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RECONFIGURING AGRI-FOOD ASSEMBLAGES THROUGH ‘SUPER VINES’ : KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGIES, AND VITICULTURAL ADAPTATION IN CHILE AND BELGIUM

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Contemporary viticulture is increasingly confronted with multiple and interrelated challenges, including climatic unpredictability, frost, drought, wildfires, and the proliferation of pests and pathogens. These difficulties are intensified by climate change and have prompted the search for adaptive solutions that are often framed as technical responses to environmental risks. Drawing on Science and Technology Studies (STS), this paper examines how new forms of knowledge and plant technologies participate in the reconfiguration of agri-food assemblages through the transformation of vineyards and grape varieties.

Based on ethnographic research and semi-structured interviews conducted in two contrasting wine-producing regions—Wallonia (Belgium) and Quilpué (Chile)—the study analyzes the emergence of what winegrowers describe as “super vines”: grapevines endowed with enhanced resistance, vigor, and adaptability. Although both regions are historically dominated by French grape varieties that are poorly suited to current ecological conditions, they

conceptualize and enact “super vines” in markedly different ways. In Chile, adaptation relies on the revaluation of ancient and locally embedded grape varieties (such as País, Moscatel de Alejandría…), mobilizing long-standing practices and memories. In Wallonia, by contrast, innovation is oriented toward interspecific grape varieties (such as Solaris, Johanniter…) produced through botanical crossings, emphasizing technoscientific breeding and experimentation.

To interpret these divergent trajectories, the paper mobilizes Anna Tsing’s concepts of “contamination” and “transformative mutualism” (2015), highlighting how heterogeneous forms of knowledge, plants, and environments co-evolve in uncertain conditions. The analysis shows that these “super vines” not only reshape taste or vineyards but also challenge wine markets, quality regimes, and certification systems (e.g., appellations and labels). Ultimately, the paper questions how such hybrid agri-food objects reconfigure standards, value, and legitimacy in contemporary wine economies under socio-ecological crisis.

Palavras-chave: sts; climate risk and adaptation; hybrid agri-food object; interspecific grapevines; traditional grape varieties.