

Differentiating the wine Quality

Geneviève Teil
INRA
SAD-APT
Paris
teil@inapg.fr

1900-1935: A remedy to wine crisis: the *quality sign*

- Consumers failed to recognize the good wines
 - ✉ They had to be *informed* about quality (as a product description and ranking).
- Independent intermediaries for quality definition/delimitation
 - ✉ Laws from 1905-1919: signalization of the geographic origin(AO)
 - ✉ Relying on a moral behest: “you have to prefer the original to the copy”
 - ✉ 1935: quality signalization (AOC)
 - ✉ Relies upon **typicality** -> wine styles; some simple criteria (alcool, taille, rendements...)
 - ✉ AOC is **not** a **result guaranty** but a **means guaranty** because quality has no definitive definition and must be able to adapt to a series of changes

Quality signs raising 2 criticisms (1900-70)

- They signal badly

There is a difference among the wines

☞ Signs are imperfect

✉ More signs, more precise

- They signal illusions of quality

☞ quality is potential: signs do not differentiate actual quality

✉ Wine concourses/medals
1967: tasting added to AOC

☞ Quality does not exist: the AOC success is based upon consumers credulity

1970 : the need to assess the result of the quality differentiation

Tastings develop

AOC agreement

concourses

critics

A variety of
quality
assessments

Méthodological reflexion

No repetability nor reprodctibility in judgement do

not mean than **quality does not exist**

They sought for new judgement quality indicators



to have an effect, to be discriminative



to avoid errors and compromission (blind tasting)

**A plurality of tasting results feed the controversy
about quality**

Consumers and critics more and more guarantees

It is impossible to signal quality because of the trivial interest of anybody to claim its own quality

Consumers

Any sign (some signs) is better than I

I need to select the *good* information

- ☐ The most famous sign
- ☐ **Low-cost wines (risk)**
- ☐ The intersection of many signs
- ☐ A *credibility* enquiry

Critics' credibility claims

- ☒ The good methodological choice
- ☒ Professional recognition
- ☒ "Over 250 000 ex. Sold"

☒ a good critic is only a critic in the good social networks

Critics efforts fostered the sociological criticism

Settling the quality differences: Sciences as a resource (1970-90)

Technical sciences

The investigation of the product
characteristics

A proliferation of influence factors, but
no stable cause for quality

Professional sciences

A better definition of quality

An impossible delimitation of quality

Social sciences

The delimitation of the social
dimension of quality

“Wine and signs are social, cultural,
ritual, imaginary, symbolic...”

The controversy persists

Getting rid of the signs (1990)

« It's the signs themselves that generate the quality controversy, we must come back to a direct relation between the wines and the drinkers »

A denunciation of the “label drinkers” by the “real amateurs”:

- ✉ You have to rely on yourself to recognize quality
- ✉ -> the blind test to protect oneself from social influences

An expertise behest:

- ✉ You have to become an expert (enology courses...)

« Expertise is a social distinction procedure »

A test for the drinkers evaluation:

- ✉ The blind test

« Blind test is a social distinction practice »

Getting rid of the experts (2000)

