

Postface

GUIDO NICOLOSI

I first met Marina Maestrutti in the autumn of 2008, amidst the corridors of the Faculty of Sociology in Rome, during my first gathering with colleagues and friends of STS Italia – Società Italiana di Studi su Scienza e Tecnologia. The recollection of our initial conversation remains vivid, as our intellectual connection was instantaneous and swiftly evolved into a profound alignment both personally and scientifically.

As time unfolded, I came to comprehend the depth of immersing oneself in the intricate and multi-dimensional network meticulously woven by Marina. Her ceaseless and inquisitive journey traversing various realms of knowledge, disciplines, and connections revealed itself as a composite and multilevel tapestry. This network stands as a remarkably rich scientific, moral, and emotional legacy, characterised by immense creative prowess and the generation of substantial intellectual capital.

Marina Maestrutti's intellectual persona orbits around two pivotal concepts—mobility and the frontier. Despite their seemingly contradictory nature, these elements have played a decisive role in shaping her existential profile. Those fortunate enough to have known her are aware of Marina's profound inclination toward travel and exploration. A quality that she adeptly harmonised, with disarming and gentle ease, alongside an almost obsessive inclination to be deeply connected to the essential places in his life: Codroipo, a town in the Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia where her family lives, and the Marais, a historic district in Paris. The journey has consistently been the hallmark of her lifestyle,

and the deliberate choice to relocate from Italy to France serves as the most explicit affirmation of this characteristic.

I have never been fond of the overtly rhetorical tone, which, in my opinion, often carries a provincial undertone, characterising the Italian public discourse on the phenomenon commonly referred to as the “brain drain.” The truth is that, dating back to its ancient medieval origins, the academic realm has always thrived on the dynamic mobility of both educators and students. This should be acknowledged as a fundamental resource within the system, one that warrants robust encouragement, particularly in terms of both outbound and, more crucially, inbound mobility—the true Achilles’ heel of the Italian system. The personal and academic trajectory of Marina Maestrutti aligns exemplarily within this context.

A brilliant Italian talent and academic excellence, she earned her degree in Philosophy from the University of Bologna. Subsequently, she chose to venture beyond Italy to pursue a *Diplôme d'études Approfondi* (DEA – “Diploma of Advanced Studies”) in *Anthropologie des techniques contemporaines*, under the mentorship of Professor Alain Gras at the Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. This decision marked a pivotal moment, transforming the university into her second home and serving as an exponential catalyst for her intellectual sensitivity and cultural breadth.

In particular, the meeting and relationship with Alain Gras are crucial for understanding her research path, her inclination for multidisciplinary and, more generally, her approach, both enthusiastic and critical, towards contemporary technological developments. Alain Gras was also her mentor in the initial stage of her PhD studies in Epistemology and history of science and technology, which she will however achieve under the supervision of Prof. Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent in 2007.

Understanding Marina’s profile in its entirety requires an examination of the profound significance that the concept of the frontier held in her life—a significance extending beyond the physical realm to encompass the mental and existential dimensions. Both in Italian and French, the terms “frontier” and “border” are often used interchangeably to denote a geographical limit. However, in the classical world, there existed a notable distinction between these two terms. “Border” was associated with the realm of familiar space and the known world, while “frontier” represented the demarcation threshold separating the known from the unknown, order from disorder, and civilisation from barbarism. In Marina’s life, this duality was remarkably evident.

At first, the frontier represented her Friulian identity, signifying her connection to a region that serves as both a dividing and unifying force, enriching both Friuli and Italy. Marina skillfully integrated the contradictions of a global citizen deeply rooted in her community of origin into her personality, humor, and intellect. This apparent paradox, however, finds its sustenance in the relationship with a land that, like all borders—I speak as a Sicilian—compels the intertwining of roots and estrangement.

While of Friulian descent, Marina was born in Turin and spent her formative years there. Even in this distinct borderland, her recollections were consistently illuminated

by the liveliness of human and social interactions in the Madonna di Campagna neighbourhood. During the 1970s, this area functioned as a “central periphery,” acting as a frontier that both united and separated the countryside from the historic center. It was a space where diverse social classes converged, engaging in exchanges of perspectives amid moments of friction and solidarity.

Her connection with France mirrors this ambivalence toward the worlds she inhabited, each coexisting within her in a delicate balance. Identified by some as a Franco-French intellectual, she manifested an unmistakable Italian spirit in her scientific and cultural endeavors. In this unique position, Marina successfully sustained the richness and complexity inherent in the relationship between these two reference cultures. Achieving this task is no small feat in a country like France, which, even in its generosity, historically exhibits a tradition of cultural assimilation. The palpable “cohabitation” of her two worlds is exemplified by her deep attachment to “her” Parisian neighbourhood (the Marais) while simultaneously choosing not to pursue French citizenship—an apparent contradiction that only those privileged enough to know her well can truly comprehend and justify.

On the intellectual front, Marina’s research unfolded along the uncertain and rugged frontier intersecting diverse realms of knowledge: a degree in philosophy, a DEA in anthropology of technology, a PhD in epistemology, engagement in sociology, teaching in social psychology, and a focus on gender studies, among others. This is precisely why the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) became a privileged domain of her activity. Embracing its inherently “uncertain” status and maintaining an “undisciplined” dimension, we both consistently advocated for and valued it as a resource not to be squandered but instead, to be carefully preserved. Marina had the opportunity to manifest and nurture her passion for the transversality of knowledge at the *Centre d’Études des Techniques, des Connaissances et des Pratiques* (CETCOPRA) at the Sorbonne, an interdisciplinary research center founded by Alain Gras and currently directed by Thierry Pillon. Here, she charted a rich and original research trajectory, consistently anchored to a specific perspective—the body and its social construction. From this standpoint, she delved into studies on the imaginaries of technology (with a focus on nanotechnologies and nanoparticles), the analysis of techno-utopias, post-humanism and transhumanism, cultural disasters, and the anthropology of De Martino.

Finally, the culminating frontier in her scientific exploration focused on the hybridisation of the body and technology, particularly in the realm of medical and restorative prostheses. This research not only enabled her to synthesise earlier works but also elevated her scientific *métissage*. This transformative phase was facilitated by her delegation, a temporary assignment spanning 2018/2019, at the Institut des Systèmes Intelligents et de Robotique (ISIR), a laboratory under the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Her ambitious project, titled “Aux frontières du corps: La place de l’expérience singulière dans le processus d’innovation technologique en robotique et prothétique,” delved into the intersection of the body and technology.

Conducting fieldwork within this research initiative, Marina passionately embraced her mentorship role until the very last days before her sudden and untimely demise. As attested by the younger researchers involved in this project, she generously supported them, helping navigate the fears and uncertainties inherent in the early stages of an academic career, especially when navigating the complex terrain of interdisciplinary research.

In this aspect as well, Marina demonstrated her *force tranquille*—a serene yet resolute strength that defined her approach to work, fueled by the passion and love for knowledge that characterised her. With the same selflessness and transparency, she nurtured profound human connections, constructing and supporting them with generosity, even in instances where her Friulian background might have led those unfamiliar with her to misconstrue a certain reluctance and introversion as rudeness.