

# EDITORIAL

## *Celebrating young scholars*

By Kristine Ask, Sofia Moratti, Kim-André Myhre Arntsen,  
Shan Wang, Nora Kristiansson & Birgitte Nygaard

The Nordic Journal of Science and Technology (NJSTS) celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2023, have used the occasion to direct attention toward young scholars in STS and bring in reflections about how STS is changing as a field. While publishing high-quality research is the main priority of the journal, we consider NJSTS's role in STS to extend beyond publishing; it is also a place where young scholars learn about the making of science (through editorial work) and build the kind of academic community they want to be part of (Moratti & Ask, 2022). As part of our anniversary celebrations, we wanted to shed light on young scholars' experiences and viewpoints, and to seek out different perspectives about what STS is and should be.

Illustrative of our values as a journal and dedication to early career scholars, we hosted a plenary panel at the Nordic STS conference on the 8th of June in 2023 titled "Leaving the old behind? The future of STS, academic identity and disciplinary boundary work among early career scholars." We had noticed how panels about the state

of the field (and its futures) tended to be populated by scholars with already established names, prestigious networks and high visibility. While it makes sense to platform influential thinkers and institution-makers in meta-discussions about where the field is headed, an overreliance on recognizable names implies that those with seniority in the field are best suited to set the course of the future. We, instead, opted to highlight and platform the perspectives and experiences of early career STS scholars because we believe that the future of the field should be shaped by the people who will be doing the work. We invited four early career scholars from different Nordic countries to discuss the scholarly and institutional identity among STS scholars today and in the future: Ingvild Firman Fjellså, Jakob Lundgren, Kamilla Karhunmaa, Alexander Myklebust. The panel discussed disciplinary boundary work and new collaborations for STS, highlighting where young STS scholars take inspiration from when developing the field of STS and how a phd in STS can lead to different trajectories both inside and outside of academia.

## A brief history of a community driven journal made by phd students

NJSTS's interest and commitment to young scholars traces back to the journal's origins. NJSTS was started by a group of phd students at The Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture at Norwegian University of Science and Technology Studies, as a response to the shortage of journals dedicated to STS and a desire to support the Nordic STS community.

The idea to start a journal was first articulated at the magic hour between 3 and 4 AM, after a few drinks. Most ideas that emerge at that time, and in that state, are promptly forgotten the next day. However, Henrik Karlstrøm, the journal's first editor, started investigating exactly how you would go about starting an academic journal. To everyone's surprise, the requirements were achievable and involved setting up a journal webpage, registering the journal in the right academic databases, putting an external review system in place and attracting submissions. The group obtained support funds for open-access journals from the Norwegian Research Council as well as administrative support from the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture at NTNU. The next steps were recruiting members to the advisory board, writing aims, mission statement, author guidelines, drawing up ideas for a journal logo,

having a professional company make a logo and template for the journal, and scouting authors for the first issue. This experience taught the young scholars that ambitious goals can be within reach, with effort and dedication.

While the journal's aims and goals have been revised since, the core mission remains: to be an open access STS journal with a broad interest in the role of science and technology in society.

The journal was launched in 2013 during the first Nordic STS conference at Hell. The journal hosted a panel about Nordic STS asking what characterizes Nordic STS. Some argued it was a fascination with technology for heating (given our cold climate), while others noted a pragmatic approach and rich empirical work. After some deliberation, the panel concluded that maybe there wasn't any defining characteristics of Nordic STS. While it was a slightly disappointing answer to our question, we remained steadfast in our belief that even if Nordic STS research might not be notably different – the need for local scientific communities and publication venues persists. Accompanied by home brewed beer made special for the occasion, complete with the journal's logo printed on the



bottles, the journal was launched in the same lighthearted spirit in which it was conceived.

In the 10 years that followed, both the journal and its board members have matured. The journal has published 17 issues, including two special issues – one on Crafting Sustainability and one on Care in STS. Publishing on a range of different topics relevant to STS, the journal continues to publish research that engages with STS perspectives and the Nordic region, spanning from how surrogacy is governed

through media (Levold et al., 2019) to how businesses appropriate digital technology (Pettersen, 2014) to the valuations that take place in interdisciplinary collaborations (Lamberg et al., 2023). New editors have joined the board, adding their specific focus, flavor and interest to the journal. We want to use this opportunity to thank previous editorial members for their work – with a special thanks to previous editors: Henrik Karlstrøm, Tomas Moe Skjølsvold, Jenny Bergschöld and Roger A. Søråa. In addition, we want to thank all authors and reviewers who have contributed to making the journal possible.

## Current and future issues

The path we set out on continues, with new people joining the board and shaping the journal in ways that differ from the original vision. We see this as a good sign that the journal is moving, if not necessarily with the times, at least with the people that it is by and for. We are proud that the journal has survived through ups and lows in its first decade, and for it to remain a venue and community for Nordic STS scholars. Not least, are we also happy to be a venue for interdisciplinary work and in support of STS in its many different forms. This is visible in a forthcoming special issue on “Knowledge, Technologies and the Police” to be published later this year, that combines police studies with STS to gain new insights into how knowledge and technology shape policework.

The current issue has two research articles. The first is “No rose on this one? Citizen science field excursion negotiations at the Great Alvar” by Björn Ekström. The article concerns the material qualities of the tools that shape information practices, such as observing and documenting species in citizen science. The participant observation and trace ethnography showed that the tools used by participants got redefined depending on the situation. This case study shows how knowledge produced *in situ* is translated into biodiversity citizen data, and at the same time manifests one of the core tenets of STS: that knowledge-making is negotiable, materialized and entangled with different practices.

