Doing STS in Times of Crises

This issue marks the beginning of *Tecnoscienza*'s fifth three-year cycle and, on the basis of the journal's alternation policy, inaugurates a new Coordination Board. We would like to thank the two previous members of the Coordination Board, Attila Bruni and Paolo Magaudda, for their invaluable contribution to the journal since its conception.

When the journal was first published, twelve years ago, it represented an example of alternative and independent scientific publishing practices, in a context where open access practices were in their early days. With the support of STS Italia and the volunteer work of a group of Italian scholars, *Tecnoscienza* introduced a radical platinum/diamond Open Access (OA) model, in which neither authors nor readers were required to pay any fees, to make scientific work freely available under the Creative Commons license. Against the odds and in a landscape where several STS open access journals have emerged, this joint effort and hard work has been rewarded by a growing readership and, more recently, international indexing. In addition to our previous acknowledgment as "Classe A" (top journals for the Italian research evaluation body ANVUR) in Sociology of cultural and communicative processes and in the WOS Emerging Sources database, since 2021 *Tecnoscienza* is also indexed in Scopus.

Nowadays, with the pressure of initiatives like Plan S – forcing research funded by public grants to be published in compliance with OA principles without paying direct fees – the OA landscape has changed significantly, with most of the leading commercial publishers introducing OA routes in their subscription journals. In this regard, it is widely recognised that OA policies, jointly with digital repositories and knowledge bases, may play a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge for free to all potentially-interested researchers and concerned groups of stakeholders. In its putative figuration OA is indeed expected to make scholarly knowledge a sharable resource, that is a *knowledge commons*. The mainstream narrative on the public governance of knowledge-making practices

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(e.g., EU's open science policy) seems to consider OA a context-free arrangement, able intrinsically to promote intellectual exchange among researchers and societal actors, thus increasing the visibility and impacts of science. Alas, despite this narrative's depiction as an intriguing and desirable politics of knowledge, it conceals a highly-questionable soft determinism. In fact, it neglects to consider how OA framework, in its chains of translation from putative figurations up to specific editorial policy practices, displays some degree of ambivalence and pitfalls, being subsumed strongly within the current academic economisation. This is a crucial point to be considered by those, such as like *Tecnoscienza*, currently endorsing OA policies, so as to reflect under which conditions such policies may effectively democratise the access to knowledge.

In this regard, at least for the last three decades, the economisation of scientific knowledge has configured the domain of academic publishing, in which OA in embedded, as a highly asymmetric and, to a certain extent, exploitative market. It is well known that scholars, acting as referees and journal editors, provide intensive free work to commercial publishing companies. At the same time, public academic institutions and research organisations are mobilising a growing amount of financial resources for paying Article Processing Charges (APCs) to the publisher for releasing research outputs in OA.

Hence, OA is reflecting the power asymmetries between universities and private publishers operating in a concentrated market that ensures large profit margins for a small group of publishers. It is not by chance that both European and US-based universities cancelled some of their journals' subscriptions. However, it is important to point out that the most interesting and, maybe, sharp challenge to the dominant business model of academic publishers is related to some out-of-law innovation (e.g., Libgen and Sci-Hub), that are putting in the foreground the need to define public policies for coping with the regime of knowledge commodification operated by the major for-profit publishers.

So, OA – far from being an inherently liberating tool – strongly ask to reconsider carefully issues related to the public value of science and scientific knowledge, as well as the kind of assemblage public academic institutions are drawing with academic publishers, where OA is enabling the dissemination of research for free for its readers, but authors (and their institutions) are in charge of paying for expensive APCs for OA publishing.

Against this backdrop, and echoing Donna Haraway, endorsing a free-of-charge OA implies "staying with the trouble", thus enhancing connectedness, unusual and unexpected collaborations for re-imaging the

future politics of knowledge outside the current regime of academic commodification.

To stay true to our platinum/diamond OA model and strengthen *Tecnoscienza*'s position in the STS landscape in times of crisis, we needed to find allies to maintain our self-supported publishing practices. We are happy to announce that, from our next issue, *Tecnoscienza* will have an academic publisher: AlmaDL Journals. This is an OA e-publishing service of the University of Bologna supporting scientific, peer reviewed journals. The partnership between journal founder STS Italia and AlmaDL will allow us to continue with our platinum/diamond OA model and to maintain intellectual and editorial independence, while receiving support for publishing practices.

In the next three years, we plan to consolidate our position as an international platform that offers a space for novel intellectual inter and cross-disciplinary thinking. In addition to being a venue for publishing original research in the forms of essays, we continue to promote the debate on emerging topics in contemporary STS thorough the publication of special issues or thematic sections, along with our "Scenarios" and "Crossing Boundaries". Our effort will be especially directed to make *Tecnoscienza*'s sections a space for contributions by plural forms of engagement with diverse social worlds.

As part of the STS community, we have rarely witnessed such a massive deployment of STS at work as in current times. The more climate, health, social and political crises are connected, the more STS themselves seem fully entangled with them and the boundaries between engagement and commitment, knowledge and practice are increasingly blurred within our field. At the same time, the whole theoretical and methodological repertoire of the last decades erupted worldwide, making visible at once and to all the technoscientific controversies, lay and expert knowledge, the laboratories and their actor-networks, the epistemic cultures and communities, the categorical work and socio-material practices, and all the components that feature the field. Walking through the perfect storm for STS in the years to come requires the utmost responsibility and thoughtfulness. Rephrasing Lucy Suchman, this involves to put to the test how our scientific community is ordered, to proclaim the fragility and openness of its existence, and to explore alternatives.

Our journal will continue to promote what we consider good scientific work without taking for granted the publics and the communities that we are addressing. With the transition to the new publisher in the next issue, further ways of engagement with our readership will be introduced. We will keep supporting the voices of early-stage and independent research-

ers, extending the invitation to practitioners, journalists, and non-academics around the planet. That gives us the opportunity to thank once more the guest editors, external anonymous reviewers and all the authors whose voluntary contributions have made *Tecnoscienza*'s journey possible and supported its resilience and maturation, despite the challenging times. Just like STS, *Tecnoscienza* is a collective and distributed endeavour.

Trevor Pinch (1952-2021) has been a brilliant example of how STS could mingle and engage with art, science, technology, everyday life, and make the difference in the academic/scientific as well as personal spheres. In remembering Trevor and the huge contribution he made to the field, we are going to follow his path for doing STS in times of crises. Would you like to join the walk? There will be fun.

Claudio Coletta, Stefano Crabu, and Manuela Perrotta