

Abstract (English)

The subject of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) is one that has not been featured much in Science and Technology Studies thus far. Apart from its controversial nature, which might have contributed to it being neglected, the subject does not seem very approachable at first glance. This is why I chose to engage with it. UFOs, or rather the contexts in which they are being discussed, make an interesting research subject, precisely because of the profound lack of a consensus on the ontology of UFOs. Ontological matters with regard to other objects or practices have been discussed before, which gives me a foundation for this engagement with UFOs. I look at how different actors deal with the subject in the context of the so called Belgian UFO Wave that took place from the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s. I am not interested in determining what UFOs are, but only in how they are perceived and enacted. To access these enactments, I look at concrete arguments and enactment strategies found in documents produced as a follow-up to the Belgian UFO Wave. The different enactments by proponents of various hypotheses on the nature of UFOs become visible in the discussions around various sightings that are part of the case. Apart from shedding light on the details of those enactments, this allows me to investigate different epistemological issues. These issues range from the operation of different knowledge cultures to the question of how science manages to differentiate itself from other forms of structured knowledge production. Beyond that, a look at the discussions between the different actors in the case at hand also uncovers some aspects regarding publicly waged controversies in techno-scientific contexts that might also be helpful in other areas of Science and Technology research.