

## Building Community with *ESTS*

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### Abstract

This editorial describes the crucial role of building transnationally diverse STS communities that our Editorial Collective (EC) has imagined and sought to implement for *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society (ESTS)*. Community-building as an ethic characterizes all aspects of our EC's work: from editorial practices to infrastructural development, and from content publication to the broader initiatives that we undertake. In a context where the role of scholarly journals is increasingly instrumentalized through corporate-led valuation systems that effectively also render them largely inaccessible, we see this as an especially important value to affirm in and through strengthening open access publication.

### Keywords

transnational STS; scholarly community; infrastructure; labor; open access publication; politics of language; open data; genre form

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**To cite this article:** Editorial Collective: Khandekar, Aalok, Noela Invernizzi, Duygu Kaşdoğan, Ali Kenner, Angela Okune, Grant Jun Otsuki, Sujatha Raman, Amanda Windle, and Emily York. 2022. "Building Community with *ESTS*." *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society* 8(1): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.17351/ests2022.1671>.

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## Community–Building Technologies

In a context where discussions about academic publication are largely dominated by talk about impact factors and indexing, scholarly journals are often reduced to commodities. Corporate publishers have played a key role in cultivating this culture, constraining (and sometimes inspiring) possibilities for creating scholarly community. But what are academic journals if not community–building technologies? This fundamental, if flexible and continually emergent, role is one that our Editorial Collective (EC) has been keeping central for *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society (ESTS)* over the last two years as we work to weave various projects, desires, and practices together to make scholarly community.

In January 2022, our EC met with *ESTS*'s [Editorial Board \(EB\)](#) for the first time since we assumed editorship. We deliberately constituted our EB with the goal of connecting to STS scholars across different regions and intellectual traditions. In our meeting with the EB, we wanted to update them about various initiatives undertaken by us since assuming the journal's editorship; we also wanted to understand from them how we might enroll a more diverse body of STS scholars into the journal community. To this end, EB members had several suggestions to offer, including for example, sponsoring Calls for Papers (CfPs) around rubrics that could draw in scholars working in STS–related domains across different geographies and disciplines (e.g., innovation, technology transfer, infrastructure), promoting collaborations between “northern” and “southern” scholars, and supporting and mentoring students to further develop their publication skills, and foster greater professional engagement with the journal and the field more generally. We are still deliberating over many ideas that came up during our meetings with the EB, and these will inform some of our initiatives to come. As we have noted in our previous editorial ([Collective et al. 2021b](#)), we are constrained by our collective's capacity to process and publish content. This means that we will be able to take up only some of the many initiatives that we have discussed as part of our editorial vision. Overall, however, we believe that our meetings with the EB reaffirmed our vision for *ESTS* to model and extend the role of scholarly journals.

Building geographically and intellectually diverse communities in transnational contexts has been an important consideration for our EC from the very outset. This goal permeates all aspects of our editorship: from the constitution and functioning of our editorial team, to the content that we publish, the infrastructures that we share, design and develop, and the different experimental initiatives that we are undertaking.

For instance, given our commitment to promoting greater transnationalism in the field, inclusions and exclusions enacted by virtue of publishing in English have been a key point of discussion. Our EC has had several in–depth conversations about this issue within our group, and this was also a point of discussion during our meeting with the journal's EB in January 2022. We have considered approaching the politics of language, as we call it internally, using different tactics: publishing in multiple Englishes, publishing translated texts, collaborating with other journals to undertake joint publications in different languages, and in a more limited manner, as in the case of Nicola da Schio's essay in this issue ([2022](#)), translating essay metadata into languages that authors deem important for them. da Schio's motivation behind translating the essay's abstract into French is to render it at least partially meaningful for the communities in which he

has worked and is writing about. In order to authorize that translation, we have had to draw on some of our EB members, since no one on the journal's editorial team is sufficiently fluent in the particularities of Belgian French. Our own intention in publishing our metadata in different languages is also to enable the text to circulate among and draw in different communities, those who would identify as STS as well as experts in other fields and broader publics. Attending to linguistic dynamics that underwrite our publications foregrounds different ways of community-building: as reciprocity in research relations, as new ways of relating between ESTS authors, reviewers, and editors, and as reaching out to scholarly and broader publics that have thus far been outside the spaces in which the journal typically circulates.

