



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS | DEADLINE 1ST OF DECEMBER 2017
EARLY CAREER WORKSHOP AT HUMBOLDT UNIVERSITY

**PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND COLLABORATION IN STS ETHNOGRAPHY: GENERATING
METHODOGRAPHIC SENSIBILITIES FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY STUDIES**

Workshop venue: Institute for European Ethnology, Humboldt University Berlin

Date: April 12th to 14th, 2018

Organisers STS Lab ([Labor Sozialanthropologische Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung](#)) at the [Institute for European Ethnology](#), Humboldt University Berlin and ETHOS ([Experimental Techno-Humanities and Organizational Services lab](#)), [IT University of Copenhagen](#)

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SUMMARY

The workshop focuses on the methods of participant observation and collaboration in and around the field in STS ethnography. By that, we seek to strengthen the capacity for methodography, the empirical study of research methods in practice. Prior to the workshop participants share draft articles on the workshop theme. These are discussed throughout the workshop, commented on and re-written during a practice unit. All workshop applicants are expected to also submit a revised paper for the organisers' event at the upcoming EASST conference in Lancaster, UK (25-28th July 2018). The revised papers are intended for a future special issue, guest-edited by the workshop organisers.

BACKGROUND

STS have a peculiar relation to methodological concerns regarding their methods in use. We now build on and critically engage with a tradition of carefully scrutinising how natural scientists pursue their research – in the field, the laboratory, at desks and conferences. (Knorr-Cetina 1999, Latour and Woolgar 1979, Latour 1988 [1993]) Relatively little interest has been shown in sociological description of qualitative social science research methods in practice (Greiffenhagen, Mair, and Sharrock 2011). In a trajectory of recognising that textbooks' presentations of methods cannot be mirrored in their "applications" or "implementations", STS has turned to question how to author STS accounts "after method" (Law 2004); and we may attend to "inventive methods" (Lury and Wakeford 2012) to pay attention to the various material and semiotic tools and devices that "configure" (Suchman 2012) research objects – through



which the researcher's data is achieved. The British project "The Social Life of Methods" has foregrounded method devices as performative and messy assemblages (Law and Ruppert 2013) shaped by the social as much as being performative – doing the social themselves (Law, Ruppert, and Savage 2011).

Interestingly, however, STS have not yet developed a strong tradition for accounting of how one of its key methods – participant observation – is shaping its generation of data. This workshop conceptualises the relation between participant observation and its data as configured in negotiations of different worlds in collaborations across difference between the researcher and other actants of the research assemblage. Thus we wonder: how do our data "gathering" practices relate to and are co-constitutive of other actants and relations in the research "infrastructure" (Bowker and Star 1999, Star and Bowker 2006, Star 1999), our "onto-epistemic apparatuses" (Barad 2007)? How does STS ethnography practice their data? We are particularly interested in ethnographic descriptions and analyses of how we do STS data (cf. Kasper and Ross 2017; Greiffenhagen, Mair and Sharrock 2011, 2015) and to how that data is configured and shaped in our collaborations and/or *co-laborations*, whereby we use the neologism of *co-laboration* to point to both the labour involved in research and evoke the STS history of laboratory studies (Niewöhner 2016).

We contrast our interest with a normative project of telling "how to" do data or research well; and instead the workshop shall enact care for how researchers practice care for what they encounter and relate to participant observation, inquiring into formatting, standardising, silencing, representing and performative engagements that shape and betray the matters of research. Reflexivity of how the researcher as a subject is involved in doing data does not need to be an end in itself. Instead, we hope to contribute to a conversation about how we configure accountability relations between researcher, our subjects, objects and our devices, whilst paying attention to how these assemblages are generative of the objects we study (Cf. Kenney 2015).

