NEWSLETTER #3

FESTIVE WISHES *FROM THE BOARD*

As 2024 comes to a close we would like to wish all STS Austria members a happy and healthy holiday season and all the best for the year ahead. On 17 December 2024, we will hold our 2024 STS Austria Annual General Meeting. The meeting will be followed by our "Collaborative Futures Session on STS (in) Austria" workshop.

We already look forward to seeing many of you at various events next year and to further fostering the STS community in Austria. **Happy holidays,**
Doris Allhutter, Juliane Jarke, Erik Aarden, Dana Wasserbacher, Katharina Kinder-Kurlanda, Bao-Chau Pham, Masafumi Nishi

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

We congratulate Astrid Mager and Karen Kastenhofer on their Habilitations at the Department of Science and Technology Studies of the University of Vienna!

Karen's work *"From 'Epistemic Cultures' to 'Techno-Epistemic Cultures' and 'Post-Normal Epistemic Cultures'"* impressively shows the social significance of the hybridisation of science and engineering within distinct epistemic cultures and epistemic communities. She develops the label of 'techno-epistemic cultures' to denote this hybrid constellation and provides empirical analyses of fields such as systems biology and synthetic biology. The label of 'post-normal epistemic cultures', on the other hand, she reserves for scientific practices and communities that combine an epistemic ambition with a socio-political mission, such as STS, sustainability science or technology assessment. In her Rahmenschrift, Karen also points at the aspects that she sees as the most central for further developing our understanding of epistemic cultures and for applying this understanding to open questions in science and society.

Astrid's research on *"Algorithmic Imaginaries. Visions and values in the shaping of search engines"* is an important contribution to thinking counter-hegemonic search in Europe, beyond the tech industries' quasi monopolies. Her work shifts the focus from the effects of search engines on society to socio-technical practices and power relations that are involved in the construction of search engines in the broader social context. It places particular emphasis on the European context, where there has long been a debate about how to contain and regulate large tech companies like Google and their business practices, but also how alternative search engines can thrive in the shadow of large, commercial players.

Congratulations to Christian Haddad for being awarded an ERC Starting Grant for his project
"The politics of alter-biotic innovation: Examining the making of alternative regimes of biomedical innovation in response to the global health crisis of antimicrobial resistance".

Karen Kastenhofer is the new Deputy Director of the Institute of Technology Assessment at the Austrian Academy of Sciences.
Congratulations! Read the press release here.

FWF-DFG funded research unit on Communicative AI (ComAI) (01.01.2025 - 31.12.2028)

The prevalence of speech assistants taking orders, social bots influencing debates, and machines generating texts underscores the increasing sophistication of automated communication. Simultaneously, public discourse on these phenomena reflects the ongoing challenges associated with the automation of communication. It seems that the intricacies of today's complex societies compel a reliance on automation to meet communication needs, while also generating additional issues for which automated communication appears to be the most plausible solution. The research unit focuses on pioneer communities, the development of interfaces, the legal handling and governance of communicative AI, its role in journalism, in public (online) discourse, in everyday personal life through technological companions, in the health sector and in learning and teaching.

One of the projects funded by the FWF in Austria is on the topic of "Care through ComAI for Healthy Ageing" by **Juliane Jarke** (Uni Graz). https://comai.space/en/projects/

STS
Austria

STS AUSTRIA EVENT: *EARLY CAREER WORKSHOP*

"How did you prepare for your job interview to convey the expertise you bring from STS?"
The reply to this question sparked my favorite moment: "Not at all, I only attended this workshop a couple of years ago."

The **3rd Early Career Workshop organised by STS Austria on 21 November 2024** explored job opportunities for graduates in STS and was a resounding success. How can graduates apply academic knowledge? What non-academic career paths offer exciting fields of activity? And what does career development look like across various fields?

Four speakers from public administration, research, art, and industry shared their experience on job seeking, everyday work, use of STS knowledge, and work-life balance with over 30 participants attending both in-person and online. The workshop was an inspiring and engaging experience, offering new insights and networking opportunities. It highlighted the wide range of dynamic career trajectories available to STS graduates, sparking new possibilities and enthusiasm for the impact we can make also outside academia.
We would like to thank all the speakers and participants!

FUNDED EVENT: *TEACHING STS-TOPICS IN STEM FIELDS*

Increasingly, STS scholars, as well as scholars from other fields (ethics, philosophy, STEM) are involved in teaching STEM students about the interactions between science, technology (development) and society. These teaching activities aim to develop capacities of students to discuss social and environmental implications of their research (fields), and related societal responsibilities. However, these activities also pose challenges, such as to bridge the often quite different thought styles of mostly technical students with those of teachers with thought styles relating more to the social sciences or humanities.

As of yet, there is little exchange on how to best define and meet respective learning aims, the best didactic approaches for reaching them, useful methods and tools, or the different formats and the very different ways in which such teaching is currently getting embedded in academic institutions. Activities at recent conferences though have shown an increasing need for such an exchange (e.g. STS Graz Conference, EASST/4S Conference Amsterdam).

To create more space for discussing teaching-related questions, the co-organisers (Lisa Sigl, TU Wien; Maximilian Fochler, University of Vienna; Susanne Oechsner, TU Wien; Erik Aarden, University of Klagenfurt; Jesse de Pagter, ZSI/TU Wien; Raffael Himmelsbach, LBG) brought together scholars involved in Teaching S-T-S in STEM at 9 universities and research institutions in the DACH region. It was supported by STS Austria and the Service Unit of Responsible Research Practices of TU Wien.

The workshop, which took place on 6 December 2024 at TU Wien, offered an opportunity to discuss a broad range of questions related to the "Why?", the "How?", and the "What?" of teaching Science-Technology-Society aspects in STEM fields. It also included an international Student Sounding Board that actively participated in our discussions and provided insightful thoughts and perspectives on learning about S-T-S within current conditions of studying in STEM fields.

The program was mostly designed to facilitate exchange: participants prepared posters on their courses that were a great resource for building an agenda to discuss aims, teaching concepts and what works well (or not so much) in this kind of teaching. The organisers provided short inputs based on synthesising participants' input from the posters, moderated small-group discussions for in-depth discussions and are now working on a careful documentation of the discussions and results of the workshop. The workshop ended with the shared wish for continuing the conversation and with brainstorming on potential follow-up activities. Read more here and here.