

## Pursuing Transnational STS at ESOCITE/4S Joint Conference

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### Abstract

In this editorial, the *ESTS* editorial collective (EC) reports on various events it had organized at the 2022 ESOCITE/4S joint meeting held at the Universidad Iberoamericana-Puebla in Cholula, México. The EC hosted a journal “happy hour” meet-up and several roundtables on the “Politics of Language,” the challenges and opportunities for open research data in STS worlds, as well as a Managing Editor (ME) Roundtable collaborating with other OA journals. The EC also participated in a two-day pre-conference writing workshop for early-career researchers. Various events organized further the EC’s commitment to cultivating and supporting the development of transnational STS.

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## Keywords

open access; ESCOCITE; 4S; transnational infrastructuring; STS conference; STS Infrastructures; politics of language; open research data; copyediting and production cycle

## Introduction

We write this editorial at the conclusion of the ESCOCITE/4S 2022 joint meeting in Cholula, México. The conference marked a return, although in hybrid mode, to in-person meetings after a period of nearly two years. This was especially significant for *ESTS*'s editorial team; we assumed editorship of the journal during the pandemic, and for many in the team, this was the first time we met each other in-person. The *ESTS* editorial team organized several events at the conference: a roundtable where *ESTS* editors interacted with conference participants, a roundtable where *ESTS* editors were in conversation along with other invited speakers and the audience about the politics of (English) language in and beyond publishing, a roundtable co-organized with the 4S's student section (6S) where managing editors of different journals were in conversation about the labors, challenges, and joys of open access publication in STS, and a workshop on the challenges and opportunities for open research data in STS worlds. In collaboration with editors of other Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S) affiliated journals (*Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience*; *East Asian Science, Technology, and Society: An International Journal*; *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*; *Science, Technology & Human Values*; *Social Studies of Science*; *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology, and Society*), *ESTS* editors also hosted a two-day pre-conference workshop for early-career researchers, prioritizing participation from scholars based in Latin America and other locations in the global South. These reunions were revitalizing for us. We came away from the conference with a renewed sense of purpose, having reaffirmed our belief in the need for STS communities, as the [conference theme](#) notes, "to come together again (in difference)."

ESCOCITE/4S 2022 epitomized the promise of transnational STS that is foundational to our editorial vision. Across panels, plenaries, and exhibits, different traditions of STS scholarship were prominently on display, catalyzing discussions about the dynamics of science, technology, and society across contexts—their similarities, differences, interconnectedness and accompanying hierarchies, asymmetries, and inequities. The multiplicity of the field itself, constituted in relation to varying social, political, and institutional contexts, was also readily evident. Shared concerns—e.g. climate, energy, mobility, extractivism, AI—and their different manifestations reverberated throughout the conference, underscoring the need for shared spaces of deliberation.

Shared languages for deliberation, however, were more difficult to articulate. At the trilingual conference, working variously in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, many participants took to heart the invitation of the conference organizers to prepare their presentation slides in languages other than the ones they were presenting in. Translation tools such as DeepL® and built-in auto-transcription, translation and captioning tools in Microsoft Teams® proved to be crucial, if also (wildly) imprecise, guides for participants to navigate multilingual worlds. Participants conversant in more than one of the conference languages, too, often played a crucial mediating role as translators in ensuring discussions across language

barriers. The *ESTS* roundtable on the “Politics of Language” ([Kaşdoğan, Invernizzi, and Kenner 2022](#)) delved deeper into associated issues, underscoring that the imposition of Standard English as the privileged means for scholarly communication is the result of, and durably reproduces, hierarchies within global academia. These extend from the different value and visibility attributed to knowledge produced (and published) in other languages, to the increasing impoverishment of different languages as scientific languages, materialized through the not-very-evident hierarchies constructed within the classrooms, and the much more apparent ones created by assessment regimes, citation practices, and subordinated adoption of theories. As the panelists noted, these dynamics affect not only scholars located in regions such as Latin America, Eastern Europe and East Asia where English is not the primary language of (scientific) communication, but also in countries like the United States, with its many Englishes, dialects, and minority languages. Our editorial collective (EC) has been mindful of language as a potential axis of exclusion in STS and therefore sought to experiment with ways to be multilingual: from publishing in multiple Englishes, to translating metadata, to pursuing publication of full translations. We will continue experimenting with alternative approaches towards multilingual sciences, including we hope, collaboratively with other journals.

