

Wine is not a product for old people. It is a product in the hands of old people

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 19 Ottobre 2026



Priscilla Hennekam recently published a reflection on LinkedIn that I recommend reading, "[Rethinking the Impossible](#)". It starts from the São Francisco Valley, in north-eastern Brazil, between the eighth and ninth parallel south. A semi-arid tropical climate, more than three thousand hours of sunshine a year. According to every manual, the vine should not grow there. **Yet it does grow there, and it reaches two and a half harvests a year.**

Nobody changed the climate of that valley. **They changed the question.** They stopped asking how to copy Bordeaux and started asking what could be done with what they had in front of them. Hennekam draws a simple idea from it: we constantly confuse

what has never been done with what cannot be done.

We become, she writes, prisoners of precedent. And when we say “it is impossible,” we are often saying something much more modest: I cannot yet imagine how. **Her proposal is to replace “why can’t it be done?” with another question: if it were possible, what would have to change?**

I tried to turn it toward our wine industry.

For years we have talked about nothing but change. Markets in revolution, consumers who are no longer what they used to be, models to be rethought. **Then I look at the state of things, and I write about it often, and I see a world that appears unchangeable.** Locked into the idea that no alternative to the status quo exists and that the only strategy is to hope everything goes back to how it was.

And yet, looking more closely, the solutions are already on the table.

People want to have fun, and **I do not know many products that fit a party as well as wine.** People want experiences outside mass tourism, the standardized kind, and wine tourism is exactly that.

There is a desire for biodiversity, and we have an oenological offering of impressive variety. And today the moment of consumption matters more than the product itself, and this is a good thing because wine, in its thousand types, has the right bottle for any situation. **The ingredients are there, and there are more than we imagine.** So why does putting them together into the right recipe seem so difficult? Indeed, so impossible?

A direct and ruthless answer comes to my mind. I know that, without going into detail, it may sound excessive. I leave it

as it comes, because softening it would only serve to make it harmless. **Wine is in the hands of old people.** Of the usual old people. Old people who have no intention of leaving the field to others.

Mind you, I am not saying that wine is a product for old people. That is bullshit. **I am saying that it is a product in the hands of old people, and that is another matter entirely.** And it is not only a problem of generational handover in companies. It concerns the entire supply chain: consortia, organizations, media, wine critics. I am the first who must count himself in, since I have been doing this job for quite a while.

And unfortunately, and this is the most serious aspect, it is not even only an age problem. It concerns, in fact, even the young, and this is the point that worries me most. **To enter the world of wine, in fact, and to be accepted, they have to disguise themselves as old people.** They learn the language, the rituals, the cautions. And after a while they can no longer take those clothes off.

If this diagnosis is true, try to imagine how willing an industry like this would be to turn the supposed impossible into possible. Put in these terms, one could conclude, brutally, that it is enough to wait for a generation to leave the stage. That is not the case. **That generation has already genetically contaminated the next one.** Replacement alone will change nothing.

So what is to be done? First of all, say it. Denounce it, bring it out clearly, without fear. Because the impossible becomes possible only if one starts from an awareness of reality. Without that, the impossible turns into abstraction, into science fiction. **And science fiction is a perfect alibi for changing nothing.**

Hennekam invites us to distinguish real constraints from

assumptions we have stopped questioning. **That wine must remain in the hands of those who have held it for forty years is not a real constraint.** It is an assumption. The most convenient one, for those who support it.

Note: I rendered “settore” as “wine industry” in the subtitle and in “our wine industry” so that the keyword appears twice in the article.

Key points

1. **Change the question:** ask what would have to change if the impossible were possible.
2. **Wine is in the hands of old people,** young newcomers included, who adopt the same language.
3. **Ingredients already exist:** parties, wine tourism, biodiversity and moment-based consumption fit wine perfectly.
4. **Generational turnover alone changes nothing,** because the next generation is already contaminated.
5. **Name the problem openly,** and separate real constraints from unquestioned assumptions.