

December 9, 2015

Annual Report of STS-CH, 2015 (January – December)

1. Scientific activities of STS-CH in 2015

1.1 Workshop Assembling Cities, 21-22 Jan 2015

Organization: Monika Kurath, Jean Ruegg, Julio Paulos and Marko Marskamp

On January 21 and 22 the workshop “Assembling Cities: STS concepts and methodologies in planning studies” was held at the ETH Zurich in Switzerland. The workshop’s objective was to discuss the various ways in which Science and Technology Studies (STS) can inspire urban (planning) research, and potentially practice. In two days, four plenary sessions and six tracks the workshop offered eight invited speakers, 24 paper contributors and other participants an informal and interactive setting to share conceptual and empirical approaches to planning issues. The idea for the workshop originated from our a research project called Rethinking Zones: A comparative study of planning cultures in which a STS perspective is adopted on the topic of land use planning.

1.2 STS Seminar

Organization: Marc Audétat

The STS Seminar continued its activities of coordination and planning of events for its third year in 2015. This network is composed of teachers, researchers, doctoral students and other people directly interested in the social studies of science. It coordinates the public events of STS character of about 10 partners within the UNIL and in neighbouring institutions. In particular, it is bridging activities of various other seminars, in particular that of the Institut d’histoire de la médecine et de la santé publique (IUHMSP) and of the Digital humanities network (DH Lausanne). It is an embryo of a more formal network structure able to maintain and develop STS activities and has played a role of doctoral school for many students.

1.3 “Intermediality” project and visit of the Zurich zoo, 27 March 2015

Organization: Nicholas Stücklin, Priska Gisler and Julia Siegmundt

For the 2015 GA of STS-CH, the board invited STS-CH members Priska Gisler and Julia Siegmundt to talk about the research findings of their project *Intermediality* at the Zurich Zoo. They presented their current research and took delegates on a tour of the zoo, followed by the General Assembly of STS-CH. Since some members of the association are interested in animal husbandry and social relations with animals

in their research, the meeting in the Zurich Zoo constituted a stimulating event that helped gather the diverse range of disciplines and research activities of the association's members.

1.4 Participation to the book *Sciences et technologies émergentes: pourquoi tant de promesses?* Marc Audétat, Gaïa Barazzetti, Gabriel Dorthe, Claude Joseph, Alain Kaufmann and Dominique Vinck (eds.), Hermann editions, Paris, 2015

Various members of STS-CH took part to the redaction or the edition of this book, which investigates the regime of promising and aims at steering discussion about issues and consequences for research as well as for society. Based on the workfield of many junior and senior researchers mostly from Switzerland and France, and also from Canada and The Netherlands, *Pourquoi tant de promesses?* (why so many promises?) has a descriptive and analytical purpose which invites to a normative one. It outlines alternatives to the regime of technoscientific promises, stressing experimentation and articulation with society. While discussions have been speaking a lot of “public engagement” in recent years, this book asks everybody, scientists, lawyers, decision makers, economists, philosophers and ethicists, including STS researchers, what kind of engagement one has with scientific promises?

With contributions of:

Sara Aguiton, Isabelle Arpin, Marc Audétat, Lazare Benaroyo, Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent, Emilie Bovet, Daniela Cerqui, Gabriel Dorthe, Nadja Eggert, Olivier Glassey, Céline Granjou, Xavier Guchet, Pierre-Benoît Joly, Céline Lafontaine, Sacha Loeve, Séverine Louvel, Marina Maestrutti, Francesco Panese, Vincent Pidoux, Arie Rip, Sara Tocchetti, Dominique Vinck.

1.5 Urban STS: Assembling new perspectives

September 18-19, 2015

Location: St. Petersburg, European University at St. Petersburg

The symposium in St. Petersburg was organised jointly by the Centre for Science and Technology Studies (STS Centre/EUSP), the Munich Centre for Technology (MCTS/TU Munich) and the Centre for Research on Architecture, Society and the Built Environment (ETH CASE/ETH Zurich). Following up on the STS-move on urban (planning) research, policy and practice from the January workshop, the main rationale and challenge of the symposium was to further expand the conceptual STS-inspired repertoire on urban research and to create a new platform for social scientists from different countries by discussing the applicability of the STS approach to the studies of urban space and change.

