

Ferruccio Rossi-Landi and a Short History of the Rossi-Landi Network

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Summary: This presentation was intended as an introductory address for the section “Current Issues in Socio-Semiotics”, which was co-organized by the International Ferruccio Rossi-Landi Network IFRN and the IASS-AIS, or personally speaking, by Susan Petrilli and myself, with assistance by Renée Gadsden. First I gave an outline of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi’s paradigm, then reviewed the Network’s history (esp. conferences and publications), including books by and about Rossi-Landi which have appeared since his death, and finally I sketched some programmatic matters. This is an abbreviated version of a presentation of about an hour duration on the spot.

INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the 20th century, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1921-1985) is undoubtedly a major figure in modern semiotics, particularly as part of a trend which came into being with the early work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin decades before. We may term this trend Socio-Semiotics, which is characterized by its commitment to the search for the foundations of (anthropo)semiotics in social practice and society as a mega-system, or rather, mega-process. To understand the latter, Rossi-Landi developed the most elaborate theoretical approach hitherto known in modern (socio)semiotics. He proposed a new sign model stressing the “sociality” of human sign use, he emphasized the “homology” of material and sign production, and, finally, he embedded sign systems and processes in theoretical terms in social reproduction at large. He died unexpectedly without having completed his endeavor, but he has left strong traces, which may now be followed fruitfully.

The first conference dedicated to the work of Rossi-Landi took place in Rome in 1992, hosted, first of all, by János Kelemen, then Director of the Hungarian Institute of Culture in Rome. During the conference a group of scholars decided to found an International Ferruccio Rossi-Landi Society for Semiotics and Social Philosophy, which was to be provisionally coordinated by myself until its formal existence (while actually up to now). However, the rapid rise of Internet has caused us to revise the idea, and to build a “network” instead to avoid bureaucratic procedures. Another conference took place in Bologna and Padova, while in connection with it a Rossi-Landi documentation center was opened in Brugine (near Padova). In the Dresden IASS World Congress 1999, the Network organized a major section on „Semiosis, Community, Sociality“. The most recent conference took place in Bari, Italy, 2002, under the auspices of the IASS-AIS. The results appeared shortly before the 8th World Congress, Lyon, and were presented in its course. As an Associated Member, the Network has been represented in the IASS Executive Committee since 1999 by two scholars, János Kelemen and Susan Petrilli, since Lyon by Janós Kelemen and Augusto Ponzio (Petrilli is now a Member of

the Board of the IASS-AIS, so that, together with myself as Administrative Vice-President, the IFRN seems well-represented in the community).

This presentation has two clearly distinguished parts:

- 1) a short revisitation and valuation of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's life and life-work; this seems particularly necessary because, on the one hand, he is already counted among the "classics" of semiotics in the second half of the 20th century (alongside e.g. Thomas A. Sebeok, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Jurij M. Lotman, Umberto Eco), but, on the other hand, he is much less widely received than those mentioned, in greater parts of the semiotic community and also outside (which might have contextual as well as political reasons, and comes certainly also from the fact that in some big languages nearly no translations exist, for instance in French; his last book, so to say his scientific testament, *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* from 1985, exists still only in Italian).
- 2) There follows a short history of the International Ferruccio Rossi-Landi Network IFRN. My intention, beside this, is to emphasize moreover that the International Ferruccio Rossi-Landi Network does not just focus on the author's lifework and its better implementation in the semiotic community, but is also very interested in cooperation and exchange with all scholars stressing the social relevance of semiotics and neighboring fields, and who dedicate their work and thought to practice-oriented theorizing and actual analysis of signs in society. (In the context of the Lyon Congress this should have been also particularly relevant in relation to problems concerning the foundation of semiotics in the field of tension between biosemiotics and socio-semiotics, in my view an important point of discussion in the semiotic community of today and in the near future.)

