"Do It First, Do It Yourself, and Keep on Doing It": Ten Years of *Tecnoscienza*

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Abstract: The paper introduces the ten years anniversary issue of Tecnoscienza. A short history of the journal is presented, together with some reflections about its evolution along the years. Sketching the texts that compose the anniversay issue, we identify some past, present and future themes in STS.

Keywords: Tecnoscienza; anniversary; do-it-yourself; academic publishing; STS.

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Commonly, at around 10 years old, children start to change drastically: they begin to build strong relationships with peers, from whom they also experience greater pressure; they become more independent from their family and start to recognise more clearly the point of view of others; their attention span increases, while at the same time they need to cope with greater school commitments; as puberty approaches, they also become more aware of their own bodies. While not properly a child (but possibly our "*non-human child*"), at the end of its tenth year of life *Tecnoscienza* begins to deal with issues very similar to those listed above, facing increasing pressures, putting its own identity under discussion and coping with higher responsibilities.

Tecnoscienza was born in 2010 (but its conception goes back to at least 2008) as an open access journal, in an academic scenario where this model of self-organised open access publishing represented the newest and in some sense the most radical alternative to traditional scientific publishing. However, over the years, this scenario has changed rapidly. Ten years ago open access publishing platforms were, at least in social

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and human sciences, still an embryonic phenomenon – also considered as an emerging technology surrounded by both technical and social controversies. Today, not only are open access journals a well-established reality in academia, but the same notion of "open access" has been actualised in several different ways.

When the first issue of *Tecnoscienza* came out, open access was mainly discussed as a political tool able to rebalance the huge concentration of power within the academic publishing sector. Today, open access is no longer one distinctive model, alternative to established corporate publishing, but it includes very different, and to some degree conflicting models, including the last frontier of that same corporate publishing that open access appeared to bring into discussion at the beginning. For example, it is quite common today (for instance within EU projects) to encourage open access in its so called "gold" declination, which means that the authors pay a fee to make their own work freely accessible for everyone, without the need for the readers to pay a subscription. Although a valuable initiative in terms of knowledge circulation, this model does not offer a real alternative to existing monopolies in the publishing sector, with the associated risks of weakening the quality of academic publications (as in some situations authors pay to receive a publishing "service") and also carrying the further responsibility of stimulating the growth of the much depreciable phenomenon of predatory publishing.

In contrast, at the beginning of its journey, *Tecnoscienza* adopted a different and more radical kind of open access model, defined as "platinum" or "diamond" open access, in which neither authors nor readers are required to pay to make scientific work freely available, thanks to a self-supported publishing organisation. This was made possible by a collective effort put in place by the Italian STS community and supported by STS Italia, the Italian Society for Science and Technology Studies. In 2009-2010, the group of founders of the journal adopted this quite uncommon – at that time – way of publishing with the idea that an alternative organising of the way a journal is funded economically and managed operationally was fundamental to allow different voices, identities and perspective to emerge. At the same time, as STS scholars, we enthusiastically embraced new technical tools available (especially the Open Journal Systems open access software, released originally by the Public Knowledge Project in 2001) with the genuine belief that new technologies need to be appropriated with emancipatory political aims in order to display fully progressive outcomes.

At the beginning, these choices undoubtedly favoured *Tecnoscienza*, allowing the journal to grow in an environment that was increasingly "welcoming" to such alternative views on academic publishing. However, while the changes occurring in the academic publishing landscape in the last decade helped the development of *Tecnoscienza*, along the years they brought new pressures, raised by several interconnected phenomena. Just to name a few: the increased competition in the open access sector; the

increasingly demanding work required to maintain a high quality publication; the multiplication of open access STS-inspired international journals; the proliferation of scientific databases (each with its criteria and indicators to meet); and the increased pressure for publishing in high-ranked journals.

The flourishing of other self-organised and open access publishing experiences within the STS community has allowed *Tecnoscienza* to find 'peers' with whom to compare and build common experiences. At the same time, however, the presence of an increasing number of open access journals has also been a source of 'pressure' on *Tecnoscienza*, which has had to find ways to characterise its identity in a more marked way in the face of a very different and more densely populated landscape than the one in which it was born. Moreover, having been cited and considered on several occasions as a possible 'model' to be inspired by has made us focus not only on the identity of *Tecnoscienza* that was being built, but also on the expectations nurtured towards it.

