



Colloquium on the Biographies of Artifacts and Practices

Dear colleagues,

we cordially invite you to join the Biographies of Artifacts and Practices (BOAP) Research Colloquium. Based on a collaboration of researchers from the University of Edinburgh, Aalto University, and the Technical University of Berlin, this bi-monthly colloquium provides an open platform for an international network of researchers interested in BOAP and related methodological and analytical approaches. Its main goal is to contribute to strengthening the robustness of research designs in STS and the sociology of technology and innovation. Each event features the presentation and discussion of one research project that traces the biographies of complex sociotechnical systems across multiple locales and extended timeframes, often linking multiple studies and scales of analysis.

The colloquium will take place online on **March 7th, 4pm (CET)**. It will feature a talk by **Alin Ake-kob** (Nord University). She will address how her multi-sited ethnographic study on technology implementation in end-of-life healthcare services in Norway, prompted a methodological shift from BOAP to BOPA: The Biography of a Practice and its Artefacts.

About the talk:

Based in classic anthropological approaches to objects (Kopytoff, 1986) and multi-sited ethnographies (Marcus, 1995), the Biography of Artefacts and Practices (BOAP) (Hyysalo et al., 2019) has provided a solid research template for those interested in technological innovation. However, the BOAP approach may further contribute to innovation studies and the social sciences in general by decentering the template from the artefact, allowing social practices to take centre stage. In this talk I will share how my fieldwork in end-of-life care services made me reframe the BOAP to BOPA: The Biography of a Practice and its Artefacts.

My study started with an interest in understanding the development and implementation of a video-audio digital movement sensor in the care services of Norway. For more than a year I conducted participant observation in various settings. The sensor was first installed in the private houses of end-of-life humans (very aged or aged with dementia), programmed to send its notifications to the mobile phones of home-service healthcare personnel based in a remote office. One year later it was installed in an end-of-life care facility. At the middle of fieldwork, I realized that, instead of reconstructing the biography of the sensor, it was more relevant to focus on care work in Norway as social practice, and how its digitalization was related to broader changes in the country's welfare model.

In the social sciences, quantitative methods have been the privileged choice by scholars interested in social change, habits, attitudes, and wealth distribution. However, comparison of such figures tells us very little about what these shifts mean for the people on the ground, and hardly provides the reader material to visualize social change in a particular community.



The Biography of a Practice and its Artefacts (BOPA) is a practice-based alternative for longitudinal qualitative studies that can inform readers about social change without giving up vivid illustrative experiences. It also provides more solid accounts than traditional longitudinal interviews, which lack first-hand data. Different aspects of the proposed perspective can be discussed, for example, the choice of school in social practice theory, the management of empirical data, and the presentation of results.

About the speakers:

Alin Ake-kob could continue fieldwork in end-of-life healthcare settings, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, through access in a healthcare institution in the Arctic Circle. She had not planned to stay that long in the field but could not leave due to the same pandemic restrictions.

She is a third year PhD candidate in Sociology at Nord University. Previously, she received scientific training at The University of Edinburgh in the MSc by Research program in Science and Technology Studies. She holds two bachelor's degrees, one in Law, and another one in Political Communication by the National Autonomous University of Mexico, where she has been digital lecturer for more than 10 years.

Alin is Member of the European Cooperation in Science and Technology. In 2020 the Norwegian Research Council chose her to be one of the two representatives of the country in the research network Good Brother. She has been a one-year guest researcher at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. Apart from the Arctic, she has also lived at the Mexico-USA border while working as Chief of advisors to a governor. Back home she mostly worked as advisor to politicians.

Zoom link and contact:

<https://tu-berlin.zoom.us/j/66505996516?pwd=ZWhreXhKeWtzbWIRZFh1NIJmbVRGdz09>
Zoom PW: 125067

If you are interested in the activities of the research network, or would like to present at the colloquium, get in touch at david.seibt@tu-berlin.de.

Next dates in the BOAP Colloquium

(all colloquium sessions start at 4 pm, Berlin time)

07.03.2022, **Alin Ake-Kob** (Nord University): 'From BOAP to BOPA: The Biography of a Practice and its Artefacts – A practice-based alternative for longitudinal qualitative studies.'

02.05.2022, **David Seibt** (Technical University of Berlin): The Socio-Material Construction of Users: 3D Printing and the Digitalization of the Prosthetics Industry

04.07.2022, **Neil Pollock & Robin Williams** (University of Edinburgh): tba