FERRUCCIO ROSSI-LANDI

The Italian philosopher Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1921-1985), Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Trieste in the last stage of his life, is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding representatives of semiotics, and particularly socio-semiotics, in the second half of the 20th century. In a certain sense he is also a "great outsider" (Ponzio), well-known in the field, but also largely misunderstood for many reasons, indeed more often than not. The term socio-semiotics is understood, in the first place, as a socio-genetically, or socio-evolutionarily, founded semiotics, a philosophy of the sign and a "methodics", as Rossi-Landi himself called it. He was well informed about all major currents in modern semiotics and drew especially from Morris and Peirce, while, on the contrary, criticizing the various structuralisms which had arisen in the wake of Saussure, a controversy which had already started with Bakhtin/Voloshinov, to whom Rossi-Landi was also indebted. Rossi-Landi's life work was dedicated to the systematic development of an independent dialectic and materialist sign theory in its own right, which goes hand in hand with an authentic socio-philosophical theory of mind/thought. The essential aspects of the latter (in the closer sense) were developed in his *Ideologia* (1978/1982) in terms of an interplay of ideology as world-view, on the one hand, and false consciousness, on the other. Important aspects are also the close relationship of sign and ideology and the "programming" of societal circumstances via ideology.

However, Rossi-Landi developed his socio-semiotics in the stricter sense beginning from his (anti-Saussurean as well as anti-Oxonian) concept of "parlare

comune” (“common speech”), subsequently conceptualized in terms of linguistic work (and sign work, in general, resting on a well-defined “Marxian” – not “Marxist”, as he often emphasized – concept of work) and finally in terms of his “homology model”, with which he identified homological relations between material and linguistic production, and further on sign production in general. This model elaborates a comprehensive theory of “articulation” of all types of artefacts in homological relation to a theory of the “hidden structure” of sign work bringing signs in motion. All this, in the last instance (as he pointed out very systematically and comprehensively in his later works), is going on embedded in collective societal reproduction, the moving force of the sphere of circulation and distribution: sign exchange = communication. Thus, semiotic systems and processes are embedded in the triadic movement of production-exchange-consumption, where their dialectic/dia-logic unfolds as the functionally unrenouncable mediating structure between the trivially-material basis and the superstructure (ideology). As a result, “common speech” translates, in the last analysis, into “common semiosis”.

Rossi-Landi’s discourse developing these central topics can be found in its most advanced form above all in such volumes as *Linguistics and Economics* (1975) and *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (1985). His determination of the integral locus of the signs and of semiosis in the general framework of human performance made Rossi-Landi’s system, to put it modestly, one of the most advanced in modern semiotics (whose possibilities, however, have been but rudimentarily utilized so far). He must indeed be acknowledged in his outstanding uniqueness as a true innovator in the field (*champs sémiotique* as well as social philosophy).

Rossi-Landi’s philosophical and semiotic legacy developed across four productive decades of work. During this time his preoccupation with the sign, with language, but also with the “strong materiality” of bodies and objects, and with everything else which ensues from their interplay, consistently assumed a prominent role. He started by presenting and discussing Ch.W. Morris’s “semiotic” for the first time in Europe (*Charles Morris*, 1953): this study provided the key to his own move from Morrisian/Meadian behavioristics to genuinely societal behavior resulting in the development of “common speech”, first in *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* (1961), then, enhanced by the notion of sign work, in *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato* (1968), followed by *Semiotica e ideologia* (1972) and even more significantly by *Linguistics and Economics* (1975), in which nearly all the essential elements of his thought are combined in highly elaborate form (parts of which were already presented earlier in important journals edited by himself, like *Ideologie* and *Scienze Umane*, and in a vast number of articles published in other places). *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* (1985), the last volume he published (and which appeared after his death in that same year), is, then, a kind of semiotic-philosophical testament. *Between Signs and Non-Signs* (1992; ed. by Susan Petrilli), appeared posthumously, throwing new light on the various stages of his intellectual development.

Resting on the fundamentals of Hegelian dialectics advanced to a dia-logic, and on Marxian anthropology, Rossi-Landi developed neither a “modern” nor even a “post-modern” system of thought, but rather worked in a genuinely future-oriented direction, whose applicative conclusions are still to be drawn. From the very beginning, all his texts centered around issues that were always unconventionally and convincingly raised, such as sign, thought, language, tool (the actual key to his homology model),

work, production, society and social reproduction, history, practice, ideology, economy, values, matter, nature/culture, evolution, consciousness, totality, discourse, communication, processuality, dialectics, alienation, and related topics.

