

Presentation

The journal you are reading is the result of a short circuit, or rather two.

From a theoretical perspective, *Tecnoscienza* is the result of that particular short circuit occurred within social sciences between the 70s and the 80s, when social sciences started focusing on the production processes of scientific knowledge and technological artefacts, thus questioning the boundaries between the categories of “human”, “artificial”, “social”, and “technological”. The long-term effects of such short circuit are not yet clear. However, we reckon that such process of change in the vocabulary and theoretical perspectives of social sciences mostly depends on their ability to deal with settings and environments characterised by increasingly complex and technologically dense practices. In these contexts, the social nature of technological tools is taken for granted, and human interaction is made possible through the mediation of objects and tools brought about by technoscientific innovations. Made up of technological life forms, these environments draw attention on the active role somehow played by machines, information technologies, consumer goods, architectures, infrastructures, technical and daily objects, within the processes of interaction, definition of body and identities, construction and circulation of knowledge, organisation and stabilisation of particular social settings.

For this reason, *Tecnoscienza* intends to foster the awareness that the understanding of social phenomena must necessarily involve the study of scientific and technological processes. In the same way, an accurate analysis of technoscientific phenomena should not fail to consider the social dimensions that such phenomena

involve, stimulate, and question. For this reason, *Tecnoscienza* does not narrow its areas of interest to a particular object of study – science and technology – but intends to regard the contemporary social forms as socio-material forms: connections among heterogeneous actors (both biological and technical – or, as in the STS tradition, “human” and “non-human”), where agency always takes place in an ecology of elements.

In this respect, the journal was created with the purpose of collecting issues and suggestions coming from the wider international debate on science and technology studies, starting from a particular interest in the “doing” of science and technology. It is actually on the “doing” side that STS reveal their most interesting aspect: the ability to produce studies and research works on specific subjects, as well as to question the categorial architecture of social sciences by interacting with different disciplines and borrowing ideas and concepts from them. The grounding assumption is that science, technology, and society do not belong to separate worlds, but are irreparably intertwined, both in their construction and reproduction. Stemming from a large number of empirical studies, and turned into a theoretical formulation, this assumption has allowed STS to emerge from a niche sector and move to the centre of the international debate. Besides, in countries with far-sighted research policies, Science and Technology Studies have also become privileged partners in the development of innovation projects and programmes.

A second short circuit at the basis of the creation of this journal is an intellectual and organisational one. It concerns the process (started in 2005) that led a group of researchers to set up an association and create STS Italia, the *Italian Society for Social Studies of Science and Technology*, which is the promoter of *Tecnoscienza*. On the one hand, STS was created with the aim of bringing to Italy a debate as much established and acknowledged at the international level, as it is neglected and disregarded at the national one. On the other hand, in the national scientific and academic environment, the association has also represented an original form of aggregation able to attract researchers who not only share the same areas of interest (regarding scientific knowledge and technological innovation), but are also willing to meet the challenge of changing the current knowledge production and sharing processes in scientific settings. The work carried out so far (through the organisation of national and international workshops and meetings, and establishing a dialogue with not exclusively or strictly academic institutions) has made clear that the breeding ground for social sciences is the development of opportunities for fostering new perspectives and new generations of scholars, especially in a moment in which the social sciences in Italy seem to be plunged into a crisis with no way out.

In any case, the publication of *Tecnoscienza* is above all a proof, and the result, of the commitment and energy of a new generation of researchers who, in the last few years, have been going through the traditional issues of science and technologies studies, and also expanded the scope of their own interests by drawing on different areas and research fields, as in the general STS trend, with particular regard to the hybridisation of concepts, themes, and disciplines. The aim of *Tecnoscienza* is therefore to go on with this work by following two parallel research paths: on the one hand, the journal will be contributing to the STS debate; on the other hand, it will be drawing a transversal line across the existing categories and boundaries, by questioning fields, objects and methods, and involving a heterogeneous set of knowledge, disciplines and topics, which cannot be circumscribed a priori.

The subject areas that *Tecnoscienza* intends to focus on therefore involve both the most traditional STS areas – as in the case of Montanari and Giannelli's Essay, and in the following Debate on the relationship among science, technology and citizenship – and more cross-sectional areas, as in the case of the Report selected for this first issue, which explores affinities and differences between the feminist debate and STS. More in general, we are interested in involving the areas that are mostly affected by innovations and transformations of economy, work, organisation and professions (in all their various meanings). Such areas are increasingly called to deal with dense and widespread technological innovations and practices, as in the Essay by Laura Lucia Parolin regarding the work practices in the production of furniture. Another objective of the journal is to open new perspectives for discussing the variegated and diverse world of cultural processes and consumption practices, which has currently become incomprehensible due to the lack of a theoretical framework able to interpret its daily technological applications. In this regard, the Essay by Tiziana Piccioni provides an interesting example, by focusing on the case of the raw milk dispenser.

The journal starts as a six-monthly publication, and will be distributed in the most dynamic and accessible way, being available as an open-access online publication. It is divided into four different sections: «Essays», «Debates», «Reports» and «Reviews». While Essays, Reports and Reviews are formats commonly featured in academic journals, the Debates intend to represent a field of encounter among different disciplines and perspectives, also involving people outside the academic community (as in the case of the Debate on scientific journalism featured in the present issue). The aim is to open new paths and possibilities for the social studies of science and technology in Italy. For this purpose, *Tecnoscienza* intends to feature articles and texts in other languages than Italian, in order to further enhance the international scope of the journal.

Resulting from two short circuits, *Tecnoscienza* hopes to trigger and foster many others. The cover and opening text of the journal, realised for this first issue by the Armenian French artist Zaven Paré, follow the same approach.

The Editorial Board

While this first issue was being prepared, Susan Leigh Star suddenly passed away. She was a source of inspiration for many people working on this journal, and a strong supporter of the foundation of the STS Italian network and Tecnoscienza. We remember her with affection.