New wine merchants and gentrification: spatialization of discourses and local commercial landscapes

Arnaud Delamarre and Louis Dupont
New wine merchants and gentrification: spatialization of discourses and local commercial landscapes

Arnaud Delamarre and Louis Dupont

Introduction

New wine merchants and shops have appeared in the major metropolitan centres since the early 2000s. In France, their arrival is linked to changes in wine consumption patterns that date back to the 1960s, as well as to the transformation of the commercial offer in city centres (Navereau, 2011). These spatial and commercial changes have forced wine shops to adapt to new consumer demands, specializing for example in certain types of wine such as organics. The growth of these new traders can thus be analyzed in relation to a specific urban, social and commercial context born out of gentrification. This article aims at showing that these new shops assert their specificity through the very figure, although renewed, of the wine merchants. We will see how their personalities, but also their life courses, have been put into use in a process of commercial singularization in the urban space. In this way, they lay the foundations for a distinctive wine discourse in phase with a specific urban setting and commercial landscape, born out of the dynamics generated by the commercial gentrification (Mills 1988; Ley 2003; Butler and Robson, 2003).

We shall not return here to the complex phenomenon of gentrification, which has been widely studied and debated in French (Charmes, 2005; Bourdin, 2008; Rousseau, 2008; Clerval, 2016; 2013), and in Anglo-American (Mills, 1988; Smith, 1996; Lees, 2000; Quastel, 2009; Zukin, 2014; 1982) scientific literature. While many focus on its residential dimension, using a critical approach of the dispossession of urban space by the working classes in favor of the well-off classes, the commercial dimension is often
reduced to an ancillary element, if not a collateral consequence of residential gentrification, and not as a dynamic with its own logic. Rather, our article will be anchored in the analysis of the interactions between changes in trade and the urban transformation that results from it, a phenomenon that has been the object of recent studies (Zukin et al., 2009; Bacqué et al., 2013; Berroir, Clerval, Delage et al., 2015; Chabrol, Dubucs, Endelstein et al., 2016).

Far from being merely the spatial translation of financial and capitalist logic resulting from globalization (Smith, 2002; Clerval, 2016; 2013), gentrification can also be considered as one of the supports for the emergence of new urban neighborhood identities (Corbillé, 2013). Gentrification can indeed be seen in its local/global dynamics, so much so that we can speak of a plurality of gentrifications (Chabrol et al., 2016). In this perspective, the independent merchant in a neighborhood in the process of being gentrified can be a marker or an actor of gentrification depending on the urban arrangements (Chabrol, Fleury and Van Criekingen, 2014). Independent neighborhood retailing can be seen as supporting a process where the incoming consumer is increasingly sensitive to local consumption, in practice or in discourse (Lemarchand, 2016). This local consumption, as “consumption of the local”, presupposes new ways of purchasing directed towards local products (as in locavore, short circuits, or terroir products), as well as in a commitment by consumers to local procurement practices that contribute to economic and commercial development of a neighborhood. It is the role of the retailer as a catalyst for these aspirations that we focus on, highlighting not only his role in shaping the district’s commercial offer, but also in modeling the consumption practices of the district’s residents. Our article aims to show that the new wine merchants are representative of the process of reaffirmation of independent shops in the city, and how the wine trade, with its new approaches to wine consumption, fits particularly well into these social and commercial changes in cities.

We will first show that wine, as a “local” product, is becoming an important factor in the singularization of commerce, particularly on the scale of a gentrified downtown urban district, which has allowed this change in the status of the wine trade. Second, we will demonstrate that this transformation is the result of a specific urban, social and commercial context that requires a reading of this phenomenon on a local scale. Then, in focusing on two wine merchants in the 9th and 11th districts of Paris, opened in the 2000s, we will explore their choice of location, the display of their cellars, and lastly their paths and approaches to wine. These combined elements will bring to light the spatialization of wine discourses anchored in the local dynamics of commerce, and of gentrification.

