Panel #89

Theorizing STS from China and beyond: Disciplinary development, epistemic exploration, and sociopolitical positioning

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STS was recently recognized by the Ministry of Education and the National Social Science Fund of China as an official discipline and an independent category for grant application. These milestones follow years of efforts within a fast-growing yet highly state-centered academic system in a country with an abundant tradition and emerging global influence in science and technology. However, STS in China still faces profound challenges in **disciplinary development, epistemic exploration, and sociopolitical positioning** (Li & Lu, 2018; Santos et al., 2023), just as the STS field in general. Unpacking the history, present, and future of these efforts and challenges is not only essential for understanding China's STS and its science-technology-society interactions. It also offers an opportunity for leveraging the Chinese experience as a generative non-Western site to theorize STS as an international, diverse, and contested field and interrogate the impacts of science and technology in the decentered contemporary world.

This panel welcomes contributions that situate issues of China or "Global China" in broader STS debates and critically interrogate and expand the theoretical repertoire of STS. Themes include, but are not limited to:

Discipline development of STS as boundary work: institutional evolution; trans-lingual/national practices in the intersection of Marxist tradition, indigenous disciplines like history of science and technology, and Western-originated STS paradigms; and other interdisciplinary interactions involving philosophy of science and technology, public administration and innovation policy, media and communication, etc.

Epistemic exploration of science and technology based on historical and contemporary cases: dialectics between lack, lag, and development; temporal epistemology of rupture and continuity, innovation and maintenance, modernity and tradition, snapshot and longue durée; and indigeneity, transnational and global flows, and global inequality.

Sociopolitical positioning of STS: sociopolitical and epistemic impacts of techno-nationalism, techno-developmentalism, and the "catching-up" discourse; geopolitics-technoscience co-production; and social engineering, surveillance, digital ecosystems, and the technology-state-society co-production.

Li, Z., & Lu, X. (2018). Reflections on STS in Mainland China: A Historical Review. *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal*, *12*(2), 185–196. https://doi.org/10.1215/18752160-6577904

Santos, G. D., Sharif, N., & Xing, J. L. (2023). Translating STS in China: Disciplinary Struggles and Future Prospects. *Engaging Science, Technology, and Society*, *9*(1), 23–49. https://doi.org/10.17351/ests2023.805

Additional details:

The recent development of STS and the shift of global science and technology landscape demand a fundamental diversification of STS, especially at its theoretical frontier. This entails moving beyond merely interrogating Western-originated STS theoretical cannons or documenting non-Western empirical cases; instead, it requires utilizing studies of science and technology in different parts of the world to construct a multi-situated theoretical "assemblage" of STS. This panel, largely inspired by the pioneering Latin American Breakthroughs in STS Theory project, contributes to that initiative by highlighting three facets of STS in China that are essential to the transnationalization of STS theory.

First, the development of STS in China is situated in a unique academic structure and shaped by multiple disciplinary forces, each with its own intellectual traditions, institutional resources, and sociopolitical/ideological implications. It not only offers practical takeaways for STS development but also provides a vantage point for understanding the social shaping of interdisciplinarity, the core of STS theory.

Second, empirical cases in China offer unique epistemic value for STS. As a site characterized by profound science and technology traditions, radical sociopolitical transformations since the arrival of Western scientific and technological forces, and increasing influence in the contemporary global science and technology structure, China contributes to the reflections upon important theoretical issues in STS mentioned in the main abstract.

Third, characterized by the state-led rapid leapfrog and the aggressive application of emerging science and technology, China provides a unique site for theorizing STS's roles in addressing sociopolitical challenges faced by states and societies amid the impact of emerging science and technologies and the vicious geopolitical rivalries in science and technology.

The panel features traditional paper session(s) and prioritizes interdisciplinary dialogues. While focused on China, it welcomes comparative contributions that place Chinese experiences in conversation with the Global South to broaden the theoretical horizon.

分组会议**89:** 从中国出发的**STS**理论建构：学科发展、认识论探索与社会定位

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近年来，STS（科学技术与社会/科学技术学）及其相关学科在中国持续发展，在学科体系与科研资助体系中获得了更加明确的位置。这一进程既得益于中国STS学术群体的长期积累，也与中国经济社会发展中不断涌现的科技议题及其全球科技格局中的影响力提升密切相关，并植根于中国深厚的科学技术传统和独特的学术体系。与此同时，与全球STS共同面临的情况类似，中国STS研究也面临学科建设、理论体系探索与社会定位等方面的重要挑战（Li & Lu, 2018; Santos et al., 2023）。对上述进程与挑战的历史、现状与未来加以梳理，不仅有助于深化对中国语境下科技与社会关系的理解，也为基于中国经验推动STS理论创新、促进STS在全球多元与开放发展提供了重要契机。

本分组旨在立足中国乃至"全球中国"经验，探讨其对STS理论发展的贡献，为STS研究

在全球多元语境中的对话、交融与发展提供新的视角。相关主题包括但不限于：

- 作为划界工作的STS学科发展：STS学科的演进；在马克思主义传统、传统学科（如科学技术史）与西方STS范式的交融；与公共管理、创新政策、传播学等领域的跨学科互动等。
- 基于历史与当代案例的STS理论探索：滞后与发展、断裂与延续、创新与维护、现代性与传统、瞬时与长时段、自主创新与模仿引入、本土与跨界流动等概念与现象的辨证关系。
- STS的社会政治定位：技术发展主义、技术民族主义和“追赶”话语的社会政治与理论意涵，地缘政治与技性科学的互动，技术治理与数字生态系统，技术-国家-社会的共同生产，科技向善、南南合作与全球不平等等。

补充说明

随着STS的发展和全球科学技术格局的变化，推动STS的多元化发展日益成为一个重要议题。这不仅意味着要对既有STS理论传统进行反思，也意味着要通过不同地区的经验研究，共同构建多元情境下的STS理论体系。本分组希望从以下三个方面探讨中国STS对全球STS理论拓展的贡献。

首先，中国的STS植根于独特的学术体系，受到多种学科力量及其各自知识传统与制度资源的影响。这不仅为STS学科的发展提供了实践经验，也为我们理解STS的核心——跨学科知识生产——的历史与社会建构提供了重要视角。

其次，中国的经验案例为STS提供了独特的理论资源。作为一个拥有深厚科技传统，经历了自西方科技到来后的重要社会政治转型，并在当代全球科技体系中不断提升影响力的研究场域，中国案例有助于深化对上述STS核心理论问题的理解。

第三，作为一个国家主导新兴科技快速发展和广泛应用的场域，中国提供了一个重要的观察窗口，用以探讨STS如何应对新兴科技及围绕其展开的激烈地缘政治竞争所带来社会政治挑战。

本分组重视跨时期、跨学科对话，在关注中国的同时，也欢迎将中国经验与全球南方其他地区进行比较的研究，以拓展STS理论视野。