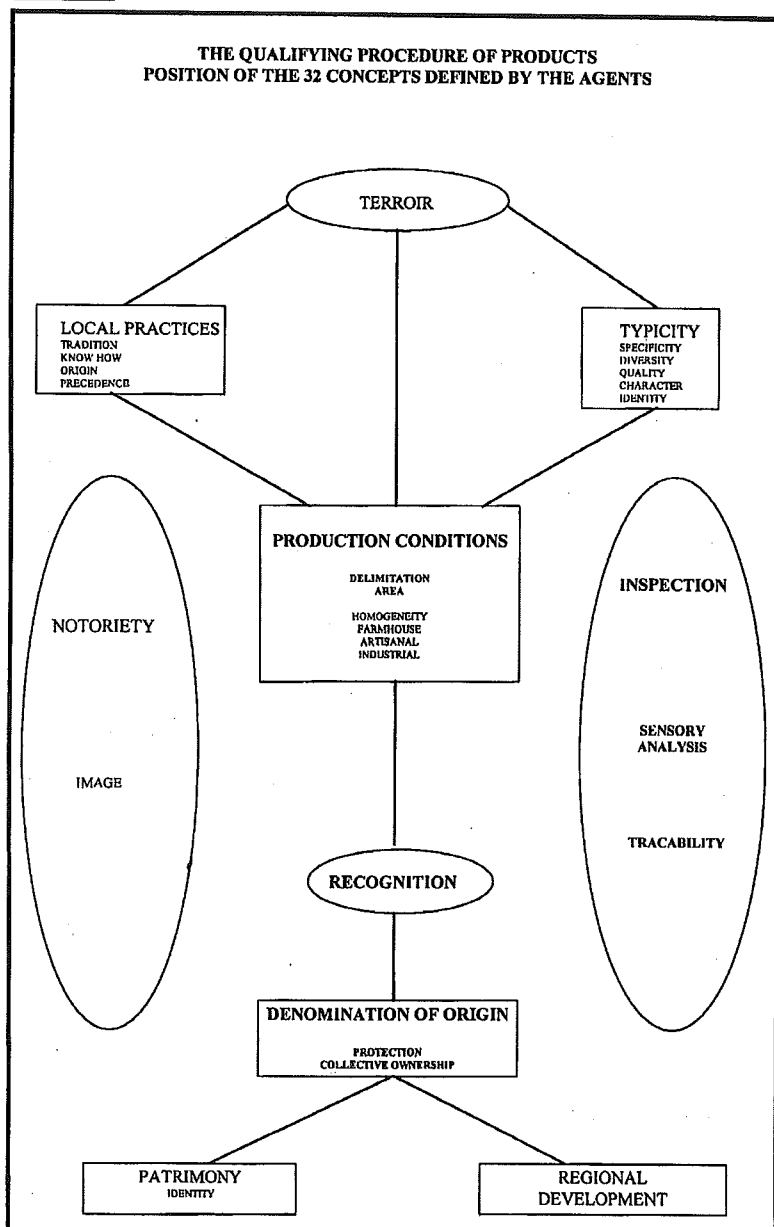


Diagram 4