Viewed in this totality, Rossi-Landi's theoretical research may be considered as leaving a vast and powerful heritage among the different philosophical and theoretical currents with originality, and as leaving signs certainly destined to last. The havens towards which Rossi-Landi sails and from which he is always ready to set off, are primarily English analytical philosophy, Marxian dialectics and the semiotic science of Peirce and Morris, visited, furthermore, in historical moments when such havens were still largely ignored or misunderstood¹.

Thanks to such orientations, Rossi-Landian theory opens new vistas especially on the problematics of sign production, exchange, and consumption in modern (or post-modern, or neo-capitalist) society, problems which are necessarily connected with the whole structure and development of society and its manifold subsystems. To revisit Rossi-Landi's insights and achievements and to complete them with findings of congenial authors is exactly what should be the task of conferences like "Il segno e il testo" (Rome 1992), "The Relevance of Rossi-Landi's Semiotics Today" (Bari 2002) or – still to come – "Social Reproduction and Cultural Innovation" (Vienna 2005; actually the semiotic section of a much bigger congress), but to "revisit" them means of course, in the sense Rossi-Landi would have preferred, that is, to *make use* of his findings, to apply them to the intricate problems of present-day life on its micro- and macro-social levels, that is, in their sociality and historicity, against the background of the new challenges we have had to face in culture and society and must continue doing so – advanced but ambivalent technology, socio-economic problems, ecological problems, etc. This means to further develop his theory in the light of events which are considered to have changed the world significantly, and will do so even more in the near future.

SHORT HISTORY OF THE ROSSI-LANDI NETWORK

Before reviewing the history of the International Ferruccio Rossi-Landi Network, let me start with some personal remarks on the, so to say, pre-history, as far as my personal relationship with Rossi-Landi is concerned, which dates back to the late 1970s. I had the opportunity to meet him several times in my capacity as Sec. General of the Austrian Association for Semiotics as well as privately. The latter was the case because he loved Vienna and visited the city frequently, so we had the opportunity for long talks about semiotics, politics, sociological questions, etc., but soon also more private issues. The scholarly relationship started with the 2nd Semiotics World Congress in Vienna 1989, in which he had his own big section, and I was involved in organizatory matters. Afterwards, I invited him as keynote speaker to the 4th International Congress of the Austrian Association for Semiotics, Linz 1981, entitled "Didaktische Umsetzung der Zeichentheorie" (Didactic Implementation of Semiotics), whose proceedings with the same title appeared in 1984, and for which I remember well one special redactional meeting with Rossi-Landi, combined with an exquisite dinner. Then followed several

¹ PONZIO, A. (1986), p. 3.

invitations to guest lectures in Vienna, and the last greater event was the 5th International Congress of the Austrian Association for Semiotics, Klagenfurt 1984, entitled “Zeichen/Manipulation” (Sign/Manipulation), in which he also played a leading role. Actually, it was the last congress outside Italy he had attended. In the course of it, he gave a plenary lecture on the topic “Work, Sign, and Some Uses of Language”, a very important text for the understanding of his approach, of which the publication was unfortunately delayed until 1994 in the proceedings *Zeichen/Manipulation*, edited by myself, a volume dedicated *in memoriam* Ferruccio Rossi-Landi. So we had only about 7 or 8 years of personal acquaintance but enough to become good friends. And if I ever had a teacher in semiotics, which you could study nearly nowhere at that time, then it was him, and I am very grateful for the long conversations we had together.

Our last meeting took place in early 1985 in Vienna; we were three: he, Gloria Withalm, and myself, and he complained a bit about his state of health, esp. his blood pressure, but seemed nonetheless yet in good shape (and we managed to drink together about two thirds of a Whisky bottle just in one long evening). In late spring 1985 however, due to a brain stroke, he died on his yacht in the arms of our common friend János Kelemen who just had visited him in Trieste. The IASS-AIS and the ÖGS/AAS were present at the funeral in the persons of Gloria Withalm, Treasurer IASS-AIS, and myself, Secr. General ÖGS/AAS, and the first to react upon the sad event publicly were also Gloria Withalm and myself because we dedicated the double issue 9(1,2)1985 of the Journal of the Austrian Association for Semiotics, *Semiotische Berichte*, “IN MEMORIAM FERRUCCIO ROSSI-LANDI”. It contained a review of *Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni*, a provisional bibliography, and an interview with him. (*Metodica filosofica e scienza dei segni* appeared actually only very shortly after his death.)