From the wine shop to the new wine merchant

Traditional representation of wine and of the wine merchant

The status, image and role of the wine professional have evolved simultaneously in France with the metamorphosis of the wine trade and wine consumption. In the 1960s, the consumption of a “table wine” was widespread, characterized as it was by very cheap prices and often by its low quality. According to the semiologist Roland Barthes (1970, p. 69), wine is a fortifying food drink established as a “totem drink”, supplied
mainly by wine merchants and other “drinking establishments”. These merchants are perceived by their customers as grocers or retailers. In the French society of the 1960s and 1970s, wine conveys a positive image that is mainly rooted in the rather traditional and earthy French identity (Demossier, 2010). Wine therefore has a strong cultural value and the purchase and consumption of wine is similar to the purchase of other everyday products: people would go to the wine merchant after buying their baguette!

The anthropologist Pierre Mayol (1994 [1980]) studies the relationship a working-class family has to wine in the Croix-Rousse district of Lyon in the mid-1970s: “There are only two foods that ‘accompany’ the meal from beginning to end, and accommodate each moment of the series: bread and wine. They act like two ramparts that keep the meal going. They are therefore the basis of the kitchen, which must be thought of first before any other gastronomic decision” (pp. 122-123).

### Changes in the wine trade and consumption (1960s to 1970s)

In the 1960s, a major structural change affected trade in France: changes in food retailing forecasted the emergence of the consumer society (Moati, 2001). Supermarkets emerge in part by relying on generous wine shelves (several hundred references), special events (wine fair – foire aux vins), and low prices, to attract a broad and diversified clientele. It gives them a formidable attractiveness compared to traditional wine merchants, in a period when a sharp decline in wine consumption was observed in France. However, geographically speaking, this deployment of mass distribution is not uniform, it tends to be concentrated mainly on the outskirts of towns, somewhat sparing the city centers (Metton, 1982).

This spatial pattern helps specialized wine stores such as Nicolas to maintain itself by deploying its stores in the city centers. Its strategy was to stand out from the mass distribution, basing its discourse and communication on both its expertise and its work in selecting the wine offer. An advertisement by the Nicolas chain store dating from 1973 strongly testifies to this positioning in relation to mass distribution, with an explicit slogan: “When you look for a good wine among hundreds of labels, you have hundreds of opportunities to make a mistake”. This advertisement is accompanied by a text that enhances in several ways Nicolas’s discourse on wine. First of all, it highlights its expertise in relation to the relative loss of reference points for the customers in a supermarket shelf. The latter are described as “overwhelmed” and “disarmed”, so the company therefore invites to trust Nicolas’s cellar men. Moreover, it values its seriousness and competence in the selection of wines: “Nicolas chooses its own wines, gives advises to the winemakers, and controls the vinification on the spot (op. cit)”. Nicolas thus wants to present itself as the most reliable interface between the wine production chain and the consumer. This guarantee means that the consumer is not misled in his choice of wines, as Nicolas guarantees their quality by only selling vins de terroir, and by removing wines from its list, “at the slightest sign of weakness” (op.cit).

This positioning on a selection of products from “terroirs”, meaning “quality products”, found an even growing resonance in the 1990s, in a context where questions about the affluent society, and one of its corollaries, mass distribution, were both increasingly perceived as supports for anonymized and depersonalized consumption (Lemarchand, 2016, pp. 120-121). Wine sold in supermarkets appears as one of the products symbolizing this depersonalization of consumption. In fact, in 2015,
supermarkets (hyper + super + hard discount) continue to capture 83% of wine purchases in France, with the remainder divided between local stores such as neighborhood grocery stores (6%) and wine merchants (4%), followed by direct sales (3%), on-line sales (1%) and other unspecified formats (4%) (France Agrimer, 2016). This perception lead to a recent prospective study devoted to the evolution of food habits in France, which mentions a turning point in the supply of food products and in the consumption trends: "In the current economic and social context, the search for social ties is progressing and is reflected in the development of local shops. Generalist stores also seem less able to meet the new expectations of consumers who are looking for a more segmented and individualized offer than ten years ago" (Blezat Consulting, Credoc and Deloitte, 2017, p. 70).

This need for closer ties, both social and local, is one of the factors explaining the recent craze for local shops, and more particularly for wine merchants, which represent more than 5,500 points of sale in France in 2014, a constant increase since the end of the 1990s. In this context, wine merchants are experiencing a particular revival in the urban centers of large conurbations, particularly in Paris (where mass retailing is very present, but rarely in the form of hypermarkets). The number of wine merchants increased by an average of 15% between 2007 and 2014 (APUR, 2015). For the most part independent and working mainly with small producers, these new cellar men seem to be responding to new consumer trends. This quantitative rise in the number of wine merchants.

