



Austria

Programme

Digging Where We Stand: Activism, Community and the Politics of STS

STS Austria Conference 2023

November 27 - 29

Vienna, Austria

Austrian Academy of Sciences

Dr. Ignaz Seipel-Platz 2, 1010 Wien



Department of Science and Technology Studies
Institut für Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung



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Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the STS Austria Conference 2023 'Digging Where We Stand: Activism, Community and the Politics of STS'! We are looking forward to an interesting three days of discussing the relation between STS and activism and exploring different approaches, motivations and strategies for doing activism and/within/with/regardless of academic STS.

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, coupled with the disruptive potential of technoscientific capitalism, necessitates significant transformations in the socio-material relations within the realms of science and technology. 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?

The organizers,

Doris Allhutter (Austrian Academy of Sciences)

Erik Aarden (University of Klagenfurt)

Gwendolin Barnard (Uni Graz)

Juliane Jarke (Uni Graz)

Katja Mayer (University of Vienna)

Masafumi Nishi (AIT/University of Vienna)

Bao-Chau Pham (University of Vienna)

Andrea Schikowitz (University of Vienna)

Dana Wasserbacher (AIT)

Monday, November 27:

Registration 12:30-17:30 (Aula)

13:00-13:30	Opening Plenary (Sitzungssaal)	
13:30-15:00	Exploring activism at STS Austria: plenary participatory floor exercise (Aula)	
15:00-15:30	Coffee break (Aula)	
15:30-17:00	Session 1a: Solidarities and Alliances (Sitzungssaal)	Curated Workshop: Speculative Methods (SE 2, limited seating)
17:00-17:30	Coffee break (Aula)	
17:30-19:00	Public Keynote and Round-Table: Pelin Tan (Batman University): Threshold Infrastructures: Pedagogies of Entangled Topographies (Sitzungssaal)	
19:00-19:15	Early Career Awards (Sitzungssaal)	
19:15-21:00	Reception (Aula)	

Tuesday, November 28:

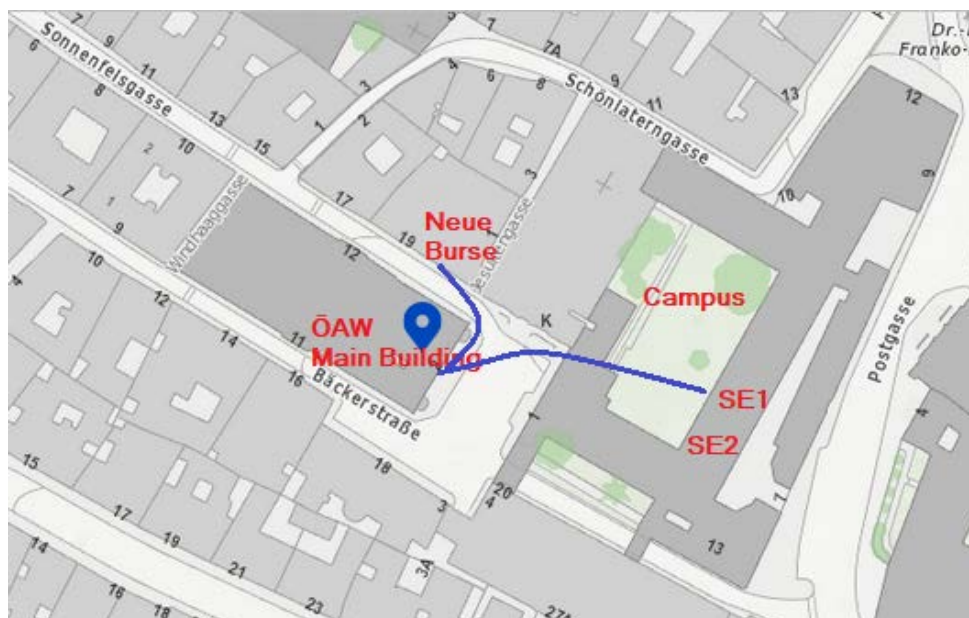
Registration 9:00-14:00 (Entrance Sitzungssaal)

