

DIGGING WHERE WE STAND: ACTIVISM, COMMUNITY AND THE POLITICS OF STS

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Activism and new forms of political organizing are (once again) gaining traction outside and inside of academia. This is happening alongside calls for more participation in and for the democratization of science. The intensification of current crises and the disruptive potential of technoscientific capitalism call for long overdue transformations of the socio-material relations that science and technology are part of. Postcolonial and feminist critiques of the normative power and epistemic violence in science and technology have been renewed in recent years and push for an ethico-onto-epistemology that urges researchers to reflect their positionality and take a stand. Precarious working conditions in academia intensify the search for agency and clout of critical research and engagement.

This is the time for STS to revisit its relation to activism and engagement, its own community standards and positioning within the labor struggles of the wider academy. What are our standards of and visions for engagement? Where do we as STS researchers draw the boundaries of engagement and what alliances do we enter? How are we multiple and (how) should we join forces nonetheless? We call for contributions on the intersections of STS and activism that deal with the following issues:

- **Working towards livable futures:** What are the normative visions of different fields of STS research? What are the interventionist protocols of various strands within STS? (How) Can we think of STS as an activist practice? What activist practices do STS scholars engage in? What is the relation between doing STS, engaging in political activism and practising policy advice? What knowledge-making practices are activists engaged in? What are the specifics of activism, (un)invited participation and citizen science? To what extent are science communicators involved in activism, and to what extent are activists also science communicators?
- **The Politics of STS:** What concepts and methodologies do we have available to research the politics of STS? How do the geographies of STS overlap with the geographies of scholarly activism? What examples of activist histories of STS can we learn from? How do we want to continue them in the future? How do we engage with citizens, stakeholders, advocacy groups, NGOs and polities? What methodologies and methods have emerged to engage (with) activists and community organizers in and for research? What toolkits, games and approaches have been used, appropriated, or discarded?
- **STS and activist movements:** “How can the study of science, technology, and social movements be configured in a way that is of value to activists?” (Hess et al. 2008, p. 487) Where, when and how do we align ourselves with activist groups, and why? When is activist research a burden on those we seek to align ourselves with? What happens when research, participation and citizen science get hijacked by supremacist groups, science skeptics and conspiracy theorists? What are the responsibilities of researchers in open science frameworks to “guard” their research against misappropriations?
- **Activism in and for academia and STS:** How can we mobilize STS concepts and methodologies to research and act on power structures and working conditions within academia and STS (e.g. #WeDoSTS, #IchBinHanna)? Does STS take the inclusiveness and diversity of its research community for granted? How can we act on mechanisms of exclusion in academia and practice inclusion in STS? How do we decolonize STS curricula and citation practices?

Hess D. et al. (2008). Science, Technology, and Social Movements. In: *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*. Cambridge, MA/London, pp. 473-498.

STS Austria invites you to submit abstracts of max. 300 words to office@sts-austria.org by September 11, 2023.