The rise of new wine merchants in the city: between trade, consumption and gentrification

Several studies have shown that the phenomenon of gentrification is not limited to a mechanical process of transformation of the social and urban framework of the city, but is also accompanied by the development of specific consumption patterns (Chabrol, Collet, Giroud et al., 2016). The district and the shopping street become the spaces of urban experience and amenity, constituting one of the modalities of the social construction of the inhabitants’ space (Charmes, 2005). Within these gentrified neighborhoods, shops tend to reflect the inhabitants’ consumption choices, and even become symbolic places for the construction of their sociability. Commerce is both a point of convergence and a starting point for social interactions: "[..] when shops are numerous and diversified, people find almost everything they need for daily life. Not to mention the opening of specialized businesses that explain why they can almost do without going to other boroughs [...] wooden toy stores for children, wine stores specializing in biodynamic and organic wines, delicatessens or gourmet restaurants" (Corbillé, 2013, pp. 34-35). In looking at things in this way, that is the eyes of the neighborhood shopkeeper and consumers, we can ask ourselves in what way is the opening of a gentrified wine shop related to a specific urban and social context. We tried to answer this question in studying (new) wine merchants in Paris and New York, pairing their commercial discourse on wine with the urban setting their wine shop is located. More than 50 semi-directive interviews were conducted with wine merchants in districts of Paris and New York (Manhattan). For this article, we will focus on the Parisian case by presenting two wine merchants who are representative of the interaction of commercial forms with the considerable urban,
social, and commercial changes that have taken place in the neighborhood of their settlement.

The first wine merchant is located near the Pigalle District (9th arrondissement of Paris), a district particularly concerned by gentrification since the end of the 2000s (Clerval, 2016 [2013]). This transformation is accompanied by a transition in the district’s image towards a “trendy” commercial and consumer environment under the aegis of an urban marketing embodied by the name “South Pigalle” (Bacqué et al. 2015). The second is located in the Oberkampf District (11th), a gentrified area since the 1990s (ibid.), and whose dynamics continued in the 2000s, driven in particular by the commercial rue Oberkampf. This street went from being a shopping suburb street to a “trendy” street (Fleury, 2003), giving rise to the construction of an urban centre based on specific and spatialized consumption practices: “[...] Its originality lies in the double spatial features that characterize it: the relations of proximity and the new socio-spatial practices, which create a new centrality - at the scale of the entire city - with its own places, temporalities and dynamics” (p. 246).

The selection of those two wine merchants results from the special dynamic of the gentrification process in their districts, but also from the depth and richness of the two wine merchants’ responses, which reveal complex issues that we will try to unravel. So, our aim here is not to draw general conclusions, but to highlight the interactions between a spatial and social process (gentrification), with commercial and consumer dynamics. The interviews thus reveal that the choice of the localization is based on several parameters, among them, most notably, spatial ones.

The role of the urban and commercial context

The context of urban and commercial changes played a role in the choice of the installation in the district. There is, however, a notable difference between the two merchants: while the first wants to be a pioneer in its neighborhood in the “independent wine merchant” niche, the second rather put emphasis on the emerging attractiveness of a neighborhood, and even of a street that is “changing”. One emphasizes the commercial context, while the other points to the urban context. Moreover, in both cases, we can see the importance of opportunity in the choice of the installation: they both bet on the future of the district. They are in fact betting on the future change in the commercial atmosphere of the district, wishing
by their presence to attract similar businesses. This is why our interviews also revealed a desire for spatial inscriptions of the merchants in the territory: more than the district or the street, it is a question of finding the location or the place that will distinguish this business from another. This is why these two wine merchants are also characterized by the layouts of their cellars, which participate in the staging of the place.

The staging of a business place

15 The concept of “staging” has generally described as the process though which a business gives itself a lift, physically or structurally, before being put up for sale (hence “business staging”). Geographers see the process as a way for a business to integrate to a place, in other words, to conjugate the business venue, its products, and the place where it is located. A classic case is the window shopping at Christmas time (Lemarchand, 2014), or yet commerce located in heritage neighborhoods (Mermet and Gravari-Barbas, 2013). Indeed, the two wine merchants are trying to fit into the “trendy” atmosphere of their neighborhoods, and, accordingly, they will deploy various atypical devices to offer a singular wine experience.

16 S., for La Cave du 9e, sought an original concept capable of setting it apart from the other wine merchants in the neighborhood, in making the pre-existing configuration of the place as a part of his discourse and strategy: “It used to be a caterer here. I had the idea of opening a cellar and a restaurant together, a concept that has become fashionable today. The place was a good fit. And very important: underneath, I have a reserve of 80 square meters. So, I can store wine, which is important when you have a restaurant business. Here, I can make up to 30 place settings”. In an open space of about 60 square meters, S. wants to propose two approaches to wine consumption: to the left of the entrance, there are racks displaying bottles of wine for takeaway sales; to the right, separated by a chest of drawers filled with takeaway bottles, the restaurant area consists of about ten tables. This arrangement allows the consumption of wines on the site for a “corkage fee” of eight euros, provided they are accompanied by dishes prepared in the kitchen area at the back of the room. This layout encourages the development of interaction between the customers of the winery, but, even more so, a deployment of relations between the residents of the neighborhood.
Differently, *La Cave du 11<sup>e</sup>* only offers takeover sales, but its setting remains no less original: nestled in an old butcher’s shop, the “décor” has changed little since the arrival of a new owner and a new business in 2001. The façade still bears the inscription “boucherie” (butcher shop) accompanied by the name of the former butcher. The interior, barely 30 square meters in size, has remained in its original juice: small colored tiles coexist with a polished glass false ceiling containing light spots. The atmosphere is more reminiscent of the 1960s. Moreover, the organization of the place seems non-existent: the bottles are scattered all over the walls and the floor. In the middle of the room, there is a large wooden console where dozens of bottles are stacked. The cellar master stands behind a counter at the back of the cellar. The size of the crowd is amplified by the narrowness of the place. All in all, one can say that although the two cellars have different approaches, they both share the same quest for a certain conviviality; one by a hybrid format of the cellar and restaurant, the other by offering a profusion of bottles in a rather cramped space. These layout choices are part of a growing consumer demand for authentic and/or local products sold in meaningful and original places.
A layout that promotes “conviviality”

The approach of the wine merchant of La Cave du 9e reveals one of the commercial repercussions of gentrification. Indeed, the gentrified districts of large cities tend to be characterized by an over-representation of “convivial” places such as food shops, bars or restaurants, as these activities increasingly tend to be coupled. According to the anthropologist Sophie Corbillé (2013), these are the preferred places for consumption practices geared towards the construction of sociability between inhabitants: “For the people interviewed, this practice is established as one of the key moments in the performance of friendly relations” (pp. 122-124). Whether at a delicatessen, a wine store, a wine bar, or a restaurant, these types of businesses generate trends in consumption that go along with a “strong social return”. In other words, these food stores would become places conducive to more or less informal exchanges between neighbors and customers. These interactions would aim at sharing impressions of the products sold by these businesses, contributing to the development of strong social ties while remaining “on the go” and “light” in the exchange (ibid., p. 125). From this point of view, the phenomenon of gentrification would tend to intensify the supply of food stores in a neighborhood (Bridge and Dowling 2001; Van Criekingen and Fleury, 2006). As a result, the supply of food stores attracts categories of consumers with similar tastes, and who frequent similar stores.

“In other words, gentrification is not limited to a change of resident, but also to a movement where a middle class, at different levels of purchasing power, moves away from mass consumption and culturally invests in consumer practices and products that express a lifestyle and values, a kind of social and geographical distinction because this amalgamation of products, local values and geographical space contributes to urban growth and transformation” (Lemarchand, 2016, p. 129).

In this way, the choices made by these two wine merchants regarding the premises’ layout aim to be in phase with the consumer trends observable throughout society. However, the layout of the place alone is not enough to give an extra interest or
originality to the business place. It must also be embodied by the person who carries out the activity. Our interviews show the central role played by personal paths and personalities in the elaboration of a life story, and thus of a specific discourse on wine. In our last section, we will show how the discourse of these wine merchants acts on at least two dimensions of gentrification: as commercial and social markers of gentrification, these wine merchants are not only players in residential and commercial gentrification, but also in the aspirations of the inhabitants to consume “locally”. In this way, these shopkeepers formulate commercial discourses based on “conviviality”, claiming a singularity and even assuming their subjectivity. In this way, they respond to a need for local identification through consumption. We will therefore study how the life paths of these wine merchants, as well as their approach to their profession, shape the development of new discourses on wine that resonate with the aspirations of neighborhood consumers, and how these lead to renewed forms of neighborhood wine trade.

