

community only as mediator or intermediary is again considering as problematic field the social as opposed to the technological. What might be helpful is to bring the same lenses used to look at “community”, to look at “digital”.

The only further problem with such a program might be a political one. Pelizza’s approach is quite helpful in distinguishing communities, which might transform into movements and enable more democratic participation. The reassembled “digital” – i.e. “digital” seen under Pelizza’s lenses – might turn on the counterparts of the criticized myths, like the centralization of power and new alliances, e.g. government and business. Then, what we see in contemporary political processes of different countries might be at the same time understood and legitimized.

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### M. Puig de la Bellacasa

*Matters of Care. Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2017, pp. 280

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Few years ago, I got deeply engaged with my colleague Paolo Magaudda in a qualitative research focusing on the development of a grass-roots community network (CN) in Italy, originally started in Rome in 2001 under the name of “Ninux.org” to then expand to other Italian cities (see Crabu and Magaudda 2017). CNs are commonly considered as a case of “inverse” infrastructure (Egyedi and Mehos 2012), characterised by being built and self-managed by communities of voluntary people

(hackers, engineering students, and political activists) concerned about the consequences of the neoliberal governance of internet. Briefly, it is about a decentralised network that is fully independent of the internet, particularly respectful of the confidentiality and user privacy, and estranged from the for-profit paradigm.

Unexpectedly, one of the most relevant things we immediately noticed in adopting an S&TS point of view in order to explore Ninux.org everyday life was a sort of “widespread care for everything’s intimacy”. Thus, the mainstream narrative according to which the source code and the hardware do not seem *matter of care*, revealed itself in all its fallacy. Indeed, in our S&TS exploration within Ninux.org, we directly appreciated multi-faceted caring practices, like the collective responsibility to live within more than human relations. Participating in Ninux.org means enacting a “logic of care” (Mol 2008) for the sake of non-human agents: wireless antennas, which compose an alternative material-semiotic choreography for digital communication, need to be “taken care of”. This activity is essential for the development and efficient operation of the network. At the same time, committing to taking care of antennas has both ethical and material implications, as it means participating in and taking care of the collective infrastructure as a (bio)political project.

This way, when I started reading the dense and inspiring book *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds*, the narrative of Maria Puig de la Bellacasa invited me to travel back to the CN fieldwork evoking in such a powerful and clear way the generative, political and hybrid nature of care. Better yet, its potential to transform the “present”. Ambivalences remain, of course, in the foreground. As Bellacasa nicely put it at the centre of her feminist-positioned argumentation, albeit care is crucial in opening new possibilities for shaping *alterbiopolitics* (see especially chapters four and five) and counter-subjectivisation paths, it may still entail a maintenance work deeply engaged with normative ethics and moral obligations. So, in continuity with the Tronto and Fisher definition of care as “a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (1990, 40), Puig de la Bellacasa proposes an anti-paradigmatic understanding of the concept in terms of practices generated at the interfaces between “labor/work, affect/affections, ethics/politics” (p. 5). In this way, by opening an innovative bridge between feminists and posthumanists Puig de la Bellacasa’s “invites a speculative exploration of the significance of care for thinking and living in more than human worlds” (p. 1). Accordingly, in this book, feminist scholarship and S&TS sensibility toward the relational materialism are streams converging in a single river, thus defining a conceptual texture which encourage the reader to take a bold journey to “thinking care as a politics of knowledge at the heart of technoscientific, naturecultural worlds” (p. 15), in which a speculative posture is a reliable compass. A speculative way of thinking that allows Puig de la Bellacasa to avoid normative instances

about care, since this terrain should be intrinsically exposed to be captured within a hegemonic moralising regimen of truth. In so doing the author, differently from other thought of care (see the Introduction), handle this concept as an inspiring tool for enabling a speculative thinking, that is a way to “designing” other possible worlds. Under this perspective, the book, by systematizing seminal articles that Bellacasa published in *Social Studies of Science* and in other journals related to S&TS, deals with ethics, without representing a normative engagement, since it traces a speculative, open-ended conceptual landscape as a way to escape from moralistic ambush, philosophical binaries, or western-based essentialisms.