In order to sharpen the journal's identity and to make it relevant to the already-existing and evolving STS international community, we opted to draw transversal lines across the existing categories and boundaries, for instance giving space to reflect on the evolving geography of STS at the global level. Since the STS landscape arose in specific countries (i.e. the UK, the Netherlands, the USA, and Nordic countries), it has been characterised by the growth of newer, increasingly international and globally interconnected networks, journals, and research. Today, the presence of STS scholars has expanded in many different countries around the world. In this scenario, one of the aims of *Tecnoscienza* has been to redefine the geography of the global STS community by giving resonance to the importance of the local embeddedness of STS perspectives. Thus, not only is *Tecnoscienza* an attempt to draw attention to a relatively new, 'indigenous' Italian STS community; it also more generally supports a revaluation of the role of smaller national communities and alternative perspectives in the STS domain.

Staying true to the original idea of working without the support of a traditional publisher – thus maintaining full autonomy over our work and offering a true platinum/diamond open access formula – we continue to manage everything by ourselves and attend to all aspects of the publishing process, from the governance and decision-making about editorial choices, to the management of the peer-review process, copyediting, maintenance of the web platform, and promotion. This is of course hard work, often with little visibility, and not rewarded in academic terms, but nevertheless crucial for the journal's independence and autonomy which, we believe, are the pivotal features to advance and to develop a critical and reflexive discourse on academic publishing and knowledge making.

As is well known in STS, knowledge production is not a neutral activity, but on the contrary a work that actively contributes in producing the realities it claims to just report. Knowledge production is performative,

and research practices and methods enact a specific reality at the same time they describe it. From this standpoint, looking at scientific publishing in a "critical way" implies a reflexive attitude about our own scientific practices, of which publishing is a crucial one. Setting up and running a journal, thus, is not just a way to share ideas; it is a performative action that can alter the scientific context we inhabit and the kind of knowledge we produce and circulate.

A celebratory issue

As a 'celebration' of its first ten years, this issue of *Tecnoscienza* follows a different model to the usual one. Playing with words (and time), at the beginning of 2020 we invited several members of our Scientific Committee to contribute with short texts reflecting on the state of the art of STS and its future challenges, possibly within the next ten minutes, days, months or years. Then the SARS-COV-2 (commonly known as "Coronavirus" or "Covid-19") appeared and all of a sudden a dramatic reconfiguration of our daily private and public practices (including work, of course!) took place. Priorities took on a different shape and we all had to be smart enough to find ways to manage exactly at the same time our analogue and digital life, as well as our private and public spaces.

Thus, notwithstanding all the problems we and our contributors have had to face in the last months, we are happy to present to our readers a collection of celebratory contributions from several of the friends and supporters of this publishing adventure. These texts are a meaningful set of reflections on the journal's history, on the state of the field of STS in Italy and internationally, with a focus on present issues but also on future challenges and, of course, on the contemporary issues related to the pandemic that emerged precisely during the writing of the texts.

The set of articles is opened by a sort of birthday gift Lucy Suchman has kindly donated to the journal. Thinking through volumes 1 (2010) and 10 (2019), she sketches five generative lines of future STS inquiry: translations; ordering; senses; feminism; and 'more than human'. More importantly, the text by Suchman is a call to expand "our capacity to acknowledge radical difference, including the specificities of our own locations and associated onto-epistemological conditions, and the histories, politics, economies and discourses that hold those differences in place" (Suchman 2020, 20). The politics of language in academia and scientific publishing in particular, with the dominance of English as lingua franca, she remarks, "are integral, in sum, to thinking about our field's pasts and transforming its futures" (ibid, 16). And a less hegemonic future could look for "new possibilities for researchers not only to think and work but also to write in first languages" (ibid, 16). In fact, as recently pointed out also by Law and Mol (2020, 265), the point is not just about "the effects *of* english on whatever it risks eroding (…) [but] the possible value *for*

english of importing some of the intellectual resources embedded in other tongues. (…) What kinds of lessons might 'english' usefully learn?"

To stay with Suchman, it could learn that "too often the worlds of reference remain implicit, comprising the taken for granted settings and networks in which we ourselves are located. Who do our words reference, when, where, and under what circumstances?" (Suchman 2020, 20). This discussion and the text by Suchman explicitly interpellate *Tecnoscienza*, which at the beginning published articles in Italian and in English, but shifted to English only in 2016. It is not the case to recall the endless conversations we had at that time in our board, nor to try to quickly solve a complex issue which opens up many questions: how to balance the evaluation of local idioms with the need to reach potentially global readers? How to contribute to the scientific debate by questioning or refusing the linguistic standards of scientific debates? How to give voice to a plurality of languages without marking new boundaries between them?