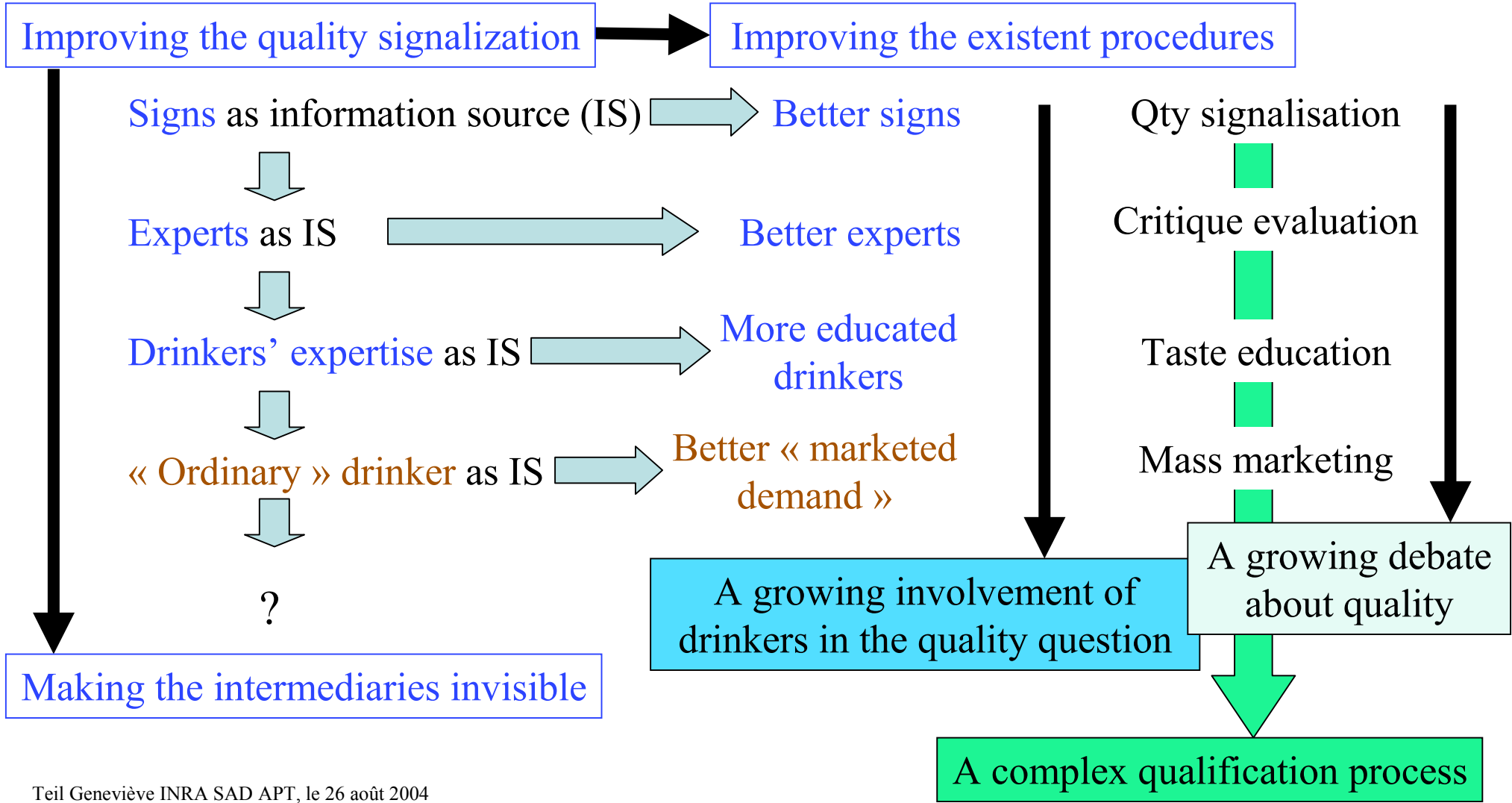
“What limits French wine market extension is not quality
But its confinement to elite drinkers’ taste.”

□ Open quality to **every body’s taste.**

□ Help **marketing techniques** to enter the wine cellar

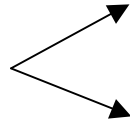
So wine producers can adapt their wines to the consumers’ tastes.

Performing wine differentiation



Conclusion

Increase of the
production



Brands : rely on marketing techniques for the adjustment of the wines quality to the demand taste

AOC : qualification of the wines resting on a certain selection of the competent quality assessors

conflict

- AOC are Competency distortions
- AOC fear market shares losses
- Ans a loss of quality differentiation

Opportunity

- Le marketing can bring new consumers
- The quality market needs to interest them to quality
And continue to stress the quality difference
- Brand marketing needs to take advantage
of the general prestige of the wine