



Max-Planck-Institut für ethnologische Forschung Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Workshop

Relocating Science and Technology Global Knowledge, Traveling Technologies and Postcolonialism. Perspectives on Science and Technology Studies in the Global South

19–20 July 2012

Organiser: Richard Rottenburg (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology/Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg), Norman Schräpel (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg), Vincent Duclos (University of Montreal)

Venue: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale, Germany

Call for Papers and Participants

As an interdisciplinary endeavour to study knowledge systems and technologies, Science and Technology Studies (STS) have become popular within the humanities and social sciences over the last three decades. However, most of the canon as well as recent scholarly work concentrate on Euro-American techno-science. Social scientists involved in STS focused mainly on the centres of western scientific knowledge production, thereby neglecting large parts of the world. While the relationship between technoscientific knowledge and postcolonial orders has been the subject of increasing discussion within the last two decades (Seth 2009), it is only recently that scholars have tried to establish a more sustained dialogue with postcolonial perspectives on science and technology (Harding 1998; Anderson 2002; Redfield 2002; Rottenburg 2009; Philip, Irani & Dourish 2011). In 2008, Richard Rottenburg, Trevor Pinch, Otto Sibum and Suman Seth organized a conference on *Places of Knowledge: Relocating Science and Technology Studies* at Cornell University. This workshop is a follow-up to this meeting. By focusing on the concept of the 'Global South' in conjunction with that of 'postcolonialism' we wish to draw attention to ever more globalizing dynamics of power, fashion, money or institutional problematizations. Accordingly, the workshop asserts the need to relocate STS by re-considering the interconnectedness of knowledge production, technology design and transfer, geopolitical categories and the particular issues, that different contexts produce. It is our contention that perspectives from the Global South may contribute not so much in describing nation states or specific regions in a historical moment, but enable us to better understand the interconnected processes that drive science and technology within a globalized world. We particularly call for contributions and participants that focus on *non-classical* STS contexts (i.e. the Global South). Contributions with case studies from Africa, Latin America and Asia are expected to challenge or at least to comment on existing methodological and theoretical concepts within STS. Taking the interstitial spaces in global networks of science and technology production as a starting point we especially encourage contributions on the following themes:

Interconnectedness

We are interested in exploring the ways in which science, technology and place are interconnected. This involves the analysis of power relations, patterns of networks or the ways technology and knowledge travels. Topics covered will include, but are not limited to:

- The linkages between global capital flows, economic growth, and the emergence of local technoscientific practices (in biomedicine, IT, agriculture etc.).
- How relations between different epistemic communities are reshaping the map of global knowledge production.
- The reconfiguration of the experiences of space, proximity, or belonging triggered by technologies apparently 'flattening' the world through constant expansion.

Historicity

The involvement of historical events and developments play a crucial role in understanding today's knowledge and technical systems. We would like to produce a diachronic perspective from contexts in Africa, South America and Asia on topics like:

- The impact of colonial legacies on current technoscientific practices
- Postcolonial dependencies and knowledge production
- Perspectives on the History of Sciences in the Global South

Locality

Context and practice is at the heart of a social science perspective on Science and Technology. Especially in the Global South scholarly work on locality is lacking. We would like to bring a number of studies together that may concentrate on the following and other topics:

- The incommensurability and invisibility of other cultures of science
- A critical outlook on the participation of STS in development aid
- The multiple uses or misuses of science and technology in development agendas (ICT4D, e-governance etc.)

Some useful references

- Anderson, Warwick 2002. Introduction: Postcolonial Technoscience. *Social Studies of Science* 32 (5-6): 643-658.
- Harding, Sandra G. 1998. *Is science multicultural? Postcolonialisms, feminisms, and epistemologies*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press.
- Laet de, Marianne & Annemarie Mol 2000. The Zimbabwe Bush Pump. Mechanics of a Fluid Technology. *Social Studies of Science* 30 (2): 225-263.
- MacLeod, Roy 2000. Introduction. Special Issue: Nature and Empire: Science and the Colonial Enterprise. *Osiris* 2 (15): 1-13.
- Philip, Kavita, Lilly Irani & Paul Dourish 2010. Postcolonial Computing: A Tactical Survey. *Science, Technology & Human Values*.
- Redfield, Peter 2002. The Half-Life of Empire in Outer Space. *Social Studies of Science* 32 (5-6): 791-825.
- Rottenburg, Richard 2009. Social and public experiments and new figurations of science and politics in postcolonial Africa. *Postcolonial Studies* 12 (4): 423 - 440.
- Seth, Suman 2009. Putting knowledge in its place: science, colonialism, and the postcolonial. *Postcolonial Studies* 12 (4): 373-388.
- Verran, H. 2002. A Postcolonial Moment in Science Studies: Alternative Firing Regimes of Environmental Scientists and Aboriginal Landowners. *Social Studies of Science* 32 (5-6): 729-762.

Format

The workshop is a mixture of keynote addresses, paper presentations and interactive sessions. We hope that the workshop will provide us with a number of empirical case studies that can be contrasted and compared, and that the papers will foster new theoretical insights and inspirations. Discussants will be appointed to comment on the papers. In addition we will arrange open discussions to explore future collaborations.

Aimed Outcomes

We hope to create an atmosphere that encourages participants to exchange ideas, share research outcomes and strengthen interdisciplinary ties. We also believe that the topic of the workshop will bring forth innovative issues in the field of Science and Technology Studies. Workshop participants may also discuss forms of collaboration, including publication strategies, possible joint panels on international conferences and other future meetings. We also aim to reinforce the work between the different regional STS groups. *The Asia-Pacific Science, Technology and Society Network* (APSTSN) and the *4S Latin America Group* are two established regional groups, where STS scholars meet that work on the same region. The possibility to establish a regional STS group that concentrates on Africa will be explored.

Participants

The workshop will be of interest for all STS scholars. Our goal is to bring together anthropologists, sociologists, historians, philosophers, political scientists, geographers and all related disciplines but also practitioners and activists in order to have a multi-disciplinary discussion on epistemological, methodological, historical and practical issues in the field.

Submission of Abstracts & Participation

Keynote speakers will be invited and announced in late February 2012 on the website of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (www.eth.mpg.de). Please send your abstracts (250 words) before **15 March 2012** to Bettina Mann (mann@eth.mpg.de) and Norman Schräpel (norman.schraepel@ethnologie.uni-halle.de). You will receive a notification of acceptance in April 2012. The deadline for papers of approximately 5.000 words is **15 June 2012**. Travel costs will be covered for all presenters, who send in their papers in time.

There is no registration fee, however the number of participants is limited. If you are interested in joining the workshop as a participant on your own account, please register with Bettina Mann (mann@eth.mpg.de) by **15 June 2012 at the latest**.

For further information please contact:

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In Collaborations with

- Special Research Programme: Adaptation and Creativity in Africa
- Asia-Pacific Science, Technology and Society Network (APSTSN)
- 4S Latin America Group
- International Federation Information Processing, Working Group 9.4 Social Implications of Computers in Developing Countries