

## **TRACK 14. FROM A "SOCIAL RAW MATTER" TO THE PRODUCTION OF STABILIZED COLLECTIVES: TRACKING INSTITUTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE**

Science and Technology Studies usually consider social practices and their environments as dynamic socio-material relations where stabilizing processes of establishing facts, measures, rules, labels and/or standards are at stake. Whether the "social" pertains to professional criteria of performance (academic peer-review evaluation, assessment of quality in the biomedical field, etc.), to industrial manufacturing, or to the counting and inventory of various biological species, its crystallization reveals how a specific configuration of heterogeneous relations (what Latour called "proposition") temporary triumphs over other possible socio-material arrangements. By giving to these stabilized configurations the generic name of "institutions of knowledge", the challenge of this thematic track is to understand the founding moment as well as the implementing process of such institutions. We consider the social as a particular infrastructure and define it as ontologically interdependent entities which are constantly reshaped by controversies, demonstrations and shocks. Consolidated macro-actors and institutions appear as precarious achievements that are perpetually being renegotiated and that cannot be ex ante defined, but whose stabilization processes can be tracked. Institutions are thus regarded as a distinct state of the "social raw matter" that presents a singular texture, a particular density of anastomotic associations without borders, or even moving separations.

Starting from this assumption, this thematic track aims at analyzing the life of institutions of knowledge, viewed from such an angle that we can grasp and follow the gradual formation of the true substance of various "orders of totality".

Potential contributors to this thematic track are invited to explore any kind of institution of knowledge (for instance: environmental, health or academic institutions).

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

### **Convenors**

**Virginie Tournay** is tenured researcher in Political Science [CNRS] at the Grenoble Institute for Political Studies in PACTE-department and she has a training background in cell and molecular biology. The aim of her research is to explore, list and feed STS and pragmatic approaches which can be used in various fields of political science such as public policy or sociology of institutions. (<http://www.pacte.cnrs.fr/spip.php?article323>)

**Severine Louvel** is assistant professor in sociology at the Grenoble Institute for Political Studies. Her current research interests include academic careers, politics of research evaluation in Europe, and the institutionalization of nanosciences and nanotechnologies. (<http://www.pacte.cnrs.fr/spip.php?article331>)

**Céline Granjou** is tenured researcher in sociology at Cemagref (Center for agriculture and environment studies). She works on the construction of biodiversity as a social and scientific problem and on the relationships between academic work, scientific expertise and public action. (<http://celine.granjou.free.fr/home/index.html>)