From segmentation to differentiation: new wine merchants as “actors” in their neighborhood

Whether they are graduates of hotel management schools, business schools, art schools, universities, or even self-taught with or without diplomas, wine merchants present a wide variety of profiles. Most of them went through professional reconversions, as it is the case for other independent merchants in gentrifying neighborhoods (Leblanc, 2017b). Although the two portraits of wine merchants presented here are not intended to be representative of professional reconversions in the strict sense, their personal and professional backgrounds reveal bifurcations and experiences that are decisive in understanding their philosophy of wine, as well as their embodiment of the wine merchant profession. In the following lines, we will ask ourselves in what way their training, jobs, or life paths lead them to promote a certain relationship with the wine commercial activity. And to what extent do these elements influence customers’ choices and vision of wine?

Two wine merchants with singular profiles

S., about 35 years old, is the owner and manager of La Cave du 9e. He first obtained a two-year professional diploma in biology at the Pierre and Marie Curie University, before pursuing a program in the viticulture enology in the Nantes region. He completed his studies in enology in Bordeaux where he became a wine producer in an estate. He then traveled extensively to learn about different winemaking techniques. Very soon, he felt the need to return to his home town, Paris: “After my travels, I came back to Paris because it is my hometown. In fact, after a while, I wanted to come back because I missed my family and the city too. I wanted to continue working in the wine business, and that’s why I started working in cellars. Very soon, I wanted to start my own business”. We can see here the importance of the feeling of belonging, and the emotional dimension bound to the place of origin.

C., about 60 years old, is the manager of La Cave du 11e. His life path differs significantly. Originally from Cannes, he worked directly after his high school in several bars and nightclubs on the French Riviera as a seasonal worker, barman, then waiter. At the
beginning of the 1980s, he decided to leave Cannes to settle in Paris. During that
decade, he worked in various Parisian nightclubs. In the 1990s, wishing to “change his
life”, he seeks a job with less restrictive schedules. A wine lover, he decided to make a
career out of it after obtaining a job as a sales assistant in an independent winery: “I
was lucky enough to become the arpeggio of a wine merchant who taught me everything. I also
read a lot about wine, but I didn’t have any academic training". He was trained “on the job”
through various visits to Parisian wine shops, before becoming manager of La Cave du

At first glance, these profiles seem relatively classic and usual in the wine world: the
first has trained in viticulture and enology, whereas the second worked for several
years as a waiter in the hotel and restaurant business before becoming a wine
merchant. However, we want to show that their way of thinking about the job of a wine
merchant differs from the usual standards, each of them promoting a personal idea of
wine, drawn widely from their personal and professional experiences. If this aspect
could be found among many wine merchants, we would like to emphasize here on the
storytelling of this experience, in order to put it at the service of a discourse on wine
that is original and singular.10

Figure 3. Typology and localization of the new wine merchants interviewed in Paris.11

Wine merchant’s vision: the fruit of professional and personal
experience

S., from La Cave du 9°, sells mainly organic wines12. A choice that was not obvious for
him: “[…] I had some training in production […] turned towards traditional, conventional
culture: chemical treatments, at a set date, with this type of product, such type of molecule […]
Organic viticulture count for only three courses over two years of my training in BTS…” S.
recounts how he gradually questioned his chemical certainties when one of his former
classmates became seriously ill: “A winegrower friend of mine discovered that he could no
longer have children, after medical tests showed that his constant exposure to chemicals for
several years was the major cause of his sterility”. He became aware of both health and environmental issues: “I could no longer imagine myself endorsing and selling wines containing so many chemicals. It was an electric shock. For me it was a question of ethics and honesty towards myself and my customers”.

