

BSA STS Study Group Annual Report 2023-2024

Number of members: Members increased from 184 to 230 in 2023-2024 (based on jiscmail subscriptions; numbers of BSA members/associate members unknown)

Income, expenditure and balance: As of 24 April 2024, the account balance for the Science and Technology study group was £90.03

Aims of the group: The aim of this Study Group is to explore the intersections of sociology and Science and Technology Studies. It aims to promote STS as one of the major sites of conceptual and methodological innovation for sociology, and to maintain a space for STS at the heart for contemporary sociology in the UK.

A summary of activities undertaken in the past year (June 2023 – April 2024)

The BSA STS study group launched a seminar series in 2023. The first event took place in October. Dr Ola Michalec (Bristol) gave a talk titled “Old Grid, New Grid: how disruptive is digitalisation of the energy industry?” where she problematised the notion of 'disruptive innovation' in relation to energy infrastructures, using digitalisation policy initiatives in the UK as a case study.

In November, we were joined by Dr Sandra P. González-Santos (independent researcher), Dr Hauke Riesch (Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Brunel University London) and Dr Neil Stephens (Associate Professor of Technology and Society at the University of Birmingham School of Social Policy) who discussed the process of creating a handbook on the Sociology of Science and Technology. Their talk was titled “Science and Technology Studies, and the Sociology of Science and Technology: How do you curate a Handbook on the latter, when you think of yourself as the former?”

In December, we held a workshop titled “Re: Constructs | Exchanges between STS and Sociology” at the University of Essex. The workshop was funded by the Department of Sociology at Essex and the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies at the University of Warwick and was organised by Tara Mahfoud (Essex), Noortje Marres (Warwick) and Michael Guggenheim (Goldsmiths) and included talks by Linsey McGoey (Essex), Anne Pollock (King’s College London) and colleagues across the UK, Germany and Belgium.

In January, Dr Sarah Pennington (Goldsmiths) gave a talk on “Care-politics in design: Toward an inventive feminist practice.” She discussed the shift from matters of concern to matters of care, its implications in the context of design research, and proposed an analytical typology of what she calls ‘care-politics’ which is attentive to processes of ‘inventive ethics’.

In February, Professor Jane Calvert (Edinburgh) talked to us about her new book “A Place for Science and Technology Studies: Observation, Intervention, and Collaboration” (MIT Press). The book details 15 years of STS work – from observation, to intervention, to collaboration with scientists and engineers – and asks “whether there is a place for STS, whether STS has to create new spaces, or whether it is fated to be forever itinerant.”

In March, Dr Michel Wahome (UCL) gave a talk titled “Challenging the ‘Boys from the North’: Epistemic Identities and Values in Collaborative Research on the Deep Sea” where she discussed collaborative research in Africa as a site for thinking about deep-sea science ‘capacity’ and expertise, the development objectives that structure North-South scientific collaborations, and the boundaries of legitimate science and expertise and its jurisdiction.

For the BSA Annual Conference in April 2024, which took place online, the group organised STS and digital studies themed sessions in a joint effort with the Digital Sociology study group. In total, we had 5 paper panels and a stream plenary. With the conference being online, we were able to host more international presenters from countries like Brazil, Hong Kong, and Canada. Presenters received questions and feedback from the audience at the end of their talks. Presentation topics varied from AI to science and the environment to digital divides in technology use, showcasing the great range of research interests pertaining to science, technology and digital sociology. In the stream plenary, Dr Lukas Engelmann (Edinburgh) discussed the notion of ‘crisis’ in relation to epidemiological reasoning and mathematical modelling in the 20th century. The talk raised important

questions regarding how epidemics have been theorised as crises and disruptions and the role of mathematical modelling in shaping such disruptions.

We also maintain an active Jiscmail list, which sees regular postings of STS-related events, jobs and other opportunities.

A summary of activities planned for the coming year (September 2024 to August 2025);

The BSA STS study group is in the early stages of organising events for the next academic year. We plan to continue our seminar series with more talks in 2024-25. Having had great interest in our 2023 professionalisation seminar on book publishing, we plan to organise at least one more seminar of this type.

We plan to run another successful set of streams at the 2025 BSA conference. We also hope to further build on the study group's relationship to other STS-related networks in the UK including Science in Public and UK-AsSIST (the UK's STS association).

We continue to advertise the conference and the benefits of BSA membership through the mailing list. We will always encourage jiscmail signups to register as BSA members when we circulate study group-related material.

Convenor details

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