The workshop therefore aims to discuss on and contribute to the following questions:

- What is it that our methods are doing? What do they imply? What kinds of worlds are they opening up to us? And what kinds of worlds are they closing off? (Cf. Law and Ruppert 2013, 233)
- How do we meet what we research? And how are these meetings generated and generative?
- How does our enactment of participant observation construct and structure empirical data?
- What kind of data is produced in non-participant, participant and participatory field work and how do we voice or silence that data? How are participant observation and its data



refigured in dialogue, mutual learning and caring relationships within heterogeneous research collectives? (Farías 2016)

- Who participates in the field, configured as what kind of subject? Researcher, human and non-human members of the field? How does the meeting and participation shift over time?
- How are our data configured and shaped in our collaborations and co-laborations?
- In how far do our collaborations dis/enable accounting for ontological difference in and around the worlds we study? How do relations of power reconfigure our accountability relations with what we encounter and collaborate with in participant research?
- STS is occasionally working as a bridge or translational device in research clusters and is encouraged to engage with the methods of other disciplines. How does the doing of participant observation relate to, or is (re)configured in interactions with, other methods?

PROGRAM DETAILS

The workshop provides a space for reflecting on participant observation, ways of how we co(l)aborate with, within or on the field and for facilitating academic publishing. Two distinguished ethnographers will join the workshop and attend to how participant observation in STS practice and modes of collaboration in the field and co-laboration with other researchers working on and with the same field shape our enactments of data: John Law and Jörg Niewöhner. Two experienced academic editors and writers, Rachel Douglas-Jones and Estrid Sørensen, will facilitate a practical session for engaging with how we write methodographically. Each workshop applicant is required to submit an article draft. The submitted drafts will be commented on and discussed by both lecturers, guests and workshop participants. The overall results of the workshop participant's contributions are intended to be published within a future special issue for an STS journal on the topic. Workshop participants will discuss plans for a joint event at the upcoming EASST conference in Lancaster, UK (25-28th July 2018) on "Meetings – Making Science, Technology and Society Together".

GUESTS/LECTURERS INCLUDE

- Rachel Douglas-Jones, Associate Professor for Technologies in Practice, IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- John Law, Honorary Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK
- Ingmar Lippert, Associate Professor for Technologies in Practice, IT University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- Tahani Nadim, Bureau for Troubles, Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin, Germany
- Jörg Niewöhner, Professor of Social Anthropology of Science and Technology, Institute for European Ethnology, Humboldt University Berlin, Germany
- Estrid Sørensen, Professor of Social Psychology and Social Anthropology, Ruhr University Bochum, Germany



PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
09:00 to 11:00		Introduction	Presentation of proposals in groups, comments by lecturers, organisers and guests II
<i>Coffee break</i>			
11:30 to 13:00		Methodography and Collaboration <i>Law</i>	Writing about Methodography <i>Douglas-Jones & Sørensen</i>
<i>Lunch break</i>			
14:00 to 16:00		Group session, presentation of article proposals <i>Law</i>	Re-writing session
<i>Coffee break</i>			
16:30 to 18:30	Public Kick-Off Lecture <i>Niewöhner</i>	Presentation of proposals in groups, comments by lecturers, organisers and guests I	Feedback, organisation for EASST18, process towards a special issue & timeline <i>Lippert</i>
		Workshop Dinner	

WHO SHOULD APPLY?

The workshop invites early career researchers within the field of STS who have at least several months of experience with ethnographic methods and who are willing to attend the upcoming EASST conference and submit a research article for a special issue edited by us. The working language of the workshop will be English.

HOW TO APPLY

To take part in the workshop, send (a) a 100 words biography including your university department (if applicable: degree program), research area and keywords, (b) a 200 words letter of motivation and (c) an abstract of your current or past ethnographic project that you hope to analyse within this workshop (300 words) to Julie and Göde via stsberlin2018@gmail.com. A limited number of places are available.

The deadline for the submission is 1st of December 2017.

We will notify every applicant via email by 15th December 2017. Successful applicants will be asked to submit an article draft by 31st of January 2018.



WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

The workshop comes without fees. In case the workshop receives external funding applied for we will be able to partially cover transport and accommodation.

ORGANISERS

The workshop is co-organised by the [“Labor Sozialanthropologische Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung \(STS\)”](#) at the [Institute for European Ethnology](#) (Humboldt University Berlin, Germany) and the [Experimental Techno-Humanities and Organisational Services lab](#) ([IT University of Copenhagen](#), Denmark).

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