For C., from La Cave du 11e, his approach to the profession is above all the fruit of a self-taught experience of wine: “[...] tasting [...] is a matter of choice, the goal is to be well guided and to have things explained to you. As far as I’m concerned, I learned a lot by myself, but at one point, there were people who guided me and gave me the basics in tasting so that I could understand what I drink”. Through the description of his journey, C.’s approach is to value the transmission of a taste for discovery and experience to his clients:

“Learning on your own is not easy, but afterwards it’s a question of practice and memory. Anyone can do it with practice and willpower. What I sometimes miss is the lack of training on wine, which doesn’t always make me very pedagogical [...] On the other hand, there is the risk of being too formatted, too academic, and therefore that the advice I offer is disembodied. [...] Academicism is not bad in itself, it does not prevent independence of spirit; the young trainees who come to us often have fairly classical backgrounds (hotel school, sommeliers, business school, etc.), but they choose to work in an independent winery rather than in a four- or five-star hotel [...] with the earning that goes with it”.

The presentation of these two wine merchants thus highlights an articulation of their approach to wine with a choice of life, a personal ethic and an assumed subjectivity, which they seek to crystallize from a discourse on wine promoting authenticity. This approach is then put at the service of a clientele eager for an “original” buying and drinking experience.

**Assuming subjectivity: from the discourse of “authentic” wine to the social and spatial experience**

In their posture, the two wine merchants ensure that they place themselves in the service of the logic of going beyond the purely commercial relationship, in order to create interactions, links, if not connivance, with the clientele. Indeed, S. considers that he necessarily influences the way his customers drink, but also the profile of his customers, by sharing his philosophy of wine focused on organic wines:

“[...] You try to make them discover by making them overflowing with their taste. You try to connect them to something a little bit different that they are not used to drinking. [...] You don’t tell them (at first) that the wine they drank is organic. You have to let them taste it and if they like it and want to know more, then you can start to explain your approach; at that point, a relationship of trust is established. This can be a way to make them aware by themselves of the health and environmental dimensions surrounding wine, beyond the pure tasting experience” [...] .

Having a regular and loyal clientele, S. has been able to build gradually strong links with his customers: “Here, the clientele is very local, from the neighborhood [...] On Fridays, the market, 100 meters from my cellar, is very important. After buying their meat, vegetables, cheese or fish, people come to buy their wine, and I regularly see the same faces”. In this customer itinerary, it is a matter of maintaining and prolonging the quest for sociability that consumers come to find in going to the market. This is why the cellar man’s discourse must also be articulated in a place designed and arranged to
offer the customer a friendly atmosphere that turns into a social and spatial experience:

“One client told me that he feels being at home [...] it’s a ‘little slice of life that we share,’ said he. [...] People start talking to each other through their regular visits to my basement, and joke that they’ve already met each other at the market a few minutes before. [...] It creates a really interesting human and social fabric. [...] there are things that happen at the time of purchase, which is quite short. On the restaurant side, as the tables are close together, people sometimes start to talk to each other. Some discover that they live in the same street. I realize that the place is a real weaver of links”.

For C., from La Cave du 11, the approach is somewhat different, and aims to promote the authenticity of the exchange, even if it is “direct” if not a directive:

“When I sell, I always start by saying: ‘What do you eat, how much do you want to spend?’ That’s all you shouldn’t do in principle in commerce, but that’s how it’s done. It’s a bit radical, but I quickly want to avoid the purely commercial part of the transaction. [...] I could make them dream, by pushing them to buy a more expensive bottle, but you can disappoint the customer. And if they leave my house with the impression that they’ve spent more than they wanted, they won’t come back. [...] So, I prefer to play fair with my customers to build their loyalty and, above all, their confidence. Sometimes this doesn’t work, because customers feel they are being pushed around too much or even provoked. But for those who come back, they know that a real relationship of trust has been established between us”.