09:30-10:30	Keynote: Stefania Milan (University of Amsterdam): Doing Engaged Research on Data and Algorithms: politics, pitfalls, open questions (Sitzungssaal)	
10:30-11:00	Coffee break (Neue Burse)	
11:00-12:30	Session 2a: The Politics of Open Infrastructures (Sitzungssaal)	Session 2b: Public Engagement & Collaboration with Activists (SE 1)
12:30-13:45	Lunch Break (see STS Austria website for near-by restaurants and take-aways)	
13:45-15:00	Session 3a: Transforming STS (Sitzungssaal)	Session 3b. Socio-Technical Controversies (SE 1)
15:00-15:30	Coffee break (Neue Burse)	
15:30-16:45	Session 4a: Towards More Engaged STS!? (Sitzungssaal)	Session 4b. Activist Practices of STS Scholars (SE 1)
18:00-19:30	Public Keynote: Katta Spiel (TU Wien): Impossible 'Choices' — Activism in the Academy (SE 1)	

Wednesday, November 29:

09:30-11:00	Session 5a: Scholar-Activists: Roles & Identities (Sitzungssaal)	Session 5b: Conceptual Approaches for Caring Research I (SE 1) Screening "Climate Court of Audit Now!" (Aula)
11:00-11:30	Coffee break (Aula)	
11:30-12:30	Special format: Data Walking as Method for Teaching Critical Data Studies (Sitzungssaal)	Screening "Climate Court of Audit Now!" (Aula)
12:30-13:45	Lunch Break (near-by restaurants and takeaways)	
13:45-15:00	Session 6a: Activist (Counter-) Expertise (Sitzungssaal)	Session 6b: Conceptual Approaches for Caring Research II (SE 1) Screening "Climate Court of Audit Now!" (Aula)
15:00-15:30	Coffee break (Aula)	
15:30-16:30	A Manifesto for Activism in STS: participatory conference outlook and closing (Sitzungssaal)	

Location



ÖAW Main Building
Dr. Ignaz Seipel-Platz 2

Aula, Sitzungssaal

ÖAW Campus
Bäckerstrasse 13

SE 1

Neue Burse
Sonnenfelsgasse 19

Coffee Breaks on Tuesday

Monday, November 27

Session 1a: Solidarities & Alliances

Monday, November 27: 15:30-17:00

ÖAW Main Building, Sitzungssaal, 1st floor

Chair: *Doris Allhutter*

Amanda Mokoena: Politicizing and Personalizing Climate Science in Africa

Fredy Mora Gámez: Tanteando Beyond Borders: digital experiments with handicrafts in contexts of migration control

Pietro Autorino, Isabella Calattini, Pietro Centorrino: Weaving Grassroots Collective Actions through Participatory Science and Environmental Learning

Laurène Cheilan: Public Engagement and the Caring Academia

Tuesday, November 28

Session 2a: The Politics of Open Infrastructures: expanding knowledge through activist, participatory, and research-based initiatives

Tuesday, November 28: 11:00-12:30

ÖAW Main Building, Sitzungssaal, 1st floor

Chairs: *Astrid Mager, Katja Mayer & Renée Ridgway*

Renée Ridgway & Alexander Nussbaumer: Designing an Ethical Framework for an Open Web Search Infrastructure

Rafaela Cavalcanti de Alcântara: The Challenge of “Commoning” Smart City Infrastructures: thinking about data integration platforms

Maxigas: Opening Telecommunications to Critical Insights and Public Engagement

Philipp Budka: Community Transport Infrastructures in Northern Manitoba, Canada

Katja Mayer: Re-Opening Artificial Intelligence

Astrid Mager: Automating Welfare: how to open up, re-imagine, and rebuild data infrastructures for the public good

Session 2b: Public Engagement & Collaboration with Activists (SE 1)

Tuesday, November 28: 11:00-12:30

ÖAW Campus, SE 1, Courtyard

Chair: *Juliane Jarke*

Gwendolin Barnard, Seeta Peña Gangadharan, Grace Nelson, Alexis Notabartolo, Klaudia Jaźwińska: Resisting the Digital Spy: US-based worker organizing and co-creating of organizing tools in Amazon warehouses

Masafumi Nishi, Wenzel Mehnert, Eva Buchinger, Michael J. Bernstein: TechEthos: Eliciting Citizens' Values & Attitudes towards Emerging Technologies through a Science Communication Game

Irina Zakharova & Stefanie Büchner: Living Infrastructures – For Participatory Digital Transformation in the Public Sector

Arlind Reuter & Steven Schmidt: Learning from Older Activists: exploring digital practices and citizenship

Session 3a: Transforming STS

Tuesday, November 28: 13:45-15:00

ÖAW Main Building, Sitzungssaal, 1st floor

Chair: *Doris Allhutter*

Sarah Rose Bieszczad, Guus Dix, Jorrit Smit: Reinventing Activism Forward

Claudia G. Schwarz: On Be(com)ing an Activist in and for STS

Robert Braun: Is STS possible without an Ontological Otherwise?