Parallel to all this, we applied for a research project in 1983, which then was carried out in the mid-1980s. Its title was *Zeichentheorie & Zeichenpraxis* (Theory of Signs, Practice of Signs), and as to the application, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi was one of the two reviewers, and thus helped us by his very positive expertise to get it through. His theory, however, was also a main topic. Gloria Withalm and I worked out this part, while the Vienna socio-semiotics group around Wolfgang Pollak delivered the other part (not yet published as a whole, but many fragments of it on several places).

In the meantime appeared the first secondary publications concerning Rossi-Landi, first of all “Per Ferruccio Rossi-Landi”, an issue of *Il Protagora* (27/1987) edited by Susan Petrilli. It contained contributions by herself and Eco, Biancofiore/Ponzio, Kelemen, Sebeok, H.W. Schmitz, Threadgold, Luperini, Posner, Tentori, Slama-Cazacu, several short “Testimonianze” collected by Paolo Facchi, and Rossi-Landi’s short text “La ‘non-filosofia’”. In 1988 Augusto Ponzio published the book *Rossi-Landi e la filosofia del linguaggio*, with two original articles by Rossi-Landi at the end, “Un frammento di storia della semiotica italiana” and “Il segno e i suoi residui”. Both publications were Bari products insofar as Ponzio and Petrilli make the kernel of the Bari semiotics group. So it becomes already obvious that the main center of Rossi-Landi research in Italy as well as in general is Bari. In fact, it was, to my knowledge, the place Rossi-Landi himself appreciated most to collaborate with, and there were also the closest inner-Italian personal as well as scholarly connections. But Vienna played also a significant role. We, that is, Gloria Withalm, our Hungarian friend János Kelemen, and myself were the issue editors of *S – European Journal for Semiotic*

Studies 3(1,2)1991 entitled “Dialectics, Semiotics, Materialism. In Memoriam Ferruccio Rossi-Landi”, which, beside our intro, contained contributions of Bozenhard, Bozenhard/Herkt, Kelemen (2), Engelmann, Louw/Tomaselli, Reid, Neumer, Garai/Köcski, Wallmannsberger, Herkt, Hall, Nyíri, Bernard/Withalm (2), Bernard (2), and my translation of Rossi-Landi’s text about sign residues (“Auf dem Wege zu einer Theorie der Zeichenresiduen”), embedding him thus in the general history of socio-semiotics.

About the same time, Susan Petrilli acted as the guest-editor of a Special Issue of *Semiotica* (88(1/2)1992) with the letter exchange between Ch.W. Morris and Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, and in the same year she edited also the already mentioned posthumous book of Rossi-Landi, *Between Signs and Non-Signs* (Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins) including an introduction by the editor; the publication project and its disposal were still Rossi-Landi’s, although he himself had been unable to materialize it (main chapters: Signs and Masters in Semiotic History; Signs as Cognitive and Evaluative Instruments; Signs, Linguistic Alienation and Social Reproduction; Signs and Material Reality). While 1992 was also the year in which Rossi-Landi’s *Semiotica e ideologia* reappeared as well as *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*, both in Milan with Bompiani, and both edited and commented by Augusto Ponzio. Moreover, already in 1990 *Ideologia* appeared in an English version somewhat misleadingly entitled *Marxism and Ideology* (translation by Roger Griffin, with a Foreword by Salvatore Veca; Oxford: Clarendon Press)

It was a question of time only, that Bari and Vienna would come to common action, and they as well as we had certainly both the idea to organize a congress in honor of Rossi-Landi and dedicated to Rossi-Landi’s life-work much earlier. However, there was no network yet to make it come true. It needed János Kelemen, who became Director of the Hungarian Institute of Culture in Rome at the turn of the 1980s to the 1990s, to take the initiative. We discussed with him a meeting first for 1990 in commemoration of Rossi-Landi’s death 5 years ago, then 1991, i.e. on the occasion of his 70th birthday. For technical reasons it finally resulted in 1992 that the first Rossi-Landi congress was scheduled in Rome at Kelemen’s Institute. It had the title “Il segno e il testo”. To fulfill the closer task of the Institute, actually there were 2 heroes to be celebrated, János S. Petöfi, the famous Hungarian professor of linguistics in Italy at Macerata University, and Ferruccio Rossi-Landi. “Testo” stood for Petöfi, “segno” for Rossi-Landi, of course, and Petöfi had the first day, Rossi-Landi the second and third. Coorganizers were beside Kelemen’s Institute the Austrian Association for Semiotics, the Institute for Socio-Semiotic Studies, and the Austrian Culture Institute in Rome, where also part of the conference took place; “silent partners” as to the organization of the Symposium, but eloquent in its realization, were the Bari group around Ponzio and Petrilli, who appeared with several colleagues.