Whereas Suchman articulates her discourse by taking the 10 year trajectory of *Tecnoscienza* as a reference point, the following two contributions by Massimiano Bucchi and Mariachiara Tallachini focus on the coexistence of various 'modes' of science and on the dialogue among institutions, scientists, and citizens as a crucial theme for the future of STS. Taking the present pandemic condition as "the greatest exercise in public scientific education that there's ever been" (Shapin, in Bucchi 2020, 23), Bucchi questions whether it is still plausible (and promising for STS research) to conceptualise science and scientific knowledge as the results of chronological transitions of organisational practices of research (from academic to post-academic science, from Science 1.0 to Science 2.0). Maybe, he argues, it is time to "recognise the *coexistence* of different modes of science – as narratives, rhetorics and images that continuously overlap and intersect, with the same actors practicing and preaching different modes in different situations" (ibid., 24). In the same vein, Tallachini starts from the present situation to point to another issue STS have variously underlined, namely the processes of coproduction of scientific knowledge and policy making. Incidentally, differently from the past she argues, "the very same citizens, previously depicted as undisciplined recipients of compulsory measures, have turned into essential actors in dealing with the pandemic (…)" (Tallacchini 2020, 30). In this scenario, the idea of coproduction could be "a powerful democratic instrument to open up science policy to public discussion".

The texts by Giuliano Pancaldi and Paolo Volontè shift the attention to the past of STS in order to trace some future lines of direction. Giuliano Pancaldi (2020) does so by concentrating on the history of STS in Italy, highlighting the ways in which the field has gained visibility in the Italian context, but also pointing out obstacles and problems that still must be overcome. First of all, the traditionally rigid disciplinary partitions of Italian academia, which contrasts (and constrains) the vocational interdisciplinarity of STS. In fact, as Paolo Volontè notes in observing "the future

twenty years of twenty years ago" (2020, 44), the public engagement of science and technology has been quickly expanding, but the same cannot be said about the presence of STS in the knowledge of scientists, engineers and designers. Focusing on some recent trends of European technical universities towards integrating critical and reflexive skills into the core of their educational programmes, Volontè underlines the opportunity for STS to become protagonists of a process which could have profound effects on the education of technologists and engineers, and thus on the present and future world.

Alessandro Mongili and Federico Neresini adopt metaphorical thinking as a conceptual strategy to widen the analytical architecture of STS and face the future challenges and ambiguities of what can no longer be conceived as a one-world world. Mongili (2020) uses two images in this regard, that of a 'lateral' approach and that of an 'unsewn' world. Only by *lateralising* our research can we challenge the Western-centred STS canons, amplify multiplicity, and conceptualise the world in local and global terms at once. Neresini (2020) proposes the metaphor of the 'swerve', or, better, of a 'swerving methodology' as a tool for reflexively questioning STS objects of study and epistemologies, together with their 'exclusiveness'. Also, the swerve implies a lateral move, thanks to which we can make more evident the intrinsic *processuality* of objects and research questions and avoid self-referentiality.

As closure of the section devoted to "anniversary reflections", the text by Geoffrey Bowker (2020) offers a swerve itself, exploring apps for menstrual tracking, the affiliative power of technologies and the reconfiguration of expert and lay knowledge. It may sound out of place, but sounding out of place is at the core of past, present, and future STS.

The issue is closed by a reflection by Assunta Viteritti, current President of STS Italia, on what STS can say about the pandemic we are in and what kind of scientific models we need to question our time. Because anniversaries, in order not to be simply ritualistic, also have to take into account ongoing situations. Finally, as always, the issue is closed by book reviews of not-only Anglo-American books.

A motto and an attitude

The quotation chosen for the title of this anniversary introduction ("Do it first, do it yourself, and keep on doing it") is not an innocent one, being the motto of the gangster Tony 'Scarface' Camonte. Not that we subscribe to a gangster imaginary or attitude, but beside being a gangster, the peculiarity of Tony Camonte resides in continuing to take action himself. While other bosses get comfortable and set the limits of their ambition as their career proceeds, Camonte stays actively involved in the front line, willing for more and not taking for granted what he already has. We believe a do-it-yourself attitude is necessary not to forget that things

could have always been done differently and that we cannot simply wait for things to happen. Without the do-it-yourself attitude *Tecnoscienza* would simply not exist; so yes, we will keep on doing it.

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