

Waiting for the meteorite

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 19 Ottobre 2026



Britt and Per Karlsson published an article on Forbes last July 28, with a deliberately provocative title: [*Wine Crisis? What Wine Crisis?*](#) **They did something simple, and for that very reason unfortunately rare: they asked the producers.** In the United States, in Argentina, in several European countries, in Georgia, in South Africa, in New Zealand. And the answers, they write, were much less gloomy than they expected.

Note: this is not a denialist article. **The Karlssons do not question that the sector is going through a very difficult phase.** Consumption is falling, habits are changing, the climate is presenting ever steeper bills, inventories weigh heavily, costs are rising. All true, all documented.

What they question is something else: the idea that there is only one crisis, the same everywhere, hitting everyone to the same degree. It is exactly what I have been arguing for years.

And it has cost me quite a few insults, especially from some trade organizations, which do not want to hear about a “differentiated” crisis.

I have written countless times that there is no wine crisis. There is the crisis of certain types of wine. Of certain production models. Of certain commercial strategies. Of certain communication models. Of quite a few denominations, many of which, however, to tell the truth, have been in difficulty since their very genesis. They are profoundly different things, and calling them by the same name is not a lexical detail: it is a choice with very concrete consequences.

Because generalization risks becoming a great alibi. In fact, let's be honest, it already is. **If the crisis is global, planetary, inescapable, then no one is responsible for anything.** Neither is the one who kept producing the same wine for decades without asking who was drinking it.

Neither is the one who built their commercial strategy on a single market and a single importer, or even without a commercial structure. Neither is the one who communicates today with the same language as thirty-five years ago. **It is going badly for everyone, so it is going badly for me too... end of analysis.**

The result is that today I see too many businesses, too many consortia, too many denominations that are essentially immobile. Waiting. **As if they were waiting for a meteorite that should make the sector disappear, just as it made the dinosaurs disappear millions of years ago.** It is an attitude I have never understood.

I struggle to understand those who think they can draw something positive from such an indistinct reading. And I also struggle to understand those who, in perfect good faith, are convinced that observing and recounting the case histories

that work in this phase only serves to generate dangerous illusions.

I will always vote for transparency. Not only for an ethical reason, which does matter. But because I am convinced that only by looking at reality in all its facets, the ugly ones and the good ones, can the right solutions then be found for a new setup of the supply chain. One that is indeed necessary for the entire system.

Because that is precisely the point: saying that the crisis is not the same for everyone does not mean saying that everything is going well. It means the opposite. It means that those who are suffering must understand why they are suffering, instead of leaning on a collective explanation that absolves them and leaves them exactly where they are.

I have a point of comparison that I have always carried with me. Part of my family, in the past, worked in the footwear sector. **A sector that has been largely wiped out.** The official version is that producing in China or other low labor cost countries was cheaper. True, but partial.

The other half of the story is that few wanted to evolve, to innovate the product, to make it truly original and different from the standard. Those who did so, in Italy, still sell today, and sell well.

I live not far from what was considered the cradle of so-called "period-style furniture". **A district that carried on undeterred along its own path even when that type of furniture no longer appealed to almost anyone.** There too, the crisis was told as an external event, meteorological, endured.

I continue to taste many, too many wines with outdated approaches. And I taste them within denominations where other producers, on the same grape varieties and the same soils, have evolved, have sought and are seeking interpretations more in tune with current consumption dynamics. **Same territory,**

same production regulations, opposite outcomes. If the crisis were truly general and indistinct, this could not happen.

Besides, it is not a novelty: it is the story of the evolution of any sector that does not want to die by marrying forever traditions that no longer interest anyone. Careful not to misunderstand. It does not mean renouncing one's roots. It does not mean running like fools after the whims of consumers.

It means knowing how to read history, being able to interpret the inevitable evolutions of the markets, knowing how to identify in one's own territories and one's own grape varieties the most correct interpretations. **It is cultural work before technical work, and it requires far more courage than continuing to do what one has always done.**

Thinking that one can still drink some Chiantis similar to those my Sienese grandfather let me taste in the 1970s may well be a Proustian madeleine for me, but for most consumers it is simply an obsolete product. They are two truths that coexist, and the second does not cancel the sentimental value of the first. **But it is the second that determines revenue.**

The Karlssons, traveling across five continents, found companies that are suffering and companies that are selling well. The latter, almost always, have diversified markets, a recognizable identity, a direct relationship with those who drink their wines. It is not magic, it is not luck, and above all it is not a consolation, it is simply a diagnosis. And diagnoses, by definition, are differentiated. **We keep calling it "wine crisis" and we will keep treating it badly.**

Key points

1. **Differentiated crisis:** the wine sector faces several

crises, varying by wine type, production model and denomination.

2. **Reject the global alibi:** a generalized crisis excuses everyone and keeps businesses and consortia waiting instead of acting.
3. **Diversify markets** and build a recognizable identity with a direct relationship with consumers, as successful producers do.
4. **Evolve the product** by reading market dynamics and finding the right interpretation in your own territory and grape varieties.
5. **Embrace transparency:** observing every facet of reality, good and bad, leads to the right solutions for the supply chain.