

EDITORIAL

Staying with “the new normal”

By Roger A. Søråa

This new fall issue of NJSTS still finds itself in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which is continuing to uproot lives across the globe at a worrying speed. As of this writing, well over a million people have died from this small, but significant virus. STS scholars, who have for decades investigated how non-human actors have both agency, interpretative flexibility, and world-shaping powers, are perhaps less surprised by it. As Haraway (2016) proclaims, we—the human species—need to learn how to better co-exist with and through other parts of nature from bats and minks to microscopic viruses. The front page of this issue (“Anthro-botanical investigations from the studio”) is a nice illustration of this interplay, highlighting the artistic collaboration between humans and houseplants—perhaps a more constructive and uplifting human/nature assemblage than the one that is currently on everyone’s mind.

How can we as scholars learn to live in, with, understand and investigate this “new normal” that we’ve suddenly found ourselves in—as well as prepare for new disruptions? We need scholars who critically research the futures, their imaginaries, and how to live with and in a nature that holds both grave consequences and near endless possibilities. Although the COVID-19 virus might be the largest “world-shaper” many of us have experienced in our lives, it won’t be the last. NJSTS is therefore glad to provide this new issue, with excellent scholarly contributions.

This issue features three articles, with the first being “Citizen science: Co-constructing access, interaction, and participation” by Per Hetland, University of Oslo. Hetland investigates how civic educators and citizen communities co-construct access, interaction, and participation and bridge contributory and democratized citizen science—in the case of the Species Observations System—Norway’s largest citizen science project.

The second article is titled “Energy efficiency in Norwegian news media: A glitch in the discourse-as-usual.” Written by Jens Petter Johansen, Jens Røyrvik & Håkon Fyhn at NTNU Social Research, the article investigates how energy efficiency features in Norwegian news media discourses and rhetorical connections to energy savings and reductions.

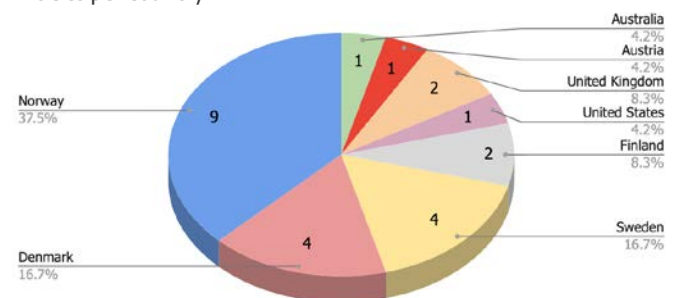
The third article by Oliver Tafdrup of Aarhus University is titled: “How imaginaries mediate sociotechnical practices: A case study of an educational robot in a Danish school context” and looks at how sociotechnical practices involving educational robots in Danish schools are mediated and thus shaped by visions of the future through investigating teachers and policy documents.

Lastly, we have a book review of Warren Sack’s 2019 book *The Software Arts* conducted by Ragnhild Solberg, University of Bergen, focusing on the book’s excellent contributions of historical connections between computer science and the liberal arts.

This issue also marks my final issue as Chief Editor for NJSTS. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the amazing Editorial Board who has worked with me from 2017’s fall issue to this 2020 fall issue. It’s been three great years, and I am especially proud of how we have accomplished to streamline the whole process of NJSTS paper submissions, the revitalization of our social media channels, and the revamping of our websites and guidelines. Submitting to a journal should not be an overly complicated a process, let’s leave the complexity for the papers themselves.

During these three years, we have published 42 double-blind peer reviewed articles—fully open-access (of course!). As can be seen below, the authors of these excellent pieces are primarily from Norway (9), followed by Denmark (4), Sweden (4), Finland (2), and the UK (2). We’ve also seen single entries from a wide variety of countries like Australia, Austria, and the US. The articles have been written by a 50/50 balance between men and women scholars, with a tendency of men co-authoring more, and women more often submitting single-authored papers.

Articles per country



Gender of authors





The most cited paper during these years has been Frennert & Östlund's (2018) article "Narrative review: Technologies in eldercare". In reaching out to Frennert (now at Malmö University), the lead author of this excellent piece on how their work has proceeded after publication, we have received the following information:

"The article was published as an initial article (review) of a series of articles regarding welfare technology. The process with NJSTS was smooth and professional. Excellent reviewers with constructive feedback. I am happy that people read the article."

I recommend those who have not read the piece to give it a go, as well as other fascinating pieces of scholarly work that have also been published in the Journal. Being Editor in Chief has taught me many valuable lessons regarding publishing, and I would particularly like to highlight four important points for writers to consider when submitting their papers to journals:

- 1) Editors work in their own spare time. We do not get paid, and all editorial work comes in addition to our 200%+ work week. That means things (sadly) often take longer than we wish, especially when we need to be super-focused to sit down and read, assess, and comment on papers.
- 2) Your paper might be great, even though it is not the best fit for a particular journal. We do not wish to discourage anyone from academic writing, but sometimes your article just doesn't fit with the scope of the journal. Read the journal's aim and scope *carefully* prior to submitting it.
- 3) Peer-review is increasingly difficult as a managerial process. This relates to the general point 1 above, both editorial work and peer-review work are unpaid labor that we as scholars volunteer to do because we have a desire to advance research and knowledge. However, getting reviewers is increasingly difficult and is one of the hardest struggles we face in academic publications moving forward. Although I encourage reviewing at least a couple of papers each year, this does clog up the process.
- 4) Despite all this, editorial work is fun and quite the learning experience. It is a key cornerstone in academia, and should have the highest academic rigor in its practices. It takes time to move an article through the whole review process, but it is worth it when the final result emerges.

Going back to the title of this editorial, how can smaller journals like NJSTS navigate the "new normal" where tiny viruses disrupt whole societies, infrastructures, and systems? Although we would all prefer to be without it, perhaps reframing this disruption as a learning experience could point to some new practices. Compared to the years prior to the pandemic, we see that resources, time, and energy are stretched thin—but with patience and fair reviews, we can get through this. Keep calm, carry on, research, write, and wear a mask.

It has been a great journey, and I wish the next Editor in Chief, Associate Professor Kristine Ask, Centre for Technology and Society, NTNU, the best of luck in steering the ship. I know it's in excellent hands, and look forward to reading the next issue.

So long and goodnight,

Dr. Roger A. Søråa
Editor in Chief, NJSTS 2017-2020

& NJSTS' Editorial Board
Martin Anfinsen, Kristine Ask, Maria Hesjedal, Lina Ingeborgrud,
Ingvild Firman Fjellså, Marius Korsnes, Tanja Plasil, Antti Silvast.

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