

TRACK 07. ARE WE STILL HALFWAY OF THE TURN? PRACTICING SEMIOTICS, PERFORMING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY STUDIES

Since their inception, semiotics has always accompanied Science and Technology Studies: from the inaugural article about the rhetoric of science written by Bruno Latour and Paolo Fabbri, to the acquisition of semiotic categories into the seminal research by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, to the reference to semiotics within the SCOT approach as developed by Wiebe E. Bijker, and so on.

Today semiotics seems less explicitly relevant within STS, even though some semiotic categories as “actant” are still broadly used, also outside the STS boundaries, and certain approaches as ANT often refer to themselves as semiotics or material-semiotics.

Since it is also through semiotics – the (in)famous “semiotic turn” – that STS have been able to view the social “as a question rather than as a distinctive explanatory category”, we think it is about time for the STS community to begin an assessment of the role of semiotics for its own field.

Because we are interested in the future of STS, as much we are in their past and present, we see the assessment as a way to reengage an active dialogue with semiotics in order to take into account semiotic’s various developments emerged during the last twenty years. Indeed we think that semiotics could be a methodological resource for STS now more than in the past. Thanks to the renewal of the study of scientific images, thanks to the development of a semiotics of artefacts and design, which can be useful to account for the “doing of things”, thanks to the birth of a semio-ethnographic approach for the analysis of practices and thanks to the expansion of the concept of enunciation – broadly used by Latour, but not achieving such an acceptance as “actant” – into the one of “enunciative praxis”, which can be useful for the study of performances, semiotics could play an important role for the growth of STS researches.

In our thematic session we intend to reflect and discuss about the role played by semiotics within STS and the role it could play in the future.

Paper may include the following themes (but are not limited to):

- the role of semiotics within Science and Technology Studies, from an historical, methodological or epistemological point of view;
- the influence of Science and Technology Studies on the developments of semiotics;
- uses and usefulness of semiotic categories in STS researches and reflections;
- case studies where semiotics is explicitly used in order to account for science and technology.

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

Convenors

Alvise Mattozzi is a post-doc researcher at the University Iuav of Venice (Italy) where he also teaches Semiotics of Industrial Design. His main research interests concern the development of

semiotics as a methodology for social sciences and, in particular, the use of semiotics within STS to account for non-human agency.

Anne Beyaert-Geslin is *maitre de conference* at the Université de Limoges (France) where she teaches semiotics. Her research is focused on images and art. She is the Scientific Coordinator of the ANR-IDiViS (Images et Dispositifs de Visualisation Scientifique) research project.

Maria Giulia Dondero is a researcher at the Fonds National Belge de la Recherche Scientifique, attached to the University of Liège (Belgium). Her main research interests concern the semiotics of photography and of the scientific discourse.