Session 3b: Socio-Technical Controversies

Tuesday, November 28: 13:45-15:00

ÖAW Campus, SE 1, Courtyard

Chair: *Dana Wasserbacher*

Carsten Horn: Datafication and Its Discontents: understanding processes of datafication and digitalization in contemporary (digital) innovation societies through emerging controversies about data centers in Austria, France and Ireland

Kleinhou-Vliek Eva Hilberg, Rob Hagendijk, Paul Martin, Sarah Wadmann: A Market without Price: reflections on the promises and limits of pharmaceutical reform in the EU

Christian Dayé: The Legislative Effect of Ignorance: unknowability in the debate on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) in the EU

Session 4a: Towards More Engaged STS!?

Tuesday, November 28: 15:30-16:45

ÖAW Main Building, Sitzungssaal, 1st floor

Chair: *Bao-Chau Pham*

Jutta Weber: Staying With The Military Trouble. On STS, Military Technologies and Activist Practices

Max Fochler & Lisa Sigl: A “hinterland” for relevant STS research? What practices help us developing more relevant research and career paths?

Samuele Fratini: Conservative Methods for Progressive Purposes: What the STS Can Do for the Future and Why It Is Not Doing It

Session 4b: Activist Practices of STS Scholars

Tuesday, November 28: 15:30-16:45

ÖAW Campus, SE 1, Courtyard

Chair: *Dana Wasserbacher*

Silke Beck & Michael Nitschmann: Mapping the possibilities for STS to actively engage in democratic and sustainable climate futures

Michael Ornetzeder: It could be otherwise: Tracing and exploring alternative realities with STS research

Miedema Marije: Big Oil, Big Tech & Big Science: reflections from a scientist and a rebel

Wednesday, November 29

Session 5a: Scholar-Activists: Roles & Identities

Wednesday, November 29: 09:30-11:00

ÖAW Main Building, Sitzungssaal, 1st floor

Chair: *Katja Mayer*

Karen Kastenhofer: From a Normal and a Post-Normal-Science Ethos to a Survival Science Ethos?

Waltraud Ernst: Knowledge as Collective Method and Practice

Sérgio Barbosa: Beyond the Consent Form: playing with fire on WhatsApp research

Raghvendra Singh Yadav & Swati Kumari: Comparative Analysis of Activist Practices among STS Scholars in Europe and Asia: a study of key contributors and their impact

Session 5b: Conceptual Approaches for Caring Research I

Wednesday, November 29: 09:30-11:00

ÖAW Campus, SE 1, Courtyard

Chair: *Andrea Schikowitz*

Iara Franco Schiavi & Sérgio Amadeu da Silveira: The Data Journey approach and SNT in the Brazilian sociotechnical context

Rafaela Cavalcanti de Alcântara: “Cambia, todo cambia”: Cuerpo-territorio and buen vivir as lenses to reflect on data commons

Aviram Sharma: Energy Democracy: A Transformative Concept or a Buzzword?

Louis Ravn: The Politics of Boundary Work (online)

Session 6a: Activist (Counter-) Expertise

Wednesday, November 29: 13:45-15:00

ÖAW Main Building, Sitzungssaal, 1st floor

Chair: *Bao-Chau Pham*

Andrea Schikowitz & Sarah Davies: Communicating engaged expertise: How housing activists exchange and negotiate techno-political knowledge

Sarah Schönbauer: Environmental-Engagement: Marine Science between Science and Activism

Thomas Zenkl: Everyday Algorithmic Activism

Session 6b: Conceptual Approaches for Caring Research II

Wednesday, November 29: 13:45-15:00

ÖAW Campus, SE 1, Courtyard

Chair: *Gwendolin Barnard*

Axel Stockburger, *Technopolitics*: Innovative Formats at the Intersection of Art, Research, Science, and Pedagogy

