



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 **January 9th, 4pm (CET)**. It will feature a talk by **Peter Fuzesi** (University of Strathclyde) who will present insights from his ethnographic study of personalized Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems. He will argue that the provision of assistive technologies diverges from the conventional market model, thus raising a particular set of challenges for studying the relationship between technology design, implementation, and use.

About the talk:

Assistive technologies (AT) are powerful means to improve the quality of life and social participation of persons with disabilities. Yet, according to the World Health Organization, globally only one in ten people have access to the assistive products they need. Critical analyses of AT provision systems are often framed in terms of comparing mainstream and assistive technology markets and departing from a medicalized model of technology provision. Calls for improvement focus on singular sites, for example better design or more participation from users. Underlying these critiques is the implicit assumption that assistive and mainstream markets are comparable, and the latter should serve as a model for technology provision for persons with disabilities.

My presentation problematizes this assumption, and argues that design, device and use are not neutral categories; they are premised on users and consumers abilities and disabilities. To trace how dis/abilities and technologies are interlinked, one needs to situate practices of designing, implementation and use in wider systems of technology provision. I demonstrate this point through the case of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems; a specific set of assistive technologies, which are used by a diverse group of persons with disabilities. I draw on ethnographic fieldwork of a Service Centre that provides personalized AAC systems to explore the following questions:



- How are AACs and the need for provision framed and justified in healthcare policy? How are AT supply and demand mediated and matched?
- How are producers, vendors, healthcare agencies and users organized into co-operative networks?
- How are agencies, expertise and work distributed among different actors?
- How are individual user's systems designed, implemented and re-designed?
- What are the infrastructures and geographies that connect sites of design, implementation and use?

In the second part of my presentation, I discuss how the BoAP (Hyysalo et al. 2019) approach could inform my analysis by tackling shared concerns; and to what extent dis/abilities' link to constructions of design and use provides a distinct and novel set of problems.

About the speaker:

Peter Fuzesi is a social scientist with a background in Science, Technology and Society (STS), Sociology and Disability Studies. He completed his PhD at the University of Lancaster. His doctoral research was an ethnographic exploration of Assistive Technology provision within the National Health Service, the public healthcare system of England and Wales. Since completing his PhD, he has been working as a Research Associate. In 2019, he started working at the University of Sheffield, on the Plastic: Redefining single-use project, that looked at reducing plastic waste in healthcare services. Between 2021 and 2022, he worked on the SIPA2: Sensory Impairment and Pharmaceutical Care project, which explored the challenges older people with sensory impairment experience, and the strategies they deploy for self-managing their medications. His research focuses on shaping healthcare practices, markets, and infrastructures to make services and technologies more accessible, inclusive, and sustainable.

Zoom link and contact:

<https://tu-berlin.zoom.us/j/69935202202?pwd=Zkl2RW5zTmdKam1mbmpHQ0FXRldTZz09>

Zoom PW: 099802

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)

09.01.2023, **Peter Fuzesi** (University of Strathclyde): Cloud forests and Penguin colonies: Ecosystems of assistive technology provision

06.03.2023, **Zinaida Vasilyeva** (Technical University of Munich): Soviet DIY Modernity: Cultural Biographies of Skills and the Problem of Value Transformation

08.05.2023, **Lisa Reutter** (Norwegian University of Science and Technology): tba