

TRACK 04. WHAT OBJECTS DO: DESIGN, CONSUMPTION AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

After 30 years of STS, it became impossible to understand how the social life works without appreciating how design objects, devices, settings, and environments mediate everyday practices, without accounting reality as a result of multiple interactions among humans and nonhumans. Indeed, STS contributed in recognizing not only meanings and social values attached to objects and technologies, but also the ways in which these artefacts materially contribute in shaping everyday social practices and patterns of life. Drawing on the STS's assumption that objects with their scripts and incorporated programmes of action and "things" with their heterogeneous ontology and contested nature constantly articulate and rearticulate social ties, the track will explore design's and consumption's performativity and their capacity to trigger specific ways of enacting the social.

Papers are welcome on a variety of issues, including (but not limited to):

- *The performativity of technical objects, of spaces and design environments.* What can objects do? How do they equip human communication? How do they mediate social interactions? How do they generate meaning in design experience? How are humans and nonhumans shaped and enacted by design? Do objects have social lives? How are their biographies entangled with the trajectories of their makers and users?
- *The processes of consumption and domestication of objects and technologies.* How do people appropriate and use objects and technologies? In which ways these processes of consumption of technologies contribute in shaping the patterns and routines of everyday life? How can we recognize the relevance of the technical and material dimension of things in the creation, stabilization and transformation of everyday practices, routines and habits?
- *Design and the Social.* How does design facilitate everyday sociality? How is design used to "outsource" morality, ethics, and politics? How does it play to solidify, reinforce, and prolong the social, the political, and the cultural? How does design shape individual or collective behaviours or become pattern giver of social practices? How does design turn the "public" into a problem? How do designers make their activities accountable to citizens or their representatives?

Scholars of different disciplines and research fields engaged in the study of the role of material artefacts and objects are invited to participate. While contributions may cover methodological and theoretical issues related to design, consumption and STS, we especially welcome papers that will base their findings on empirical examples and fieldwork. We also invite participants to organise their talks, if suitable, around the objects or "things" they might wish to bring with them in the session.

Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be sent by email (following website instructions) by 2010 March 15th.

Convenors

Paolo Magaudda is a post-doc researcher at the Università di Padova (Italy), Department of Sociology, where he is working on the consumption of media and technologies in everyday life.

Mika Pantzar is a research professor in the National Consumer Research Centre of Helsinki (Finland). His main research interests concern everyday life, consumption, design and technology studies, rhetoric of economic policy, food and future studies and systems research.

Paolo Volonté is an associate professor of Sociology of culture at the Politecnico di Milano, Department of Design. His main research topics are in phenomenology, sociology of scientific knowledge, and design studies (<http://paolovolonte.wordpress.com/>).

Albena Yaneva is a lecturer in Architectural Studies at the University of Manchester, The Manchester Architecture Research Centre. Her main research interests concern architectural design, industrial design, contemporary art and art craftsmanship (http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/architecture/staff/yaneva_albena.htm).