Dario Feliciangeli, *Carina Liersch*, *Illia Litvin*, *Paul Wunderlich*, *Lea Wölfl*: (Re)collecting Change, Changing Recollections: how can student voices multiply institutional histories

Doris Allhutter: Ethnography and Political Resistance: revisiting the activist origins of mind scripting

Abstracts: Keynotes

Monday, November 27

17:30-19:00 Sitzungssaal (open to the public)

Pelin Tan, Batman University

Threshold Infrastructures: Pedagogies of Entangled Topographies

Chair: *Monika Halkort*

Structural violence and inter-colonial memory are deeply integrated with the landscapes and topographies of local communities where fragments of layered geontologies operate. The effects of conflict and the active renegotiation of borders demand a transformation in the way that infrastructure is approached and worked with. Here, infrastructures that exist in thresholds such as care, solidarity, and commoning are function and sustained through survival pedagogies and communal interdependencies. In this context, the matter of the scale of threshold infrastructure lies between the planetary and subjectivity in the site of the commons. This presentation will share the experience and methodology of engagement, failures, and solidarity between research methodologies and artistic research in the realm of more-than-human rights and socio-spatial justice. Questions will be the core part of the discussions: How is research possible in a fluid and unconditional conflict territory? How artistic phenomenologies may create many ways of knowing and social coexistence? How critical mapping can be used for the testimony of the more-than-human rights violations? How the rights of non-human assemblies in extractive zones can be supported through art and architectural solidarity? How eco-female labor is creating resistance against slow violence? How pastoralist practices are interrupted through territorial control? How the patchy Anthropocene approach can be combined with artistic research? How to build the De/archive of Tigris Phenomenologies? This lecture will consider the value of balance between theory and activism, the distribution of power of agencies, the broken narratives of dispossession, and the limits and potentialities of artistic practices/research.

Further information:

<http://araziassembly.org/>

<https://padlet.com/mardin2021/archiving-spaciocide-with-video-topographies-2013-2022-41ydkk1upse2clj1>

<https://padlet.com/mardin2021/the-care-of-seed-an-entangled-kinship-tohumu-onarmak-bir-yol-7dd4qiaxodyznm3>

<https://padlet.com/mardin2021/tigris-phenomenologies-yrlmx4ng1qufsukm>

The keynote by Pelin Tan is open to the public and will be followed by a roundtable discussion exploring the results of the afternoon workshop on speculative methods.

Tuesday, November 28
09:30-10:30 Sitzungssaal

Stefania Milan, University of Amsterdam

Doing Engaged Research on Data and Algorithms: politics, pitfalls, open questions

Chair: *Katja Mayer*

We know by now that the advance of the datafied society alters and even erodes citizen agency. Studying grassroots practices of engagement with data and algorithms as well as communities at the margins calls for an approach to research in the sociotechnical that takes sides. Engaged research is an approach that, without departing from systematic, evidence-based, social science research, seeks to make a difference also beyond the academic community. It interrogates the impact that our empirical inquiry might have on people and community on the ground, and asks whether and how we can contribute to their goals. Among others, it asks how to make ‘research with’ rather than merely ‘research about’, and what is equitable collaboration (co-labor). This talk takes stock of two decades of variably successful attempts to do engaged research at the intersection of people, information, and technology. It reviews the politics of engaged research, its potential and added value, but reflects also on the pitfalls and the open questions.

Bio: Stefania Milan ([stefaniamilan.net](https://www.stefaniamilan.net/)) works at the intersection of participation, technology, and governance, with emphasis on infrastructure and agency. She is Professor of Critical Data Studies at the University of Amsterdam, affiliated with the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society (Harvard University) and the School of Transnational Governance (European University Institute). Currently, Stefania leads the project “Citizenship and standard-setting in digital networks” (in-sight.it), funded by the Dutch Research Council. In 2015-2021 she was the Principal Investigator of DATACTIVE (data-activism.net) and of the Algorithms Exposed (ALEX) project (algorithms.exposed), both funded by the European Research Council. In 2017, she co-founded the Big Data from the South Research Initiative, investigating the impact of datafication and surveillance on communities at the margins. Stefania holds a PhD in Political and Social Science from the European University Institute. Prior to joining the University of Amsterdam, she worked at, among others, the Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto, Tilburg University, and the Central European University. Stefania is the author of *Social Movements and Their Technologies: Wiring Social Change* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013/2016), co-author of *Media/Society* (Sage, 2011), and co-editor of *COVID-19 from the Margins. Pandemic Invisibilities, Policies and Resistance in the Datafied Society* (Institute of Network Cultures, 2021, download). She is currently preparing a monograph on data activism for Sage. Outside office hours, she loves cycling, boxing, and mountaineering. <https://www.stefaniamilan.net/>