Figuring out what protocols and considerations are needed to support linguistic plurality in the journal has been developing out of the copyediting and production stages of publishing over the last year. Managing Editor Amanda Windle, for example, dedicates extra time and care working with manuscripts in multiple Englishes, and working across languages. The "Science and Dissent" *Thematic Collection* featured in this issue, for example, includes essays written in multiple Englishes, personalized to authors' preferences (some of which have switched from one form of English to another during the copyediting process). There are also non-English references with and without English translation in some manuscripts. The process of negotiating and curating translation at the stage of copyediting loops back to the EC's own language politics, where the situated expertise and desires of authors take priority (while also keeping in mind the need for clarity for the readers of *ESTS*). The journal's copyediting process does not enforce one way of providing translations (see the differences between da Schio, Moore and Vidal, and Strasser's papers) or a standardized version of English.

Other *ESTS* projects underway that advance our community-building work include cross-platform, multi-modal publications that experiment with publishing original research data; these projects will be staged on the [STS Infrastructures](#) platform and link to essay-length publications in the journal. Associate Editors Duygu Kaşdoğan and Angela Okune are leading efforts to publish a *Thematic Collection*, "STS: Places & Spaces," that focuses on STS as a scholarly field in different geographical locations while also critically interrogating how place and space can serve as important points of entry into understanding STS scholarship. Associate Editors Emily York and Angela Okune are similarly leading efforts at constituting a *Thematic Collection* on "STS Pedagogies" that interrogates ways in which pedagogy offers a lens onto and engagement with a variety of questions in STS that span theory and practice. Work on these collections has been underway for more than a year now; *ESTS* Associate Editors have worked closely with contributors as they collaboratively—and iteratively—develop their submissions in the lead up to the journal's formal peer review process. This work includes organizing regular meetings with all contributors to check-in, share insights on content and process, and facilitate new relations across contributor teams. Here we have directly observed the value of the journal as community-building technology that continues scholarly engagement beyond the annual conference.

Importantly, this involves teaching our author and reviewer communities about open data practices, and the emergent platforms used to publish scholarly work beyond the peer-reviewed article. This work occurs in conjunction with manuscript development and production, but also extends beyond it. For example,

members of the EC have been invited to speak at a 6S [student community of the 4S] [Sketch Groups](#) workshop that will focus on questions of data sharing in STS, to consider how data can be borrowed, collected, and shared with others. Angela Okune was also invited to lead a graduate student workshop on STS data sharing at Stanford University where she presented how our collective is thinking about “data,” not as stable and self-contained objects that speak for themselves, but as embodiments of relationships, which underlie our work as STS scholars ([Okune 2022](#)). She also emphasized the role that publishing open data could play in enabling more multilingual knowledge exchange as well.

Sharing research data requires deliberate infrastructuring and dedicated labor. [STS Infrastructures](#) is one platform that has become important in undertaking this work. As we have noted in previous editorials, we have also dedicated significant time and effort in developing other journal infrastructures ([Collective et al. 2021a](#); [2021b](#)). Over the past year, for example, Angela Okune has worked closely with Open Data Editor Tim Schütz, to develop supporting documents and protocols as well as *ESTS*'s publication space on the *STS Infrastructures* platform in order to be able to publish research data. Templates for publishing research data in fields like STS aren't readily available; they have had to be evolved through extensive research and in conversation with other institutional actors including archivists and librarians. Our EC understands the deepening of open access (OA) infrastructures as an inextricable component of fostering a transnational STS community. We remain committed to sharing various tools, templates, checklists, protocols, and other infrastructural elements that we have developed as part of our editorial work: we have been constrained by our capacities to produce these in readily usable forms, but readers can expect these resources to be shared openly soon.