1.6 Assembling Cities: Planning in a material world

Urban Research Symposium – Stadtforschung im Gespräch

November 19, 2015

Location: Zurich, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, ETH Hönggerberg

Taking place within the Urban Research Series (URS) of the ETH Zurich, a co-ventured platform by the ETH CASE and the Chair of Sociology, this event particularly focussed on planning practices and the recent material turn in planning research. In form of a round table the panelists were asked to approach planning as a

relational, non-linear and material practice in order to rethink the role of the planner, the performance of things, and the formation of governance and democracy. The three substantial inputs were mediated and later discussed by the moderator in the character of a podium discussion. Revolving around the emergence and the trajectory of planning issues and their impact in the planning dialogue, the discussion came to question what difference do 'things' – i.e. plans, rulers, files, diagrams, models, maps, codes and many other materials – make in turning political claims technical and, the other way around, how do planners and these instruments deal with embedded notions of expertise and rationality.

2. Scientific Activities in 2016

2.1 Guided visit of the Pharmacy Museum Basel

Organization: Nicholas Stücklin and guide to be determined

The 2016 GA of STS-CH will be held in February in Basel, and will be preceded by a guided tour of the Pharmacy Museum Basel, organized by a member of STS-CH specializing in medical history (guide still to be determined). The association thus continues its tradition of hosting a joint scientific and social event together with the GA to gather the delegates' attention by means of a topic of shared interest, and create an occasion for informal discussion and exchange alongside the formal administrative tasks.

2.2. Détournement, irony and satire : collectively elaborate and work on our malaises during field work and the research process. February 2016.

Organization: Sara Tocchetti

Relationships with actors and institutions before, during and after field work, as well as other moments in the research process are sometime inhabited by concerns, power issues and conflicts. Most of us elaborate these matters individually, as part of informal conversations with close colleagues or maybe we write about it in the methodology section as part of ongoing conversations on field access, research dissemination, interdisciplinarity and interview or sources bias. This event is a one day workshop for young researchers and students who wish to further elaborate and work collectively on the malaises we encounter during field work and other phases of academic research.

Participants are invited to bring any type of artifact (picture, text, recording, field work object, etc.) that specifically represent one or several type of malaise. In a first phase participants are invited to elaborate and describe their malaise, in a second phase participants are introduced to a series of techniques to then deconstruct and work on alternative narratives of our own malaises. These techniques are inspired by activist and artistic practices related to academic work.

The aim is to produce a kit illustrating a number of tactics that can be use to collectively elaborate and act up on different forms of malaises in academic research.

2.3 Aesthetic Matters: Becoming an Artist, Designer or Architect in the Age of Bologna, 30 March – 1 April 2016

Organization: Elke Bippus, Priska Gisler and Monika Kurath

During three years, the research project “Aesthetic Practices after Bologna”, a collaboration between the Federal Institute of Technology, the University of the Arts, Berne and the Zurich University of the Arts has been dedicated to the study of “Architecture, Design and the Fine Arts as Epistemic Cultures ‘in the making’ “. The closing event aims at presenting some of the empirical and analytical findings of a research that has looked into the education of architects, designers and artists in Swiss universities. Based on a praxeological approach, the teaching of aesthetic practices has been observed against the background of a research dispositive that was strengthened by the Bologna-reform. Departing from the findings about how and what kind of knowledge and subjectivities’ ‘making’ in the universities of the arts, design and architecture was performed, the next step is to theorize and contextualize the results.

Thus, the workshop’s more general aim is to address the field of practice and ask how to theorize the nexus between the activities of students/subjects and those of universities as organizations. The main issues will revolve around the contents, modalities, negotiations of practice or various practices in the current education of future designers, artists, architects and beyond them in the wider field of aesthetic activities. The goal will be to reflect as well on how a praxeological approach applied to the understanding of art, design and architecture may serve to reveal their epistemic endeavor as much as to debate how such an approach may shed new light on the role of aesthetic practices in a wider socio-political context.

While the specificities of doing aesthetic education in the three fields will be addressed, the aim of the workshop is to contextualize the meaning of aesthetic practices in relation to practice theories as outlined in the cultural and social studies. The proposed workshop will gather various researchers and leading scholars with a particular focus on practice theories, with an interest in aesthetic education and a critical voice on the future of aesthetic practices. Their contributions will shed light to the topic both from the field of aesthetic and cultural theory as well as from science and technology studies.