Tuesday, November 28
18:00-19:30 SE1 (open to the public)

Katta Spiel, TU Wien
Impossible 'Choices' — Activism in the Academy

Chair: *Juliane Jarke*

Sign Language Translator: *Antonia Maier, Anja Pfneisel*

The shaping of our socio-technical environment is predominantly the privilege of a comparatively homogeneous group of people, mainly white, mainly western, mainly within an age range of 20-40 years old, mainly cis-male; with not just amusing, annoying or irritating, but also deadly consequences for anyone else. Associated academic research is similarly reduced to these perspectives; particularly in a German speaking context. Personally, I'm disabled and I'm inter*/trans*; and the academy others me as deviant along both of these lines. I continuously cross boundaries by simply being in an academic space and pointing out the ways it systematically tries to exclude me and my peers. Try being nonbinary in a field that is, fundamentally, built on binary notions, materially and epistemologically. The research environments I encounter locally and internationally, seem fundamentally unprepared for my presence. I'm researching technological design for neurodivergent people and keep on being reminded how low my colleagues' regard is for my peers and myself, how they dehumanise our being. What I do can be called critical participatory research where I focus on marginalised perspectives, particularly around notions of gender and disability. Though, even when I conduct literature reviews, write essays or do more theoretical work, my work is always seen as activist. Dispassionate research is what we expect and value, passionate research is activism. Yet, I find myself with status, with a research position from which I speak. And what else to do with it than starting to push within existing structures, to push the boundaries to make space; not just because this increases the relevance of the knowledge we produce but because it is the just thing to do. What if not transgressing those boundaries will yield more inequitable processes in the creation of our socio-technical environment? What good are we for as researchers, if we uphold artificial and exclusive boundaries? Activism can be the right choice; but having that choice constitutes a privilege. Activism is inevitable for me, because my mere presence is troubling. It's not a choice.

Bio: Katta Spiel is an Assistant Professor for 'Critical Access in Embodied Computing' at TU Wien. They research marginalised perspectives on embodied computing through a lens of Critical Access. Their work informs design and engineering supporting the development of technologies that account for the diverse realities they operate in. In their interdisciplinary collaborations with neurodivergent and/or nonbinary peers, they conduct explorations of novel potentials for designs, methodologies and innovative technological artefacts. They received their PhD in 2018 from TU Wien and after a year at KU Leuven, they conducted postdoctoral research as an FWF-Hertha Firnberg Scholar, also at TU Wien. Their work has received several international and national awards, including the 'SICGHI 2020 Outstanding Dissertation Award' as well as the 'Förderungspreis der Stadt Wien in der Sparte Mathematik, Informatik, Naturwissenschaft, Technik' in 2022, and, most recently an ERC Starting Grant. <http://katta.mere.st/>

Abstracts for special formats

Monday, November 27

13:30-15:00 AULA

Exploring Activism at STS Austria: plenary participatory floor exercise

Facilitators: *Sarah Rose Bieszczad (Universiteit Leiden), Guus Dix (Universiteit Twente), Jorrit Smit (Universiteit Leiden, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)*

In the participatory floor exercise, we aim to get everyone talking and taking a stance at the very start of the conference. We begin with a couple of short pitches that highlight different approaches, motivations and strategies for doing activism and/within/with/regardless of academic STS. Afterwards, we facilitate an exercise where people take a position in the room that simultaneously displays their stance towards a number of topics related to activism, academia and the relation to STS which can spark an open and dynamic conversation.

Monday, November 27

15:30-17:00 SE2

Workshop: Speculative Methods

This is a curated workshop. Audience is welcome; however, seating is limited. Workshop results will be presented at the round table after the keynote by Pelin Tan.