Two publication genres in *ESTS*, *Engagements and Perspectives*, also work to consolidate and extend the journal's community. Submissions for the *Engagements* genre, for example, focus on theoretical, methodological, and other matters that underwrite STS as a field of scholarly inquiry. In doing so, our hope is that these essays will encourage ongoing dialogue about ways in which the field has been comprised and continues to evolve, attending to both its strengths and shortcomings, and imagining ways in which it could be constituted otherwise. Issues [7.1](#) and [7.2](#) include forums featuring the scholarship of 2020 Bernal Prize winners Langdon Winner and Sharon Traweek respectively. Each forum includes the award acceptance lecture delivered by the prize winners alongside commentaries on their scholarship by other STS scholars. Sharon Traweek's Bernal Forum also features an interview with her by Duygu Kaşdoğan and Kim Fortun, published both in audio format as well as in the form of an edited transcript. Both forums examine scholarship that has been foundational for the field of STS in important ways, as well as ways in which it has moved beyond the contexts to which it was immediately responding. The present issue features a different kind of *Engagements* contribution: Casper Bruun Jensen's essay puts three recent books in conversation with each other, pushing STS scholars to think about the forms of “collective experimentation, learning, and intelligence” required to cultivate “an unfenced uncommons [. . .] open to surprising alliances, thriving on multiplicity, and firmly oriented to less murderous and suicidal cosmoecologies.” As these examples show, *Engagements* invites experimentation in genre, format, and content that encourage continuous reflection on the field of STS. As part of this community-building work, we welcome prospective authors to discuss potential submissions that they would like us to consider.

The *Perspectives* genre, by contrast, is designed to draw in more-than-STS audiences. The aim is to synthesize STS insights on important contemporary issues, and in the process make STS relevant in/for other spaces, including those of policy, design, and community organizing. For example, Bharti et al.'s (2021) contribution to issue 7.1 on health data governance in the UK developed out of the authors' participation in a COVID-19 response project; it was deliberately written as a basis for their future submissions on the government's policy deliberations. In response to ongoing conversations with some governmental actors, the authors are now also in the process of developing more detailed STS-informed overviews of the data regulation anticipated in their *Perspectives* contribution to ESTS. Within the ESTS collective, Associate Editor Sujatha Raman will work closely in further shaping the *Perspectives* genre, attending not only to the form and content of these publications, but also developing pathways for them to reach and engage communities beyond STS.

ESTS is not alone in its efforts to deepen OA publishing. There is work happening within OA ecosystems to take back and reconstitute the meaning of the academic journal in our scholarly ecologies. Much like editorial collectives in other fields, our EC has been reaching out to connect to others, in reciprocity. Workshop and conference spaces have been crucial venues for hosting these interactions. Our EC has organized several discussions on OA publishing as part of the Transnational STS working group. We have also been regularly organizing various events at the annual 4S conference. For instance, at the upcoming annual meeting of the 4S at Cholula, Mexico in December 2022, STS-related OA journals will meet together around the theme of the "managing editor" role in OA publications; discussions will focus on the diverse roles undertaken by managing editors and the dynamic changes being made to this position in the OA context. The event will be hosted by the 6S student community of the Society for Social Studies of Science's Annual Conference, co-organized by Amanda Windle and 6S Representatives Angela Okune, Misria Shaik Ali, and Barkha Kagliwal, as a way to extend and build connections between and across student communities and OA STS journals. We hope such events will help build the interest and capacity of future generations of scholars working in/on OA STS publishing.