The first stretch of the journey (part I, chapters 1-3) offers the possibility to cross along a theoretical matrix in which Haraway’s (chapter 1) and Latour’s works (chapter 2) are mobilized for envisioning an ethics-politics of care. Drawing on Latour’s concept of matters of fact as matters of concern (2005), Bellacasa introduces the reader to the notion of *matter of care*, as a way to frame the production of knowledge within a more-than-human process, densely populated with things, devices, and instruments. However, it is through a reconsideration of Haraway’s reflection on situated knowledges (1988) that the author makes the reader acquainted with a way of thinking according to which the relational nature of thought and knowledge require care. In this instance, care is an immanent dimension for collective thinking, for dis/entangling global struggles and matters, as well as for thinking care as a political act. This first stretch of the journey is then completed by a nice encounter with the “haptic metaphor” (chapter 3), developed by Bellacasa to challenge the “sensorial metaphor of vision, dominant in modern knowledge making and epistemologies” (p. 97). *To be in touch with*, that is, the sensibility in overcoming conceptual and practical conundrums arising as forms of ethical obligations. And more: to affirm the relationality and reciprocity in taking care of thinking.

What does caring mean when we go about thinking and living inter-dependently with beings other than human, in “more than human” worlds? This open question is at the centre of the last part of the journey (part II, chapters 4-5), where personal experience within permaculture movements and a critique of the productionist temporalities of technoscience are combined with a feminist perspective to address the concept of care in relation to the outcomes of technoscientific knowledge. By plunging into the permaculture movement, Bellacasa questions the notion of ethical obligation as a way to abiding with a relation ethics oriented at constituting interdependent relations in our ordinary more-than-human everyday life. Thus, soil-human relations are explored in chapter five, where the issue of the temporalities of care is addressed as a means to open living landscapes to emerging ethical and affective ecologies of care, capable of challenging the chronopolitics of hegemonic technoscientific innovation.

At the end of a journey, on our way home, we normally spark a wildfire of ideas on how our “biopolitics of proximity”, the assemblages of socio-technical relations within our *more than human* communities, could be influenced by the journey itself. Now I would like to try to intercept some salient points that may be of interest for S&TS scholars.

First point: more care for thinking and living. The book gives potential conceptual tools for confronting hegemonic, established moral orders, without refusing to consider mainstream notions of care: A help from a feminist perspective, in this case, to overcome *naïf* or elitist approaches and to avoid reductionist simplifications about care. Under this perspective, care is not just a *feminist affaire*, even if feminists offer a strong contribution to the reflections of care, for example by exploring apparently non-gendered practices, such as the production of technical and expert knowledge on soil.

Second point: more care for looking into troubles. This is, I think, a major methodological point, in terms of politics of knowledge, concerning how we – as S&TS scholars – situate our bodies-mind-nature in the context of the research. We can push further with respect to a mere self-reflexivity, by locating our*self(ves)*, as thinkers and knowledge manufacturers, within a web of care for the (material) consequences of our thinking and knowing.

Third point: more care for engaging. This could be a call for opening a new, more engaged programme in the politics of knowledge production, something that can resound like “S&TS as a more than engaged style of practice”. Indeed, in line with S&TS we are well aware of the (toxic) politics and ethics injections within technoscience. However, the stake here is to define a different regimen of possibility to produce knowledge over and within technoscience, one that is able to redesign alternative, more-than-human living landscapes. This also means reopening a dialogue with the ’70 and ’80 tradition of the radical science studies (e.g. Rose and Rose 1976). Under this light, the notion of care becomes a *dispositif* to configure an “ethical-political practice” and an “affective engagement” within knowledge production about technoscience and nature-culture: transformative knowledge engaged in a troubled contemporary technoscience is actually a matter of care.

Overall, this book represents an embodied transformative project, which asks us – as researchers – to articulate our biopolitical imaginaries into biopolitical action, by refusing the mortifying normative morality, or the neoliberal pragmatism with the aim to develop an affective engagement with and for the human and non-human actors we may meet in our fields. How to translate this points in practice? Is it a speculative commitment, a sufficient style of practices to envision “how things could be different” (p. 17)? Another journey in search for *alterbiopolitics* needs to be launched soon.

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