

MAKING LIVEABLE WORLDS THROUGH REFLEXIVE METHODS: CARE AND INTERVENTION IN STS RESEARCH

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Abstract:

Drawing on a long tradition of and commitment to reflexivity, situatedness, and positionality in STS research, this panel invites contributions that highlight the ambiguous relations of researchers to their research subjects, including self-referential methods and practices such as auto-ethnography.

The promise of reflexivity as a core STS virtue and methodological principle is both moral and epistemic – reflexive research is deemed to be more ethical and of higher analytical quality. In addition, feminist scholars who bring forward care ethics make an ontological argument: reflexivity enables us to contribute to worlds we perceive as desirable. Building on these assumptions, we ask what reflexivity (co-)produces in our research. How and to what extent can it make power relations more visible? How can reflexivity be translated into practice? How can it move beyond mere theoretical deliberations and commitments (Arias López et al. 2021)? Can reflexive techniques provoke consciousness about how we work together as (heterogeneous) research teams, and inspire us to create alternative spaces?

We ask how ethical, epistemic, and ontological promises of reflexivity can be mobilised in research practice, and how we can create caring relations between researchers and research ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’. Considering our research as performative not only of the phenomena we investigate but also of our researcher identities, we are also interested in how reflexivity transforms the subjectivities of researchers. Ultimately, we are concerned with the question: what kind of methods, techniques, and tools can be mobilised to faithfully ‘make and do’ reflexivity in research?

For this panel we invite discussion about how we can create more liveable spaces, in research and beyond, with reflexive methods. We want to initiate conversations about how the stories we tell with reflexive practices might ‘perform themselves into the material world’ (Law & Lin 2020), making our lived experiences visible, and allowing us to cultivate healthier relations. We are interested in

engaging with scholars and scholarly work that has reflected on research practices and reflexivity as an area of research, whether that is autoethnography or other self-referential or self-positioning practices and techniques.

We welcome contributions at any stage from finished papers to work in progress, and from academics at all stages to participate in a more-than-methodological discussion. We are eager to use this panel to foster discourse on how reflexive methods and collective reflections on collaborative work reconfigure particular group constellations, and how they co-produce research practices and spaces. We particularly encourage contributions that experiment with form and presentation of their scholarly argumentation, as well as work that investigates the nexus of reflexive methods and care practices. We look forward to bringing a wealth of research topics and questions together to collectively reflect on how we enact spaces, research identities, and care with our academic practices.

Key words:

reflexive methods, care, making liveable spaces