By seeking to create more direct and personal relationships with their customers, these wine merchants are trying to get away from certain “pretenses” of the “customer-merchant” relationship by relying on an alternative discourse on wine, and an alternative way of doing business. In this context, we can observe the foundations of a commercial strategy of differentiation, which Moati (2011) calls “precision trade”, whose aim remains customer loyalty: it is a question of building a unifying discourse likely to attract customers who adhere to the philosophy and concept of the shop to generate identification with the place. The wine merchant’s discourse is intended to be anchored both in the shop, and in the identity and atmosphere of the neighborhood. It is thus professional and social mode of “appropriation of spaces” (Leblanc, 2017a, p. 9). It is here that the commercial strategy of the wine merchant meets the logic of gentrification. More than just a simple local shopkeeper in the city, these types of wine shop become what Lallemand and Corbillé (2007) have called “city makers”: shops interwoven into the local dynamics of gentrification, and grafted onto the consumer identities of the inhabitants of the neighborhood. In other words: the aspirations of the inhabitants to consume “locally” find their expression in the commercial discourse proposed by these wine merchants: by focusing on conviviality, exchange and originality, these wine merchants want to generate, as well as respond to, a need for local identification in consumption. These elements contribute to the singularization of the neighborhood, and make it attractive to populations “outside” the neighborhood who have similar aspirations. In this sense, new merchants in gentrified neighborhoods, such as the new wine merchants we just presented, have a notable specificity compared to other wine merchants, due to the fact that their existence is concomitant with the phenomenon of gentrification: they help to shape the commercial landscape of gentrification at the local level (Mills, 1988; Ley, 1996; Butler and Robson, 2003), and, together with other gentrified local businesses, they help to attract new residents, consumers and businesses around shared discourses and lifestyles within a neighborhood.
Conclusion

As we can see, these new wine merchants are the result of a social and cultural transformation of wine consumption patterns, but also of a specific urban and commercial context, born out of the gentrification of certain city-center neighborhoods. This phenomenon tends to redefine wine merchants as specialized shops that interact strongly with their neighborhood of installation. In this sense, they are the fruit of the changes in downtown shops, but also of the specific dynamics of changes in wine consumption. Within these places, a strong relationship is established between the retailer and the customer. This exchange generates social and spatial links, since the place of trade and the figure that embodies it are the receptacles of specific consumption patterns, generating affinity to a territory. The figure of the wine merchant, and beyond that, the specialized neighborhood wine shop, become “producers” of new discourses on wine, which echo the aspirations of the consumers and clients of these places, helping to make them important actors in gentrification. Wine shops are markers of gentrification; they contribute to a neighborhood identity (Di Méo, 2007), associated with a loose community of values.13

It is thus a redefinition of the very nature of commerce, and their spatialization, that can be seen from these new types of wine merchants: they reflect and fit in with the new modes of consumption. They also promote consumption practices that have been on the rise in recent years: short product supply circuits, purchases in independent neighborhood shops, interactions between residents and merchants. This aspiration for the “local”, which affects the product, its supply chain, as much as the place of supply, is thus the expression of a search for an intimate link with commerce: “[...] neighborhood relations, and tacit recognition of local belonging are established there. The local territory is also that of the ‘place’ [...] it is a living environment [...]. Local consumption thus becomes synonymous with ‘close’, or a new proximity, a place of understanding and action. What we grasp behind this socialization of exchange is, after all, the need for the link that is established in any ‘commerce’” (Lemarchand, 2016, p. 124).

BIBLIOGRAPHY


DEMOSSIER M. (2010), Wine drinking culture in France: a national myth or a modern passion?, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 236 p.


NOTES

1. The expression “new wine merchant” refers to the four dimensions that characterize, in a way or another, these newcomers in the wine-selling business: 1- professional reconversion: they are new in the wine business and/or as a merchant; 2- they sell new wine, organic, natural, biodynamic; 3- the shops open recently and in usual locations, a new trend for wine merchants; 4- they are characterized by a new approach to customers.

2. The term gentrification was proposed by sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 to designate the urban changes in London, marked by the emergence of a middle class settling in the city center, at the expense of a working class leaving the urban centers to move to the periurban areas. In the 1980s and 1990s, other studies showed that social change in neighborhoods was also accompanied by changes in lifestyle and consumption patterns in the neighborhoods (Zukin, 2014; 1982; Lees, 2000; Bourdin, 2008).

3. A “wine merchant” is an establishment where alcoholic beverages are sold for consumption on the premises or for takeaways. In the 1960s, these merchants offered small, cheap wines “in bulk” sold in cubitainers or bottles. Today, neighborhood grocery shops, open continuously and late, sell only bottled wine among other products and services.

4. Wine consumption dropped to 43 litres in 2013 from 104 litres (per inhabitant/per year) in the 1970s (France Agrimer, 2015).


