

## Ongoing Engagement of Science, Technology and Society

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### Editorial

As we write this, public higher education in the United States continues to be battered. Governors from a number of US states have attacked the value of the kinds of education those of us in areas like science and technology studies offer our students, and a number of political leaders have questioned the virtue of professorial tenure and thereby academic freedom. At the same time, we live in a complex world filled with injustice, where phenomena beg to be diagnosed and addressed. In this context, *ESTS* can be a vital voice, addressing issues of broad societal relevance in ways that are accessible to a wide readership and allowing scholars to realize the value of academic freedom by pushing the boundaries of theory and method and sometimes making unpopular arguments.

Our newest articles deliver on the promise of *ESTS* and begin to indicate the outlines of a horizon before us. In “Finding Political Opportunities,” Anna Lamprou and David Hess explore the constraints that civil society organizations face when they seek to have political influence in the EU nanotechnology policy realm, and Lamprou and Hess identify strategies for opening political opportunity structures. Theodoros Kyriakides provides an analysis of a Cyprian patient organization and the tactics it used to make a particular illness—*Thalassaemia*—“visible” to government officials and the public. A third paper published in our current set, David Mercer’s “The WHO EMF Project,” investigates the ways in which a crucial global institution—the World Health Organization—has worked to “harmonize” science-related safety standards across national boundaries. Finally, in our “Debates/ Interactions” section we have a provocative set of pieces by Brian Martin, Max Liboiron, and Teun Zuiderent-Jerak, each of whom considers how STS scholars navigate the complicated terrain they traverse when becoming actively engaged in controversies, and how they might do so with positive impact.

Of course, what distinguishes STS as an interdisciplinary societal project are the conceptual and methodological tools it brings to bear on the description and analysis of complex social phenomena. Thus, we all benefit from a venue where new concepts and methods can be tested and debated. In this context, our first set of new papers is rounded off by a “Considering

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Concept” piece by Christopher Gad and Casper Bruun Jensen. “Lateral Concepts” asks us to rethink the generative reciprocal relationships that emerge between the ideas that STS ethnographers bring to the field and those of their informants. While not focusing on a “public issue” per se, this paper has important political implications and might productively lead us to think differently about how we do our research.

Developing these rigorously peer-reviewed papers depended on the highly skilled work of our community of reviewers, who contributed enormously to the process. We, our readers, and our authors owe them our deepest appreciation. To the one, our reviewers have approached the work of evaluating scholarship with an incredible spirit of generosity, seeking ways to strengthen it and not simply highlighting its perceived weaknesses. This is especially amazing given how busy we all are. We should all treat their—your—good will with gratitude and respect, and so we make a plea to prospective authors: Please do not ask reviewers to do work that is rightfully yours to do. Carefully read and reread your work before submitting. Ask colleagues and friends to do the same. Find any conceptual gaps and organizational confusion in your work and seek to address them before submitting your work. Don’t wait for the reviewers to fix obvious weaknesses for you.

In the months ahead, we will publish STS papers that provide insights into issues of broad public importance. Readers can expect to find further compelling diversity in the papers to come, including critical engagements, considering concepts, research articles, thematic collections, and debates/interactions. We also look forward to publishing a “Debates/Interactions” section anchored by a paper by historian of science Dana Simmons, which experiments with new methods and asks us in a way quite different than Gad and Jensen do to break and blur the boundary between subject and object.

At unsettled academic times like this, it seems more important than ever that our field publishes work that has clear and contemporary political relevance—work that might conceivably resonate with non-academic audiences who are engaged in social phenomena from quite different standpoints. At the same time, *ESTS* should and will remain a space for interdisciplinary experimentation and, as necessary, permit critical, reflective distance from the common sense of contemporary public life. Indeed, we could not maintain a vibrant and much-needed intellectual community if such a space did not exist.

Thank you, and we look forward to seeing your work soon.