

gramme is rooted: the sociology of knowledge, and foucauldian discourse analysis. Second, he delivers a number of very user friendly tools and concepts for the analysis of empirical data. The success of his research programme in German academia can be taken as a guarantee for its applicability in a whole spectrum of issues, varying from global environmental controversies, over science and technology in society, to social identity politics.

### References

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Philip Vannini  
**Material Culture and Technology  
 in Everyday Life. Ethnographical  
 Approaches**  
 2009, Peter Lang, 254 pp.

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The book edited by Philip Vannini – one of the more eclectic and prolific emergent scholars in the intersection between culture and technology – is a very useful step to fill a gap in the ongoing process of interconnection between different perspectives on the social studies of technology. This gap consists in the partial lack of dialogue between, on the one side, the science & technology studies and, on the other side, the material culture studies and, more in general, the context of cultural studies intended in their broader sense. Indeed, while these two areas of contemporary social sciences have hardly found explicit convergences, at a closer look they reveal a common feeling on the fact that social relations, technologies and objects are strictly interwoven with each other and, also, that at their junction it is possible to find a crucial dimension for the development of contemporary world. However, in spite of this, it is pretty hard to find scholars that are effectively committed to develop these connections and links. Philip Vannini and some of his colleagues certainly are among these few scholars.

As the editor recognizes in his introduction, the boundaries between these fields – STS and material culture – have remained solid more as the result of accidental scientific practices,

rather than as a consequence of motivations and planning. While we can partially agree with this idea, we could also add other kinds of considerations to this “casual” explanation. The main one is that these two different traditions have sometimes developed as “congregations” with specific “buzzwords” and vocabularies, which have been at the same time good catalysts for grouping scholars and researches, but also obstacles and impediments for the involvement of neophytes and scholars belonging to different debates. Thus, seen from this more intricate perspective, a metaphor for this book could be found not in a bridge connecting two hills separated by nature or casualty, but rather in a bridge between two cities that have developed with different infrastructures, policies and mayors – meaning different languages, perspectives, and major scholars – but that today find themselves on the same side of the barricades: the side that believes in the need to develop an understanding of the role of materiality and artefacts in society. It is to be said that the book is not the first attempt to build this bridge and probably it is neither the more analytically coherent and theoretically sophisticated one. Anyway, I guess that, at this date, it is perhaps the most variegated and inclusive one, and also the one with the clearer tendency to favour the dialogue between different domains and to enable readers to understand some of the coordinates of this dialogue.

As we have said, the book is based on the idea of making two different domains dialogue. The first one is the field of material culture studies, which

is a loose and mostly interdisciplinary sector at the overlapping of anthropology, archaeology and, at a lesser extent, sociology. Explicitly rooted in the heritage of the archaeological attention to ancient objects, material culture studies have decisively developed toward the understanding of the role of objects in the contemporary society, and the book “The social life of things”, edited by Arijun Appadurai in 1986, can be considered a founding text. Other references of this perspective can be found in the works carried out by archeo-anthropologist Chris Tilley and by the socio-anthropologist of consumption Daniel Miller. The second realm the book intends to involve is the social study of technology, which includes scholars who are already known to “Tecnoscienza” readers, such as Wiebe Bijker, Bruno Latour, Trevor Pinch, Donald MacKenzie and so on. As we know, this field presents different articulations of the relation between technology and society, but it can be generally unified by highlighting the relevance accorded to the role of technologies as material artefacts in the social context. The strategy to mix together these different scientific universes is based on the common emphasis given to two specific dimensions. The first one is a common preference for ethnographical methods, intended in their heterogeneous and open sense. The second one is the common attention to the realm of everyday life, which is not regarded as a taken-for-granted domain, but as a dimension of the social world constantly under question.

More concretely, the book is divided into three parts, which present re-

spectively theoretical, methodological and empirical chapters. Part one is devoted to the different theoretical perspectives involved in the two different fields. Vannini and Ian Woodward take it upon themselves to outline the area of material culture from a more anthropological perspective, while Trevor Pinch and Grant Kien are in charge of making sense of the STS side, undertaking the task, respectively, of tracing the legacy of the “Social Construction of Technology” (SCOT) approach and of the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) perspective.

The second part of the book has a more methodological vocation, presenting different ways to articulate ethnography in relation to the material world. These chapters engage not only in common forms of ethnography, but also in more heterodox ones, such as the practice of autoethnography (by C. Noy) and video ethnography (by D. Tutt and J. Hindmarsh), also dedicating a specific chapter to the use of “Grounded Theory” (by A. Hanemaayer). Part three of the book is characterised by the presentation of specific ethnographies of material culture belonging to the everyday world. We can take two of these chapters to exemplify the way to analyse the material technologies of everyday life. The chapter of Chris Tilley considers the practice of gardening and its meaning in contemporary England, discussing eleven reasons why people garden and what that means in their lives. In this case, the analysis of gardens as material culture represents an example of a perspective mainly rooted in the anthropological tradition and in the current trend of the more contemporary mate-

rial culture studies. The second example is the chapter by Bryce Merrill, which considers the practice of home music recordings from a perspective directly based on the SCOT approach. Probably, the different standpoints of these two chapters highlight the fact that while the book represents a good step toward an integration of different perspectives on artefacts and technologies, there is still much work to do in order to fully integrate these standpoints. This last consideration probably helps highlight the major limit of the book, which can be regarded more as a first attempt to combine the work of different scholars, rather than the result of an actual and broader process of integration.

Anyway, even if not always compact and coherent in developing its analysis, this collection has the unquestioned merit of bringing novelty and excitement to the current development of the studies on artefacts and technologies. For STS scholars unused to be involved in social anthropology of things and consumption, the book will open a door to an entire world that is not adequately known in the STS context, and will do that from a useful and understandable perspective. Moreover, methodological and ethnographical chapters definitely offer valuable insights into the ethnographic research in everyday life things and objects.

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