

MAKING MEDIA FUTURES. FROM MEANINGS TO IMAGINATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

Phillip H. Roth

Käte Hamburger Kolleg: Cultures of Research, RWTH Aachen University, Germany

Alin Olteanu

Käte Hamburger Kolleg: Cultures of Research, RWTH Aachen University, Germany

Ana María Guzmán Olmos

Käte Hamburger Kolleg: Cultures of Research, RWTH Aachen University, Germany

Abstract:

STS describe our world as constructed by a multitude of different agencies, by shared imaginations and by institutionalized forms of order and reason. "Sociotechnical imaginaries", for instance, encode collective visions of future societies to be attained and desired in specific national settings and political cultures. This panel explores, particularly from a media perspective, the scientific imaginaries of the future and how these vary according to their interrelations with diverse communities and contexts. Media play a central role in making our imaginaries of the future, by reiterating established frames of meaning production and, also, by granting access to volatile languages of power. The current heterogeneous mediascape allows for a wide panoply of possible futures. The way the extraction industry and tech giants, for example, employ science and technology to build a neo-liberal narrative of the future conflicts with the plurality of imaginaries of sustainability and social justice. Nevertheless, how the media transport concepts and narratives that lend desired and dreaded technoscientific futures meaning has been largely overlooked from an STS perspective. In early modernity, images of future societies were transported mostly in the print medium, making possible concepts like the nation-state. Kant's notion of the Enlightenment, and, consequently, his notion of the human were entangled with an emerging public sphere shaped by open debates in journals and other print media. In the 20th and 21st century, computation and the Internet diversified and expanded technological media, multiplying at unprecedented rates opportunities to shape narratives, imaginations and expectations. Computational tools enable new ways of research while also transforming ways of social life and political action. Thus, STS and their methodologies are becoming fragmented. We observe a high level of heterogeneity of concepts by which the past and the present are known and correspondingly acted upon, ranging from different understandings of citizenship and life to the environment and what it means to be human. How does the complexity of intermedial processes enable different meanings of technoscientific futures and their politics – or does this perhaps also restrict the articulation of different meanings? How do new technological media emerge and become employed for affording – which includes obscuring – possible futures? How do their intricacies translate into everyday life and governance, shaping the way society, science and technology interact?

We are interested in exploring the many facets of how politics of technoscientific futures are made and changed in between the different media languages of science, arts, politics, education etc.

Central concerns in tackling this question from various conceptual and empirical perspectives are:

- The foregrounding of language and semantics in making technoscientific futures, imaginations and expectations;
- The role of media technologies for making technoscientific futures in research cultures (paper

technologies, instruments, computer code, graphs and charts etc.);

- The intermedialities of science and technology;
- Computer modelling and simulations as media that make meanings of politics of technoscientific futures;
- The role of the senses and affect in making technoscientific futures and their politics;
- The visual arts, politics and technoscientific futures;
- Histories of mediated technoscientific futures.

Key words:

media, narratives, digitalization