In the course of the event the idea was raised to found an International Ferruccio Rossi-Landi Society for Socio-Semiotics and Social Philosophy, which should have also a newsletter. The (candidates for the) proposers’ committee consisted of the following seven persons: Jeff Bernard (Vienna), Massimo A. Bonfantini (at that time Naples, now Milan), Paolo Facchi (Trieste), János Kelemen (Budapest, originally), Susan Petrilli (Bari), Augusto Ponzio (Bari), and Gloria Withalm (Vienna). I was asked to coordinate things to come provisionally and look for a possibility to found the Society in Austria, and to launch the newsletter, whose first issue should mainly consist

of a report of “Il segno e il testo”. It never came into being because I never got all the abstracts of the participants (maybe the trust in our plans wasn’t too great at the beginning), and neither did the Society because, as already mentioned, it was never realized in this form since after a while we started discussing more flexible and less bureaucratic ways to increase communication and activities, to reach finally the point that in times of the internet a “network” would suffice (the idea came to me through observing Eero Tarasti’s Musical Signification Project, later Network, which works and collaborates much better than most comparable international associations but without a formal frame). What counts is actual communication and activity, after all.

Another plan proposed a bit later was a yearbook called *Panta rhei*, for a while we were nearly drunk from the idea and even more from the beautiful name, but nobody had time and capacity enough to realize it, although we started writing and collecting articles for it. After some consideration whether the yearbook should appear each year or every second or every third year, we realized that binding us on such a strict schedule, whether yearly or not, would be beyond our possibilities (a network has no money...). Thus it happened instead that most of the materials plus some new ones became part of a Special Issue of *S – European Journal for Semiotic Studies* entitled “Socio-Semiotics” (7(1,2)1995), with myself as the issue editor. Contributors were Andacht, Calefato, Giessen, Hepp, Hepp/Kergel, Kapsomenos, Lagopoulos/Boklund-Lagopoulou, Moser, Petrilli, Ponzio, Reinfeldt, Solimini, Spiridonidis, Tomaselli, Welty, and Wenzel, with two Review Articles by Cebulla and Hepp. It was a fine demonstration, I think, of the Network’s idea not only to constitute a close circle of Rossi-Landi specialists, but an open forum for manifold socio-semiotic discussion and exchange.

Shortly before, i.e. still in 1994, appeared the proceedings of “Il segno e il testo”, however without the Petöfi part, but still a thick volume, under the title *Reading su Ferruccio Rossi-Landi. Semiosi come pratica sociale* in Naples with Edizione Scientifiche Italiane ESI. The co-editors were Jeff Bernard, Massimo A. Bonfantini, János Kelemen, and Augusto Ponzio, but it should be stressed that a lot of corrections were tacitly done by Susan Petrilli, and moreover we must be grateful to Massimo A. Bonfantini who enabled that project to appear in his series “Semiosis” as no. 2. The book contains an Intro by Bonfantini and Ponzio and contributions by Kelemen, Facchi, Poole, Bernard, Bianchi, Negri, T. Colapietro, Petrilli, Caputo, Calefato, Biancofiore, Bonfantini, Ponzio, Marostica, Stefanova, Hoppál, Mininni, Bernard/Withalm, and two texts by Rossi-Landi himself: “Il concetto di valore” and “Per il corso di filosofia morale”, plus his bibliography. – Again in Naples 1995 with ESI appeared Cinzia Bianchi’s book *Su Ferruccio Rossi-Landi* (in the series “Su” as no. 2), based on her dissertation, a fine and extensive introduction to, and discussion of, the whole of Rossi-Landi’s work.

