

## STS Conference Graz 2015

### Critical Issues in Science, Technology and Society Studies

#### **SESSION 3: Emerging Configurations of Biomedical Technologies**

“ICSI for all!”: How an Unnecessary Biomedical Technology Became the Standard

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My contribution aims at looking the emergence of a “new technique” in the field of assisted reproductive technologies (ART). Although currently ART is universally known as IVF (In Vitro Fertilization), exploring it inside laboratories allows to see how the more used technique is nowadays ICSI (Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection). ICSI was introduced as a solution to severe male infertility problems and as a possible alternative to the donation from third party donors. By using a single spermatozoa, ICSI permits the fertilization of an oocyte even in severe cases of male infertility. Since its introduction, the percentage of use of ICSI has dramatically increased. International data show that ICSI is currently used most often. Despite several professional opinion leaders in the ART field have recently criticized the overuse of ICSI, its success continues unabated.

The progressive passage from the old to the new technique is entangled into a controversial technology and tied to knowledge processes. The configuration of ICSI emerges from a network of organizational practices, which are embedded in an institutional setting and a moral landscape. My paper will explore several factors (organizational, social and moral aspects) that explain the disproportionate use of ICSI in the case of Italy.