

“Open Panel” Proposal for the
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Revisiting Embodiment and Materiality in Ethnography of Sciences and Technologies

Ethnographies are among the commonly used approaches within STS. At the beginning ethnographies such as by Knorr Cetina, Lynch and others as well as the cultural anthropological approach by Traweek investigated scientific disciplines that are enacted in laboratories or in experimental machineries. Meanwhile the methodological and theoretical approaches have been broadened to a wide spectrum of ethnographies ranging from focused short-time to multi-sited ethnographies. With this panel we want to bring together ethnographies within STS that reflect aspects of embodiment and materiality in the socio-material entanglements of epistemic practices.

Embodiment and materiality are discussed within recent STS research, in particular in feminist studies of science and technology where reflexive and interactive accounts of ethnographies have been developed. Among many issues these approaches reflect upon the situatedness of the ethnographer and the relationship between observers and actors being observed within the ethnographic setting. For instance, it can be asked for the consequences that arise when the field under scrutiny might be close to the investigator's own academic background.

Others have discussed the relations of the researcher and the materialities in the lab as socio-material entanglements. Here the question is raised how this plays out in data-driven techno-sciences where materiality is not an issue at first hand. In particular we want to focus on the following themes and questions: What role does the embodiment of the observer and of the actors being observed play in ethnographic settings? How do socio-material entanglements in different fields of study (lab sciences, data-driven sciences, etc.) differ? How can embodiment and/or materiality be conceptualized in interactive and/or reflective approaches of ethnography? How may embodiment and socio-material entanglements be addressed methodologically in these settings? Invited are theoretical and methodological reflections as well as empirical ethnographic studies that connect to the issues of embodiment and/or materiality.