6. The qualifier “terroir” for a food product continues to hold a strong symbolic value in France, as it is closely assimilated to the image of a “local” and “quality” product (see Ascher, 2005; Delfosse, 2011; Rouvellac, 2016).


9. For the purposes of this article, we have anonymized the names of the wine shops studied as well as those of the wine merchants we interviewed.

10. And even at many other independent businesses (independent booksellers, cheese makers, delicatessens, florists...).

11. The map is taken from a doctoral thesis (Delamarre, 2019) in which the discourses of 23 wine merchants located in northeastern Paris were analyzed, each represented by a different colored dot according to its typology. The two cavistes discussed in this article are two so-called
“alternative” cavistes located respectively in the 9th and 11th arrondissements of Paris (the black circles on the map designate the districts where they are located).

12. Organic wines contain on average half as much sulfur ($\text{SO}_2$) as so-called conventional wines. The “organic” label also guarantees a very moderate use of chemicals in the winemaking process.

13. In his PhD thesis, Arnaud Delamarre (2019) observes similar patterns in New York City, but with more various combinations or connections between places, products and wine discourses. We see more a community of values gravitating around specific places than a neighbourhood community.

ABSTRACTS

The status, image and role of the wine professional have evolved simultaneously in France with the metamorphosis of the wine trade and wine consumption. In the French society of the 1960s and 1970s, wine conveys a positive image that is mainly rooted in the rather traditional and earthy French identity. Building on this cultural trait, supermarkets emerge by relying on generous wine shelves (several hundred references), special events (wine fair — foire aux vins), and low prices, to attract a broad and diversified clientele. However, geographically speaking, this deployment of mass distribution is not uniform, it tends to be concentrated mainly on the outskirts of towns, somewhat sparing the city centres. This spatial pattern helps specialized wine stores to maintain themselves by deploying its stores in those centres. Since the early 2000s, New wine merchants and shops have appeared in the major metropolitan centres. This article aims at showing that these new shops assert their specificity through the very figure, although renewed, of the wine merchants. We will see how their personalities, but also their life courses, have been put into use in a process of commercial singularization in the urban space. In this way, they lay the foundations for a distinctive wine discourse in phase with a specific urban setting and commercial landscape, born out of the dynamics generated by the commercial gentrification.

Le statut, l’image et le rôle du professionnel du vin ont évolué en France parallèlement à la métamorphose du commerce et de la consommation du vin. Dans la société française des années 1960 et 1970, le vin véhicule une image positive qui s’enracine principalement dans l’identité française plutôt traditionnelle et terrienne. S’appuyant sur ce trait culturel, la grande distribution émerge en s’appuyant sur des étals de vins généreux (plusieurs centaines de références), des événements spéciaux (foire aux vins) et des prix bas, pour attirer une clientèle large et diversifiée. Cependant, géographiquement, ce déploiement de la grande distribution n’est pas uniforme, il tend à se concentrer principalement en périphérie des villes, épargnant quelque peu les centres-villes. Cette configuration spatiale a permis aux cavistes spécialisés de se maintenir en déployant leurs magasins dans ces centres. Depuis le début des années 2000, de nouveaux cavistes et magasins de vin sont apparus dans les grands centres métropolitains. Cet article vise à montrer que ces nouveaux commerces affirment leur spécificité à travers la figure même, bien que renouvelée, des cavistes. Nous verrons comment leurs personnalités, mais aussi leurs parcours de vie, ont été mis au service d’un processus de singularisation commerciale dans l’espace urbain. Ils posent ainsi les bases d’un discours viticole distinctif en phase avec un cadre urbain et un paysage commercial spécifiques, nés des dynamiques générées par la gentrification commerciale.
INDEX

Keywords: new wine merchants, commercial discourse, local, gentrification, Paris
Mots-clés: néo-cavistes, discours commercial, échelle locale, gentrification, Paris

AUTHORS

ARNAUD DELAMARRE
Docteur en géographie, Salarié AREP - Chargé de mission AMO Émergence,
Arnaud.delamarre@arep.fr

LOUIS DUPONT
Professeur émérite Sorbonne Université – géographie
ORCID 0000-0002-0160-8283
Louis.Dupont@sorbonne-universite.fr