Chair: *Monika Halkort*

Presenters: *Pelin Tan (Co-founder of the Research Platform Arazi Assembly), Daniela Gandorfer (Logische Phantasie Lab), Sophia Rut & Aaron Kimmig (Lobau Listening Comprehensions Collective), Alexa Färber (Project team Realfiktion Klimarechnungshof)*

Discussants: *Sarah Rose Bieszczad (Universiteit Leiden), Guus Dix (Universiteit Twente), Jorrit Smit (Universiteit Leiden, Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Axel Stockburger (Technopolitics, www.technopolitics.info), Livia Regen (Universität Wien, Degrowth Movement)*

This workshop centers on the examination of creative, speculative practices that culminate in site- and context-specific interventions aimed at uncovering transformational potentials and triggering change. During the workshop, we will feature four project presentations, each exemplifying collaborative endeavors with communities and organizations. These presentations will serve as the foundation for an academic discussion involving experienced activists. This exchange seeks to provide a pragmatic lens through which to analyze the practical implications of these projects, offering activists the opportunity to offer insights from their everyday experiences. By promoting this dialogue, we aim to bridge the gap between theoretical endeavors and practical activism, facilitating a scholarly exploration of the transformative capacities at the intersection of art, science, and activism.

Wednesday, November 29
11:30-12:30

Data Walking as Method for Teaching Critical Data Studies

Gwendolin Barnard, Kajetan Hoffmann, Philipp Lechner, Juliane Jarke, Katharina Kinder-Kurlanda, Paula Nauta, Sudhang Shankar, Thomas Zenkl

Stemming from the interdisciplinary field of Critical Data Studies, there has been an increased development of methods for a critical engagement with processes of datafication and data-related practices that are concerned with the recursive (power) relations of digital data, physical infrastructures and social actors. Data Walks are potential research tools to attune researchers to the methodological choices involved in data gathering processes and to the infrastructures making datafication possible. They can also act as a bottom-up intervention in these processes that are usually determined by the top. In addition, they can also be used as a teaching tool to allow students to deeply engage with digital data, datafication processes and data-related practices and to reflect on how different methods co-construct our objects of research and ourselves as researchers.

Funded by STS Austria, advanced Master and PhD students at the Universities of Graz and Klagenfurt conducted their own data walks in the summer term 2023. Initially, students were introduced to the background, aims and research foci of the field of Critical Data Studies. They were then asked to critically compare different approaches to data walking. In groups, they developed and designed their own research project, tested different data gathering practices, analyzed and processed gathered data and presented it. The course was supported by Laura Kokschi (Aalborg University) and Mace Ojala (Ruhr University Bochum).

Wednesday, November 29
09:30-15:00

Screening “Realfiction: Climate Court of Audit Now!”

Project team Realfiction Klimarechnungshof (Rebecca Akimoto, Milena Bister, Alexa Färber, Herbert Justnik, Alexander Martos, Stephan Richter, Niklas Schrader, Alessia Scuderi)

The screening shows videos (German language with English subtitles) that present the research project ‘Realfiction Klimarechnungshof’. They explore novel institutional practices for climate governance, namely the Austrian Climate Court of Audit (Klimarechnungshof), an audit institution that had previously been called for by the highly successful Austrian citizens’ initiative for climate protection. The task of this new national audit office for climate should be to examine past and planned political measures for their climate effectiveness and thus enable political accountability. As part of the pre-enactment, we started a campaign and took up the work of an Austrian Climate Court of Audit in public assemblies together with various climate experts, such as scientists of different disciplines, activists or public administrators. We have, in the mode of a realfiction, elaborated the central knowledge base for both the institution's audit practices and its integration into the existing institutional landscape and created a space for public political debate.

Wednesday, November 29
15:30-16:30

A Manifesto for Activism in STS: participatory conference outlook

Facilitators: *Juliane Jarke (Graz, Austria) and Arlind Reuter (Lund, Sweden)*

In this session, we jointly reflect on what we have discussed, learned and explored during the conference. In addition, we consider how we want to move forward collectively. To do this, we will write a Manifesto for Activism in STS. Manifestos allow to challenge or provoke, they can come in many forms, they can embrace tensions and allow for collaborative speculations. To facilitate the process, we will use a card game for Manifesto Writing that was designed by Julian Hanna (<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/staff/j-r-hanna>).