ESOCITE/4S 2022 also highlighted other registers on which STS scholars can come together despite linguistic differences. Research data, as we have noted in our previous editorial, is one such register. During the conference, we held the latest in what is becoming a series of workshops on the possibilities of open data practices in STS. On this occasion, we took a very hands-on approach, bringing participants together to play with specific pieces of data on the Platform for Experimental Ethnography, and engaging with the themes that emerged at the contact zone of open data ideals and data infrastructures. Among the realizations at the workshop was that “open data” in STS can be so much more than the bytes and bits of information researchers produce about others; it can be a productive idiom with which to foreground the relationalities that we rely on to do STS, and perhaps to build new ones.

ESOCITE/4S 2022 reaffirmed another important pillar of our editorial vision: attention to pedagogies can be crucial in realizing transnational STS. As the field continues to grow into increasingly specialized subfields with highly divergent trajectories of empirical and conceptual investigation, it can sometimes be difficult to find common ground that sufficiently unifies STS as a coherent field. This can be even more challenging as STS scholarship across different geographies and genealogies come into greater conversation with each other. The unifying role of a pedagogical orientation in such a context is noteworthy. This was evident especially during a roundtable meeting convened by interim 4S Publications Committee chair, Christopher M. Kelty, during the conference to discuss possibilities for a newer edition of the *Handbook of Science and Technology Studies*. Debating whether 4S should commission a new handbook, participants agreed that the handbook had historically served an important role in the field and had been crucial to their own initiation into STS. They nonetheless also acknowledged its gatekeeping function such that it served to authorize particular articulations of the field while excluding others. Instead, what seemed to be a readily shared idea across the room was the need for a version of the handbook that could be readily used for undergraduate-level classroom teaching. The pedagogical role of STS served as a common register on which an otherwise heterogeneous field could still come together.

Worth insisting again is that coming together differently must be infrastructured. From technologies to support communication across languages, to platforms that facilitate exchange of research materials, and to the development of protocols and shared spaces that enable greater—and different—participation: the infrastructures that allow for transnational STS communities to be constituted and come together require deliberate attention and care. During the roundtable of managing editors (including *ESTS*, *Tapuya*, and *Catalyst*, co-chaired by 6S and *ESTS*), participants highlighted the richness and diversity of the open access publishing ecosystem, unboxing some of the ways that infrastructuring helps to shape, share, and sustain a journal's publishing cycle. Together, they made visible the infrastructures and the different expertise and collaborations involved.

We would like to use this space to highlight an opportunity for our readers to help support the work of cultivating transnational open access STS scholarship and developing supporting infrastructures. We are excited to have been selected to participate in the [Open Access Community Investment Program](#) (OACIP) organized by LYRISIS. The OACIP endeavors to support scholarly publications in remaining fully open, with neither authors nor readers having to pay. The OACIP works with individuals, departments, libraries and other institutional entities to generate funds that will allow journals to become or remain diamond open access. *ESTS* has been fortunate to have the continuing enthusiastic financial backing of the 4S for its everyday operations. To ensure long-term sustainability, enhance the editorial services we provide to the STS community, and deepen open access infrastructure that can be shared with other scholarly journals, we are now seeking to diversify our sources of support. *ESTS* seeks to raise \$40,000 per year for a period of 5 years (2023–28) through the OACIP, which represents approximately half of the journal's annual budget. Pledging for the OACIP is open through July 2023. Please support *ESTS* by contributing financially if you are able to, but also by connecting us to your university departments, libraries, and others who might be in a position to help reach our funding goals. Readers can reach out to us ([inquiry@estsjournal.org](mailto:inquiry@estsjournal.org)) or directly to OACIP organizers ([oacip@lyrasis.org](mailto:oacip@lyrasis.org)).

We conclude this editorial by expressing our profound gratitude to peer reviewers for *ESTS* in 2022. Across journals, 2022 has been a challenging year to secure reviewers and ensure timely evaluation of manuscripts. This was true for *ESTS* as well, all the more so as we attempt to enroll a more diverse pool of reviewers into the journal community. We are especially grateful, therefore, to all those who have been able to make time to undertake this crucially important task for us. The list below names individuals who have served as peer reviewers for manuscripts that received final editorial decisions in 2022.