Several Associate Editors (Duygu Kaşdoğan, Noela Invernizzi, Ali Kenner) have also organized a session on the politics of language that dovetails with a number of the 2022 meeting policies and structure. The roundtable aims to facilitate conversation focused on possible collective, experimental, and creative ways to respond to the inequalities and asymmetrical knowledge production and distribution processes in STS and other fields. Associate Editors Angela Okune and Grant Otsuki are also hosting a workshop on Open Data in STS, continuing discussions initiated at a roundtable that the EC had convened during the 2021 4S meetings. Despite the barriers, ethical concerns, and looming uncertainties regarding in-person meetings at this moment, excitement and hope join our thinking about Cholula '22, particularly for EC members who have been unable to meet in-person for several years, or who have never met at all.

Understanding ESTS as a community-building technology generates its own rubric: does this action or approach—whether it concerns publication genres, the politics of language, or the possibilities of open data—help to build community? The efforts described here reflect the EC's sense of responsibility toward

STS communities and its commitment to realizing this broad and dynamic vision of what 4S's Open Access journal can be.

### Issue 8.1

This issue includes two *Original Research Articles*, a *Thematic Collection* on “Science and Dissent,” and an *Engagements* essay.

In “The Unique and the Universal: Analyzing the Interplay Between Regulatory Frameworks, Researchers and Research Participants in Data Making,” Francisca Nordfalk, Maria Olejaz, and Klaus Høyer (2022) analyze two Danish initiatives to better understand a trend of “personalization” in data-intensive medicine. They argue that “unique” and “universal” are not only epistemological concepts, they are also politically and socially mobilizing concepts working on the people who give rise to data. In spite of a diverse spectrum of understandings of what is considered universal and unique across regulatory frameworks, researchers, and the people from whom the data derive, the authors suggest that it could be possible to design a regulatory framework and implement organizational practices where both the wishes and concerns of donors and the possibilities for researchers are taken into consideration.

In “The Empowering Virtues of Citizen Science: Claiming Clean Air in Brussels,” Nicola da Schio explores the potential of citizen science to challenge unfair frameworks of environmental monitoring and governance by focusing on a citizen science initiative, AirCasting Brussels. He suggests that citizen science initiatives may not always directly reshape environmental decision making, but may still serve to strengthen citizens' capabilities to scrutinize environmental policies and public deliberations about them. For da Schio, the empowering virtues of citizen science initiatives lie in their pedagogical potential to educate communities through the very act of coming together and participating in them.

Introduced by Kelly Moore and Bruno J. Strasser (2022), the *Thematic Collection* on “Science and Dissent” brings a fresh transnational and *longue durée* perspective to what is otherwise a familiar empirical reference point in STS. With the exception of historically grounded work by Sheila Jasanoff (2011) on the constitutional significance of controversies in the United States involving science, much STS work focuses on individual episodes where science is mobilized by various actors to articulate political claims. This collection aims to go beyond the framing of core conceptual issues in global North terms, asking how political history shapes the diverse ways in which activists—in Latin America, West Africa, Asia, Europe and the US—have deployed, problematized and attempted to transform the relationship between knowledge, politics, bodies and material practices. Interestingly, some of these efforts represent ways of building alternative structures of knowledge rather than necessarily speaking to government, mainstream science or industry as we tend to see in the global North. STS and allied forms of expertise have played a key role in these attempts to rethink and rebuild the place of science in society. The collection includes essays by Marta Conde and Mariana Walter (2022), Nathalia Hernández Vidal and Kelly Moore (2022), Melanie Kiechle (2022), Shambu C. Prasad and Mathieu Quet (2022), Bruno J. Strasser (2022), and Sezin Topçu (2022).

In the Engagements essay, “How to Deal with Cosmoecological Perplexities,” Casper Bruun Jensen (2022) juxtaposes three recent books, Clarissa Lee’s (2021) *Artscience: A Curious Education*, Arturo Escobar’s (2020) *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*, and Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel’s (2020) *Critical Zones: The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth*. Each, he suggests, offers new propositions—speculative, conceptual, pragmatic, and political—that are urgently required for dealing with cosmoecological perplexities. Read collectively, Jensen argues, each compliments or extends the others, inviting readers to rethink their “terms of engagement” in a moment of planetary crisis.

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