

TRACK 11

ENGLISH VERSION

Mapping technoscience in the media: How to do it, and what is it in, what is it out?

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Mass media, especially newspapers, have traditionally been important sources for studying technoscience and its representations in their social contexts. The increasing digitalization facilitated the emergence of new opportunities for (semi)- automatic techniques: machine learning as well as web crawling and scraping now provide important tools for analyzing huge amount of textual material. However, these tools do not provide an alternative to qualitative analysis; qualitative and quantitative text analysis should be seen, hence, as complementary. Additionally, social media as well as traditional newsprint are “naturally” produced texts, as such data are neither collected by instruments such as surveys and interviews designed by the researcher nor in artificial settings such as focus groups. There are hence many reasons that make media an undeniable asset as a data source to further our understanding of technoscience.

The aim of this track is to scrutinize the opportunities and caveats of using big data and digital (social and mass) media for textual analysis of technoscience in society. We therefore encourage social scientists in general, and STS scholars in particular, to submit theoretically, empirically, and/or methodologically oriented papers that address these three main questions:

- *Who and/or what is missing in the media discourse about technoscience in general, or in the case of more specific issues?*

Media arenas are still a limited space, also after the enlargement provided by the digitalization process and the web; therefore, giving voice to some actors and issues means to leave others outside. So, what is in and what out? But, are we able to detect “the absence” when observing media discourses about technoscience?

- *How the media discourse about technoscience is organized? How does it develop over time? Analyzing technoscience in the media can suggest any answer to the problem of understanding its cultural and social authority?*

There are many possible issues related to this very general point: for example, the crises of expertise, the spreading of ‘fake news’, the problem of post-truth, and so on. The track welcomes theoretical as well as empirical contributions addressing these questions, and others that can be related to them.

- *Do automatic techniques really make a difference? Is there the possibility to combine more traditional methods – both qualitative and quantitative – with the new one, those built up for addressing huge corpora? How can we study ‘techno-science’ overall, rather than particular topics such as ‘climate change’ with automatic methods of analysis?*

What do we gain and what is lost when focusing on traditional media instead of social media? And, of course, the other way round: what can we understand about technoscience in the public sphere when using social media as a source for our analysis?