The second article is titled “I Love it” Caring for second-hand inventory in a university living lab” by Ruth Woods, Thomas Berker, Thomas Edward Sutcliffe & Hanne Marit Henriksen. The authors expertly conjoin the concepts of circular economy and care in this study based on a living lab study conducted by the authors at NTNU in 2021. The aim of the living lab study was to investigate whether further measures could be implemented to reduce the consumption of university inventory, such as furniture and computer equipment. The authors found that reuse, in contrast

to centralised administrative provision of inventory, encouraged practices of care. The caring practices they identified were context-aware, empowering, egalitarian, and avoid prioritising some kinds of practices and objects over others.

Together with the article, this issue also includes a review by Ivana Suboticki of the book *With Microbes* edited by Charlotte Brives, Matthäus Rest & Salla Sariola, 2021. The book applies science and technology studies (STS) approaches, along with theories from anthropology and philosophy, to investigate the intricate and evolving relationships between humans and microbes, highlighting their impact on daily life. It presents a diverse range of perspectives on how microbes are sensed, regulated, and identified, from sensory practices in winemaking to governance issues related to antimicrobial resistance. The book also features innovative elements, like QR codes for listening to yeast recordings and a theatrical dialogue with *E. coli*, which enhance its experimental approach. Although the book's detailed empirical content makes it particularly valuable for academics and STS scholars, its rich analysis offers insights that could benefit policymakers and managers involved in microbe regulation.

The cover page is the artwork “Crop Rotation” by Nienke Bruijning. With a master in STS, Nienke currently works as a research assistant at Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture at NTNU where she combines her creative talents with a critical perspective on technology. The cover art is inspired by the pursuit of knowledge through a researcher's career, the dragon goes from curiously navigating an unfamiliar field, to expertly soaring the skies and eventually breaking the mold. These research stages are not linear or sequential, but can occur on the same day, or repetitively through one period of time. It represents individual scholars, and at the same time it is also an epitome of scholars across the generations.

## Interviews across three academic generations of STS scholars

For this special issue, we conducted interviews with STS scholars spanning across three generations. We deliberately chose a variety

of voices capable of offering distinct insights, to give insights into different ways of thinking about and experiencing the field.



Our career stage, and the academic generation we are part of, influence how we perceive both the discipline and the academic community we work in. The interviews provide valuable insights into the expectations, norms, and values experienced by individuals within academia, that can be complex for scholars to navigate – regardless if they are new or experienced. This contributes to shaping and renewing the academic landscape, reflecting the continuous development within research and education. We hope this journal can serve as a space for reflection on this ongoing exploration and adaptation to the ever-changing landscape of ideas and practices within academia.

The first interview is with the young scholar and co-founder of the virtual STS community FeminiSTS Repair Team, Claudia Schwarz, which is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Karl Landsteiner University of Health Sciences in Austria. She sent shockwaves through the STS community in late 2022, as her testimonial of power abuse, sexual harassment, and disillusionment within the Harvard STS programme went online. Since then, she has advocated for doing STS ethically. We interviewed Claudia to learn more about her call for challenging the orthodoxy of the STS-field and emphasising a need to confront the 'field shadows' - the disowned and neglected parts of STS by drawing upon decolonial and feminist scholarship.

The second interview is with Cecilia Åsberg, Professor at the Department of Thematic Studies (TEMA), Linköping University. We selected Åsberg for her prominence in Nordic feminist technoscience

studies, a fascinating stream of STS literature. Cecilia incarnates and champions a transdisciplinary approach, drawing from STS, cultural studies and feminist theory, and she advocates for problem-based theorizing and against disciplinary silos. Her interview showcases one of the most intriguing features of STS as a field: the intellectual latitude it offers. Cecilia is also attuned to power dynamics within the academic community. She acknowledges gender disparities in academic career progression and epistemic hierarchies among themes and approaches and underscores the significance of support networks within academia.

Finally, we also chose professor emeritus Knut H. Sørensen, NTNU, to give a perspective on the field that stretches back to its beginnings. Sørensen has been central in building up STS as a field in Norway, and has made important contributions to the field, particularly through his work on technology use and domestication theory. In his interview he reflects on how the field has changed, the pragmatic choices he had to make to get funding to do STS research, as well as how life as an emeritus is ripe with freedom - but lacks connection.

Together, the three interviews provide very different stories about what it means to be an STS scholar, spanning different topics, approaches and academic lives in different institutions. We hope that their personal stories will be a source of reflection and inspiration, as we keep on building the field – and particularly, that we encourage and ensure that it a field open to new ideas, new perspectives and new people.

## References

- Lamberg, L., Ryymin, E., & Vetoshkina, L. (2023). Money, time, or saving the world: Balancing valuations of 'good' interdisciplinary research. *Nordic Journal of Science and Technology Studies*, 30–42. <https://doi.org/10.5324/njsts.v10i1.4305>
- Leveld, N., Svingen, M., & Aune, M. (2019). Stories of creation: Governance of surrogacy through media? *Nordic Journal of Science and Technology Studies*, 7(1), 4–17.
- <https://doi.org/10.5324/njsts.v7i1.3066>
- Moratti, S., & Ask, K. (2022). Reflecting on communal responsibility in science. *Nordic Journal of Science and Technology Studies*.
- Pettersen, L. (2014). From Mass Production to Mass Collaboration: Institutionalized Hindrances to Social Platforms in the Workplace. *Nordic Journal of Science and Technology*, 2(2), 29–40.