In the same year a kind of split Rossi-Landi conference was organized in Bologna and Padova on the occasion of Rossi-Landi’s death 10 years before: “Two Days of Study and Remembrance. Ten Years after the Death of Ferruccio Rossi-Landi” (was the title of Cinzia Bianchi’s and Gloria Withalm’s report²), the first part entitled “Rossi-Landi e la semiotica” took place in Bologna on November 24th, 1995, the speakers

² In BERNARD, J., WITHALM, G., RÉTHORÉ, J. (1996), pp. 227-230.

were Bianchi, Bonfantini, Eco, Quaranta, Ponzio, and Santucci, the second, bigger, part then in Padova on December 6th, 1995, the speakers were Berti, Iannucci/Bianchi, Bernard, Bonfantini, Kelemen, Facchi, Ponzio, Withalm, Quaranta, Bobbio, Piovesan, Galassi, and Genevieve Vaughan, Rossi-Landi's wife and herself a remarkable scholar too. Co-organizers were the two Universities and the Rossi-Landi family, and, as to Padova, the Centro Internazionale di Storia dello Spazio e del Tempo CISST. This Center's seat in Brugine near Padova was also part of the scientific as well as social program, because it hosts the Rossi-Landi Archive. This archive was built up on the basis of Rossi-Landi's enormous library and his scientific assets (administered by Mario Quaranta) in a project lasting one year, and financed (to my incomplete knowledge) partly by CISST, partly by the Rossi-Landi family, and other sources. It was carried out concretely by Cinzia Bianchi and Marco Iannucci who also reported about it during the conference, and made a guided tour through the Archive. The whole material was worked off for online use, but there were no more financial possibilities till now to continue and to "normalize" the circumstances. So our hopes that the Archive would become a full-fledged Rossi-Landi research center, and a site for more Rossi-Landi conferences or socio-semiotic congresses in general didn't come true.

The next fact, chronologically, worth mentioning is August Ponzio's re-edition (with introduction) of Rossi-Landi's *Significato, comunicazione e parlare comune* from 1961, now Padova 1998 (with Marsilio). We reach now the 7th Semiotics World Congress in Dresden, Germany, in whose course the International Ferruccio Rossi-Landi Network presented itself for the first time explicitly in the IASS environs (and also was accepted among the IASS Executive Committee's Associated Members). The Congress had the title "Sign Processes in Complex Systems". It was Susan Petrilli and myself who organized within Section IV, "Cultures and Societies as Complex Systems", the biggest Session called "Semiosis, Community, Sociality". It had three subsections, i.e.: "Socio-Semiotic Theory & Fundamentals" (chair: Bernard/Petrilli); "Discourse & Power" (chair: Fernando Andacht & Astrid Hönigsperger); and "Gender, Body, Politics" (chair: Terry Threadgold & Joëlle Réthoré). Unfortunately, the local Dresden organizers who expressed their will and economic ability to publish the proceedings, and indeed collected articles for several years, have not yet managed till now to offer the results.

Still in 2000 appeared the former Rossi-Landi edition of Giovanni Vailati essays in Bari with Graphis, promoted by Ponzio. In 2003, Ponzio published the fourth edition of Rossi-Landi's *Il linguaggio come lavoro e come mercato*. The next big IFNR hit, however, happened in 2002 in Bari with the symposium "The Relevance of Rossi-Landi's Semiotics Today". A lot of institutions functioned, beside the IFNR, as co-organizers: the IASS, the ÖGS/AAS, the Institute for Socio-Semiotic Studies, the Associazione Italiana di Studi Semiotici, and the Hungarian Association for Semiotic Studies; concretely, the event was organized by the Bari group, with my assistance. The conference took place at the University of Bari on November 14-16, 2002. As already mentioned, the results were published in 2004 in the form of a Special Issue of *Athanos* 14(7)2003-2004, edited by Susan Petrilli and entitled "Lavoro immateriale", with the following contributors: Augieri, Bernard, Bianchi, Bisanz, Calefato, Caputo, Colaizzi, Facchi, Finol, Fornoni Bernardini, Galassi, Kelemen, Mansueto, Mininni, Muzzoli, Negri, Paulicelli, Petrilli, A. Ponzio, L. Ponzio, Quarta, Signore, Vieira Negrão, Vaughan, and Withalm.

