

22.11.2019 14:00-15:00 V001 (Wihurin rahasto). Gregoire Croidieu (EMLYON Business School)
From Crû to Classé: how the veneration of the 1855 Bordeaux wine classification led to the reinvention of the Bordeaux wine tradition

Abstract

(Grégoire Croidieu (EMLYON Business School) and Walter W. Powell (Stanford University))

We examine the 1855 Bordeaux wine classification from its origins until today. A 6-page long document was hastily written in the Spring of 1855 by a handful of Bordeaux tradesmen, who rated the best local wines estates, or crûs, in five classes. The classification was intended to be a temporary list to facilitate a presentation of Bordeaux wines to the Universal Exhibition held that year in Paris. Unexpectedly, this classification survived the exhibition and has endured almost unchanged until now, becoming venerated globally in the world of wine.

Behind this façade of institutional persistence, this case of historical continuity, allows us to rethink the assumption that the forces that create institutions also explain how they are sustained. We draw on a broad set of archival materials to create an original historical analysis, which reveals a remarkable transformation beneath the persistence of 1855 and its veneer of immutability. We find that the social dynamics that led one set of persons to choose the 1855 classification as the organizing template of the fast-growing Bordeaux wine region were supplanted as 1855 became venerated. Once exalted, the 1855 classification constituted the choices available to the trade people, became cognitively familiar to many, and led to a new class of people who were shaped by these categories. This new community carried the reinvention of the Bordeaux wine tradition forward as they participated in the wine trade. We examine the mechanisms that undergird this remarkable transformation and draw implications from these findings for the process of veneration.

Bio

Grégoire Croidieu is an Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship at emlyon business school. His research combines institutional theory and entrepreneurship and focuses on the legitimization processes that shape the emergence and historical evolution of industries and organizations. Grégoire mainly conducts empirical work in settings such as the Bordeaux, Australian and Californian wine regions, the nascent US radio industry, crowdfunding platforms, public policies supporting SMEs in France and in the USA, and about the diffusion of global standard of disaster risk reduction.