SESSÃO ESPECIAL - SESSÃO ESPECIAL

SESSÃO ESPECIAL IRSA - NEW ASSEMBLAGES IN THE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM

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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.

Co-producing organisms, foods and actors in contemporary agri-food assemblages: controversies and insights from the soy production chain in Argentina

Luis Ernesto Blacha, Oliver Davenport

This paper examines how contemporary global agri-food arrangements are constituted through the sociotechnical articulation of organisms, foods and actors. Drawing on Science and Technology Studies (STS) and critical agri-food scholarship, the analysis proposes an integrated framework to understand how technologies, knowledge and material practices co-produce agri-food assemblages in the twenty-first century. At the level of food products, the paper

engages with classifications based on degrees of processing, distinguishing between processed and ultra-processed foods (Monteiro et al., 2010). Beyond nutritional attributes, ultra-processed foods operate through specific forms of consumption, expertise and everyday practices, giving rise to what Van Tulleken (2020) conceptualizes as “ultra-processed people” (UPP). These subjectivities emerge through sustained interactions between products, bodies, infrastructures and intersecting regimes of technoscientific, nutritional and practical knowledge. The analysis simultaneously considers genetically modified organisms (GMOs) as foundational components of contemporary commodity production, rather than treating them as purely technical inputs. The paper conceptualizes GMOs as “ultra-processed organisms” (UPO), emphasizing their entanglement in sociotechnical, regulatory and corporate practices. Through the interrelations between UPOs, ultra-processed foods (UPFs) and UPPs, the study highlights processes of co-production that stabilize particular agri-food assemblages while generating ongoing tensions and limiting alternative trajectories. Empirically, the argument draws on the soy production chain in Argentina, illustrating how technoscientific expertise, standardization practices and commodity infrastructures shape territorial, technological and social configurations, socio-environmental effects, and the co-production of dietary practices among actors. By foregrounding controversies and unintended consequences, the paper contributes to debates on how contemporary agri-food assemblages are reconfigured through knowledge and technologies, and how these dynamics reproduce inequalities while opening limited spaces for alternative, more inclusive and sustainable arrangements

Moving with the Weather: Weather-ways and the Configuring of Care in Vineyard Management

Vaughan Higgins, Katherine Evans

The notion of care is attracting growing attention in social science scholarship on farming and agriculture. While more-than-human entities are recognised as being central to enacting care practices, this has not yet extended to a consideration of atmospheric conditions or what is more widely referred to as

‘weather’. In this presentation, we utilise the concept of ‘weather ways’ to examine how weather contributes to the configuration of ‘good’ care in farming, and the implications of weather-care relations for farmer engagement in more environmentally sustainable farming practices. Drawing upon qualitative data from a project focused on trials for improving on-farm disease management in the Tasmanian (Australia) wine industry, we show that weather has a critical influence on care practices related to minimising disease risk and growing high quality ‘clean’ fruit. Farmers calibrate their vineyard management practices to anticipate seasonal variations, and they have well-established routines and repetitions for ensuring that practices for disease prevention are sufficiently adaptable to changes in weather. Significantly, we highlight the importance of what we term care infrastructures – vineyard canopy design and management – in enabling farmers to have greater control over sunlight, humidity and airflow through the vines. However, while weather is intertwined with practices of vine and vineyard care, our data show that these weather-care relations can pose challenges for farmer uptake of environmentally sustainable practices. Efforts to minimise disease and business risk linked to weather conditions and variability reinforces reliance on synthetic chemicals that farmers know from previous experience will be effective, hindering experimentation with ‘softer’ and more environmentally benign options.

Palavras-chave: agri-food system.