

ESTS Incoming Editorial – A New Editorial Collective for ESTS

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Abstract

We write to introduce ourselves as the new Editorial Collective for *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*. This editorial describes how we are taking up the journal's mission of openness, building on the work of ESTS's prior leadership. We also summarize several changes that we are making to the journal's procedures, including publishing articles individually rather than waiting to gather them into full issues and soliciting contributions under a single, flexible submission category.

We write to introduce ourselves as the new Editorial Collective for *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*.

We thank the prior Editorial Collective for the effort and care they've devoted to building up the journal over their tenure. We're grateful to be able to inherit the fruits of their infrastructural work, including the journal's transnational scope and attention to open data—efforts recognized with the Society for Social Studies of Science's 2024 STS Infrastructure Award, and embodied in STS Infrastructures. That group, led by Editor-in-Chief Aalok Khandekar, introduced their priorities and plans through a series of editorials on "Infrastructuring ESTS," "Publishing ESTS," and "Building Community with ESTS" (ESTS Editorial Collective 2021a, 2021b, 2022).

During our five-year tenure, we hope to consolidate and sustain this established agenda. We also come to this role with some of our own priorities and ideas, even as we aim to maintain continuity with the journal's first ten years. The primary purpose of this introductory editorial is to share those priorities so that you can know what to expect of us.

In their outgoing editorial, the prior Editorial Collective employed a home-ownership metaphor to explain (some of) how they see the value of a Society-run, diamond open-access journal such as ESTS. So, in a sense, we as the new Editorial Collective might think of ourselves as that house's new caretakers. The prior team built much of the house and made their blueprints readily available; we needn't redesign or duplicate them, but we may sometimes need to refurbish or redecorate. We find this a helpful way to think about the journal as a kind of shared space, where we as editors have responsibilities as hosts, but where the point is ultimately to extend hospitality and cultivate good conversations.

Our first priority, then, is that we want to make more space for our ever-growing STS community in this house. We see opportunities to streamline some elements of how we handle manuscripts to make it possible to publish a larger number of articles with our current resources. We also want this to be a welcoming home,



and a practical one, especially for early-career scholars and others for whom publishing in an international STS journal may be a new experience.

In practice, this means that we will move to a model of publishing articles as they are ready, after being copyedited and typeset. Articles have sometimes had to wait several months to be published as part of an issue—delays that may be significant to authors in some contexts. The prior issue structure has also exacerbated the inevitable unevenness of editorial and production work, creating bottlenecks that have limited the total number of articles that the journal publishes (as described in the prior Editorial Collective’s editorial on “Publishing ESTS” (2021b)). And because publishing issues on a regular schedule has been a challenge, the issue model can be a hindrance for having *ESTS* indexed by databases such as Scopus—important to the credibility of the journal for academic promotion in some parts of the world, and another of our priorities in support of the journal being welcoming and viable for all authors.

We will also prioritize moving submissions through only a single round of peer-review when possible. It has been customary for most articles eventually published in *ESTS* to receive multiple rounds of editorial and peer-review, including to help authors align their work with the journal’s priorities. Devoting so much editorial labor to each manuscript has limited the number of manuscripts that the journal can publish, and has asked a great deal of both reviewers and authors. Our aim—to streamline review where possible—responds to how the politics and practicalities of reviewing have become ever more fraught as academics around the world are pressured to do more with less. But we also have in mind a further interpretation of *ESTS*’s established mission of openness.

We value and take to heart the “freedom to experiment and play” that home-ownership enables, as the prior Editorial Collective described the value of a society owned and managed journal. We recognize that *ESTS* will be a second-choice option for some authors who have had manuscripts rejected by more prestigious journals. We embrace this role; it’s important to the community, and someone has to do it. However, we also hope that STS authors will think of *ESTS* when they have a manuscript that’s unusual, experimental, playful, an awkward length (more on that below), or for whatever reason doesn’t seem to fit elsewhere. We want to interpret openness to include openness to various forms and approaches—an affordance of our independence and our publishing model, of which we want to make deliberate use.

In practice, this approach to openness means that we will continue to uphold transnationality, infrastructure, and pedagogy as priorities, in continuity with the prior Editorial Collective, but we also welcome manuscripts even if they do not specifically address these areas. As a generalist journal, we see the mission of *ESTS* as being to publish articles that are likely to make a contribution—to be useful, and to be interesting—to multiple subsets of the STS community. We want *ESTS* to encompass the breadth of what STS is and is becoming, including directions that may be possible for STS but not yet travelled. In that spirit, we explicitly welcome articles that concern:

STS as topic: social studies of science and technology, broadly defined



STS as approach: studies that approach diverse topics in terms of their interdependent social and epistemic or social and technical dimensions, through STS theories and/or methods

STS as genre: studies that produce knowledge through reflexive attention to the contexts and conditions of knowledge-production

In this same spirit of openness, in place of the three article types that *ESTS* has recently solicited—Original Research Articles, Engagements, and Perspectives—we will move to soliciting articles of any length up to 9,000 words under a single submission category. This change responds to an understandable confusion that we've seen about the difference between Engagements and Perspectives. We also hope that it will encourage authors to make their manuscripts as long (though not longer than 9,000 words!) or as short as they need to be to serve their purpose. And we hope that this move will help recognize that shorter pieces can be substantial contributions, including in how they're useful for teaching. Manuscripts of all length will undergo the same double-blind peer-review process as a general rule, and reviewers will be asked to evaluate each piece in terms of what it aims to achieve (i.e., not against the standards of a "standard" research article). We may also make exceptions to that rule if warranted by a specific submission, for example, if a submission needs the faster turn-around enabled by editorial review only, or if it can't reasonably be anonymized. Those exceptions will always be discussed with authors and flagged in the journal.

We encourage authors to use this single category creatively. Our primary criteria are that manuscripts speak to STS, and speak to interests shared across at least several subfields of our ever-diversifying field, so that they make sense to publish in a generalist journal rather than a more topically specialized venue. We also welcome interdisciplinary engagements. If the STS community owns this house, we risk becoming too settled in our own ways without friends popping over for a chat, stopping by to satisfy an errand, or lending a hand with a project.

Finally, we want *ESTS* to be a hospitable house. We encourage you to contact us if you have ideas or suggestions about additional formats, priorities, or features that would better enable *ESTS* to support you. We encourage you to send an inquiry if you're unsure about the suitability of a manuscript or the journal's capacity to accommodate an experiment. And as a collective, we will aim to make ourselves available for chats at conferences and other events. Please come to our meet-ups and seek out any of us if you have questions or ideas—though please keep in mind that we can't offer feedback on individual manuscripts outside the formal review process.

Speaking of the whole editorial collective, here's a very brief introduction. You can find more details about the team on the Editorial Team page.

Aparajita Bhandari – associate editor; Department of English, University of Waterloo (Canada)

Clément Dréano – post-acceptance editorial assistant; J.W. Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main (Germany and The Netherlands)

Georg Hoehne – web assistant (Spain)



Greg Hollin – co-editor-in-chief; School of Sociological Studies, Politics, and International Relations, University of Sheffield (UK)

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Federico Vasen – pre-acceptance editorial assistant; University of Buenos Aires and National Scientific and Technical Research Council (Argentina)

Richa Venkatraman – copyeditor (USA)

Susann Wagenknecht – associate editor; Institute of Sociology, Dresden University of Technology (Germany)

We look forward to meeting you—through your submissions, your reviews, at events, and as mediated by the reading and writing that we share.

The *ESTS* Editorial Collective.

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