# Lausanne 2024 Abstract Submission

**Title**
How to Optimise the Your Region’s Grape Variety Structure in an International Context?

**I want to submit an abstract for:**
Conference Presentation

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**Keywords**
terroir, regional winegrape varietal specialisation

**Research Question**
Is there a criterion that can be used as a tool by policy makers and producers to determine the future grape variety structure from the point of view of uniqueness?

**Methods**
The development of a new grape variety index and its application on international grape variety databases.

**Results**
A new index of grape varietal dominance and uniqueness was developed (called Dominance-adjusted Varietal Intensity Index).

**Abstract**
Grape varieties play an important role in winemaking and wine business both in the Old and New Wine World: at least as part terroir in the former and the focus of marketing communication in the latter case. There might be competing views in this regard: heterogeneity (i.e. having a high number of grapes and in parallel reflecting international varieties like Chardonnay, Sauvignon blanc or Pinot noir) versus uniqueness (i.e. homogeneity in mainly local grape varieties e.g. Furmint in Tokaj or Blaufränkisch in Burgenland).
The inspiration for our research was the seminal work of Anderson (2010) that introduced the Varietal Intensity Index to measure a region’s relative specialisation in one variety and the Regional Similarity Index to compare the varietal structure of two regions.

However, when faced with the task of identifying grape varieties that are dominant, yet special or unique enough to determine regional identity, wine style or authentic marketing communication, we experienced some backlashes of these indices, especially the Varietal Intensity Index (VII) in the case of varietals that are relatively rare worldwide or countrywide. Given the formula of the VII, in the case of varieties grown in extremely low proportions, the indicator can very easily take on an unrealistically high value.

Therefore, our research aims to provide an index of varietal dominance and uniqueness that may be used as an indicator if a given geographical indication or region is supposed to focus on a variety in its production, development strategy or communication. In order to reach that goal, we considered factors of regional dominance (or proportion) of a variety or the varietal fragmentation of a region. The latter consideration may pay off in the case of regions producing a large number of varieties, which is the case of most Eastern European countries, especially Hungary.

An important application of the index would be an assessment of the grape varieties cultivated in a region from the point of view of typicity and uniqueness. This may arise in a situation when decisions have to be taken, or at least, suggestions need to be articulated on the potential narrowing down of a varietal portfolio of certain geographical indications in order to create a wine style that can be communicated easier and more authentically. The twenty-year-long period of the creation of the system of Districtus Austriae Controllatus (or DAC, for short) was paved with these concerns and producers’ groups in Hungary applying for the legal protection of new, terroir-based designations of origin face similar questions.

In line with the ideas above, we applied the index on Austria and Hungary using Anderson's and Nelgen's Database of Regional, National and Global Winegrape Bearing Areas by Variety in order to compare the wine regions of these countries and to back-test recent changes (e.g. narrowing down the variety pool of PDOs that were transformed from qulítäswein to DAC). The results show that by using the new index one may be able to highlight if a variety is specific to a region and track the shifts in this kind of status of a variety over time.

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