2.4 Seminars for the SAGW-ASSH program “Migration and Mobility”

Organization: Sara Tocchetti and Emilie Bovet

In response to the call for proposals of the SAGW-ASSH for its program “Migration and Mobility”, STS-CH is organizing two seminars. The first one, to be held at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) in the summer of 2016, concerns contemporary security and military research projects in Europe on migration. More specifically, this first seminar will discuss how the production of a certain type of knowledge, techniques and devices within research projects linked to Frontex (the European agency entrusted with the management of the Union’s “exterior borders”) influences government management of migration. The second seminar, which will take place in the Federal Centre for Registration and Procedure (Centre

d'Enregistrement et de Procédure – CEP) Vallorbe, studies newly developed administration tools and software programs, and how they shape administrative practices when deciding on the veracity of the accounts of asylum seekers. By means of these two seminars, STS-CH hopes to show how a focus on practices, techniques and knowledge production can shed light on current transformations of government practices and management of migration that are otherwise hard to assess.

2.5 Doctoral workshop “History and ethnography, shared methodology in STS research?”

Organisation: Alexandre Camus and Julio Paulos Da Cruz

In response to the enthusiasm and productive outcomes of the PhD workshops „les non-dits de la théorie I, II & III“ in Lausanne and Geneva 2011-2014, the board proposed in 2014 to organize a two-day doctoral workshop with a similar framework, but on a national level. The aim is to gather students from all of Switzerland and from various disciplines interested by the broad field of STS, thus helping to create a visible network between researchers in the three linguistic parts of the country. Due to logistical reasons, it was not possible to organize the workshop in 2015, but it will now be held in summer 2015. The event will be open to PhD and PostDoc researchers, and will probably take place during 2 days in the Confucius Institute of Geneva.

3. Coordination and administrative activities

3.1 Website

Work has begun to create a STS blog, to be used alongside the official STS-CH webpage hosted by the SAGW-ASSH. The official webpage will retain its function as formal information tool, with announcements about association events, contact details, subscription options, etc. The blog will have a more informal character, and will contain member portraits, announcements of various events or exhibitions of interest to association members (but not necessarily organized by STS-CH).

3.2 General Assembly 2015

The General Assembly took place at the Zurich Zoo 27 March 2015, preceded by a guided tour of the zoo by Julia Siegmundt and Priska Gisler. During the GA, the co-presidents presented their ideas and reflections following the 2014 Swiss meeting in Lausanne (Big Data). They expressed a lot of satisfaction with how many new scholars presented interesting work, but still emphasized the importance of the association being rooted not only in Lausanne and the Romandie region, and advocated the necessity to approach more scholars from German- and Italian-speaking universities and research institutes to join the association. Emilie Bovet reflected on how an expanded visual presence via the webpage, and maybe the creation of an adjoined blog could help offer a larger contact surface, and greater visibility. Also, it is decided that a national doctoral workshop will be held, organized by Alexandre

Camus (Lausanne) and Julio Paulos Da Cruz (Zurich). Emilie Bovet introduces Nolwenn Bühler (Zurich), Sara Tocchetti (Paris, Lausanne) and Julio Paulos Da Cruz (Zurich) as candidates for the board of STS-CH. Peter Biniok (Zurich) announces he would like renounce his function as treasurer of the association in one year's time. It is decided that he will be replaced by Sara Tocchetti as treasurer of the association at the next General Assembly.

3.4 Board members

Nolwenn Bühler, Sara Tocchetti and Julio Paulos Da Cruz presented their candidacy for the board and were unanimously elected by the General Assembly.

Composition of the board since March 2015: Peter Biniok (auditor, Zurich), Emilie Bovet (co-president, Lausanne), Nolwenn Bühler (Zurich) Alexandre Camus (Lausanne), Julio Paulos Da Cruz (Zurich), Thomas Hengartner (Zurich), Pierre-Nicolas Oberhauser (Lausanne), Vincent Pidoux (Lausanne), Nicholas Stücklin (Lausanne), Sara Tocchetti (Paris, Lausanne).