Lyon 2004 is the subject matter of this electronic publication. I observed with pleasure that the IFRN “Socio-Semiotics” session was the second biggest after that of the International Association for Visual Semiotics IAVS. Here we appeared with an introductory internal Round Table called “Fundamentals”, chaired by myself, and three subsequent one-and-a-half days subsections: “Theory” (also chaired by myself), “Politics” (chair: Petrilli), and “Socio-Semioses” (chair: Gadsden). This is the place to thank Susan Petrilli for co-organizing, and her and Renée Gadsen for actively collaborating on the spot. Finally, of course, thanks to all participants for their contributions and engaged discussion, and especially to those who persevered until delivery of their print-ready texts. – The last event, historically speaking, which I can mention is, that Rossi-Landi’s 1978 *Ideologia* was re-edited by Augusto Ponzio in Rome in 2005 with Meltemi, shortly before this article went to the present Editors. This is a special pleasure insofar as the plan to re-publish this extremely valuable book exists already since several years but couldn’t yet be realized for some odd reasons.

Finally, a few lines about things to come:

The most probably next stroke is *Semiotics Unbounded* by Petrilli and Ponzio, a very special and very huge book to appear this summer in Toronto with UTP. It is, among other things, a kind of revaluation of semiotic “classics”, and it is not by chance that the chapter on Rossi-Landi is the most extensive among those about the heroes of “interpretive” semiotics. – On Dec. 9-11, 2005, the very big International Conference “Innovation and Reproduction in Cultures and Societies” will take place in Vienna; we were invited to take part and shape a semiotic section, and we suggested as title “Social Reproduction and Cultural Innovation. From a Semiotic Point of View”. The response to our Call for Papers is promising (please turn to <ISSS-Info@MCNon.com>), and I take the liberty to quote the Call here, first, to encourage you to take part, and second, to show the programmatic openness of the IFRN again:

Within the major currents of modern semiotics, the Peirce-Morris mainstream (pragmati(ci)st and related ones), the “semiological” mainstream (the diverse structuralisms incl. poststructuralism), and the important approaches of biosemiotics and socio-semiotics are the most influential ones. Concerning the latter, the most elaborate theory hitherto developed is Ferruccio Rossi-Landi’s, in which the term “social reproduction” is a very central one. In his later work, he embedded the sign systems and processes theoretically in social reproduction, wherein they have a privileged function in the intermediary structure (structure/intermediary structure/superstructure): sign exchange = communication. Without sign use, nothing works. On the other hand, we can observe since the early 1960s the rise of a theoretical as well as an applied semiotics of culture (e.g. the Moscow-Tartu School in East Europe; Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, and others in West Europe). In synthesizing the socio-semiotic and cultural-semiotic viewpoints we can approach the challenge to consider society (the people) and culture (people’s production) as a whole in an intersemiotic way, and thus also the topic of “Social Reproduction and Cultural Innovation”. “Intersemiotics” indicates also that you’re welcome to partake irrespective of the semiotic current you feel indebted to, if only you want to tackle these problems.

Therefore, we kindly ask for theoretical and applied semiotic contributions to questions and problems concerning all spheres of social reproduction, such as material production, sign production, and ideological production as well as especially their interrelationships and interdependencies. It would be preferable that your contributions should also meet the provocations of our time, i.e., would show that semiotics is a valid tool for analyzing, assessing, and interpreting the present state of affairs (globalization, neoliberal hegemony, multiculturalism, interculturality, subcultures, “clash of civilizations”, terrorism, Third

World problems, etc.), but historically oriented studies are also welcome, as well as strictly theoretical ones, insofar as they offer models for treating and overcoming the challenges of our time in society and culture (societies and cultures!).

Another Rossi-Landi conference is planned in Budapest nearly at the same time by János Kelemen in collaboration with the Italian Institute of Culture in Budapest but the date is not yet fixed; discussions go on for finding synergies, of course. In the long range, a conference “Biosemiotics and/vs. Socio-Semiotics” is also in our minds but depends on the (economic) circumstances. During the 9th Semiotics World Congress, Helsinki 2007, we want of course to continue our section work but wait still for the general Congress topic.

Finally, let me remark that I hope to have succeeded in convincing you, first, of the necessity of the IFRN concerning the (pre)occupation with the heritage of the great semiotician Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, and second, even more, that the IFNR has become a crystallization point for socio-semiotics in a wide and deep understanding, and I invite you to further collaboration.

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