Sarita Albagli  
Maria Belén Albornoz  
Florencia Arancibia  
José Ramón Bertomeu –  
Sánchez  
Mario Blaser

Simon Cole  
Morgan Currie  
Amílcar Davyt  
Marisol de la Cadena  
Jason Delborne  
Murat Ergin

Luis Felipe  
Vivette García-Deister  
Gökçe Günel  
Sandra Harding  
Jarita Holbrook  
Alan Irwin

Nils Johansson	Susan Molyneux-Hodgson	Knut Sorensen
Fredrik Johansson	Galen Murton	Christy Spackman
Marelle Kaufmann	Gwen Ottinger	Maka Suárez
Abby Kinchy	Dimitris Papadopoulos	Xiaofeng Tang
Emma Kowal	Usha Raman	Naveen Thayyil
Pablo Kreimer	Brian Rappert	Wen-Ling Tu
Marcel LaFlamme	Luis Reyes Galindo	Rosana Villares
Luciano Levin	Shiju Sam Varughese	Sara Wylie
Oscar Maldonado Castañeda	Caterina Scaramelli	Guillermina Yansen
Brian Martin	Kalpana Shankar	Jeffrey Yen
Laura Mauldin	Nicholas Shapiro	Hyaesin Yoon
Sarah McCullough	Divya Sharma	

### Issue 8.3

Issue 8.3 includes three *Original Research Articles*, one *Engagements* contribution, and two *Perspectives* essays.

The essay by Brian Rappert, Dana Wilson-Kovacs, Hannah Wheat, and Sabina Leonelli, “Turning Big Data into Digital Forensic Evidence,” ([2022](#)) focuses on the administrative and technical processes required to transform digital footprints into forensic evidence in the context of the possession of indecent pictures of children in the UK. Through their analysis they caution against relying on abstract commitments to ‘objectivity’ in this domain, and point to the necessity to attend to underlying big data practices in the production of digital evidence.

The other essays in this issue correspond to the theme of Transnational STS that we have been emphasizing as a key editorial thrust at *ESTS*. Notably, many contributors to this issue are located in Latin America, showcasing the vitality of STS scholarship in the region.

In their essay, “STS between Centers and Peripheries,” ([2022](#)) *ESTS* associate editor Noela Invernizzi, Davyt Amílcar, Leandro Rodríguez Medina, and Pablo Kreimer analyze publication trends in prominent STS journals, including *ESTS*. They highlight the stark asymmetries that characterize the field, with authors based in centers in North America and Western Europe heavily dominating publications in STS journals. They also demonstrate that while authorship from some peripheral locations is beginning to be more visible, it still nonetheless remains restricted to particular subfields such as scientometrics and S&T policy and innovation studies.

Nancy Campbell’s essay, “Transnationalizing Critical Drug Studies,” ([2022](#)) puts critical drug studies in conversation with STS in transnational contexts. Treating drugs as emblematic material-semiotic actors that flow across various corporal and geospatial boundaries, Campbell suggests that “transnational STS” as an analytic is capable of capturing the heterogeneities and relationalities that characterize them.

Especially at a moment when the role of the nation–state is being reconfigured within and across nations, transnational STS offers a fresh analytic perspective towards global drug policy.

The second part of Pablo Kreimer’s *Engagements* essay, “Constructivist Paradoxes,” (2022a, 2022b) extends the critique of hegemonic STS made in part one of the essay. Kreimer offers a brief overview of different phases in the evolution of Latin American STS, and demonstrates how certain issues taken up in Latin American STS that are relevant to transnational STS nonetheless remain invisible outside of the region. The essay complements Noela Invernizzi et al.’s analysis of publication trends in prominent STS journals and is supplemented by a reading list for Latin American STS on *STS Infrastructures* that will help readers gain greater familiarity with STS scholarship in the region.

The issue also features two *Perspectives* essays about COP26 from two Latin American perspectives. The essay “Brazil at COP26” (2022) by Lorena Fleury, Marko Monteiro, and Tiago Duarte explores the political and scientific disputes under a post-truth government around curbing deforestation and other environmental truths, during Jair Bolsonaro’s government. “Promises that Don’t Work” (2022) by Juan Layna and Leandro Altamirano offer further insights into the problems of climate change at COP26 and a lack of technological autonomy for peripheral countries analyzing the reception and translation of climate change promises in Argentina. Both essays exemplify our interest in publishing essays that can connect STS scholarship to broader audiences.

### Data Availability

Data published in this issue for can be accessed in STS Infrastructures at:

<https://n2t.net/ark:/99999/fk4127fz5n>.

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