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STS Figures to Think With

Open Source Smart City

SS2016

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Description:

To Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari the production of concepts was what distinguished the work of philosophy from other forms of reasoning, such as art and science. In this seminar we would like to inquire into the particular mode of reasoning of STS. Whilst the importance of literature and rhetorics in early science and technology studies widely drew attention to the central role that fictions, and specifically fictional persons and personas, played in processes of knowledge production, what if we thought about STS mode of reasoning as a process of thinking through particular figures of thought? Our main proposal would be to understand how the construction of these "figures" frames a particular understanding of the empirical-theoretical work in STS. Indeed, these figures are the crucial empirically-based and emergent characters through which STS modes of theorisation deploy. To show this, in this seminar we look at four particular figures that have been observed analytically and proposed as a critical resource for STS research. These include:

Cyborg: a science-fiction construct imported by Donna Haraway as a feminist construct to display hybridity, considered as an ambivalent figure that also critiques reductive and naturalist accounts of technology and society, self and other.

Invisible technician: a figure of invisible labour relations, seeking to bring back those often ‚written out' of technoscientific discourse and practice, rediscovered in historical and sociological work either as the assembler of the experimental apparatus, the mediator of experimental practice, or the worker setting up and taking care of the infrastructure.

Idiot: a character recently rediscovered by philosophers of science, borrowed from the deleuzian interpretations of Dostoievsky, a persona that puts forward the disruptions produced by epistemic outsiders to productive and fluid forms of collective knowledge.

Modest witness: a 17th century invention, these figures played a central role in public performance of facts and the development of the experiment as a genre of public knowledge in educated societies.

Key readings:

Deleuze, Gilles, & Guattari, Félix. (1994). What is Philosophy? New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter: Conceptual Personae

Suchman, Lucy. (2012). Configuration. In Celia Lury & Nina Wakeford (Eds.), Inventive methods: The happening of the social. London, New York, NY: Routledge.

Haraway, Donna. (1985). A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 19805. Socialist Review, 80, 65-107.

Shapin, Steven. (1989). The invisible technician. American scientist, 77(6), 554-563.
Michael, Mike (2013) The Idiot. Informática na Educação: teoria e prática, Porto Alegre, v. 16, n. 1, p. 71-82

Haraway, Donna. (1997). Modest– Witness@ Second– Millennium. FemaleMan– Meets– OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience: Psychology Press. Chapter Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium