

Dear All,

We would like to invite you to submit an abstract to the “*Innovation networks and real-world experimentation*” track of the EASST conference 2010, which will take place in Trento, Italy from the 2nd to the 4th of September.

Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be submitted online between the 20th of January and the 15th of March on <http://events.unitn.it/en/easst010/abstract-submission> following the website instructions. Selected authors will be informed by May 15th.

We are looking forward to interesting contributions and discussions in Trento.

Kinds regards,

Petra Ahrweiler, Wolfgang Krohn, Matthias Gross, Michael Stauffacher

TRACK 24. INNOVATION NETWORKS AND REAL-WORLD EXPERIMENTATION

This thematic track focuses on scientific activities in and with society that are marked by applying research strategies into various fields of social change and hereby turning innovation processes into quasi-scientific experimental settings. Innovation policymakers, business managers and the public often expect that the current investments in R&D, higher education, or science and industry networks will immediately produce a flow of novel products and processes.

However, disappointments and legitimacy problems arise from missing outputs, which show the limits of planning, steering, control and policy functions. A close-up view at innovation networks and their institutional embedding reveal that innovation is emerging from interactions on the micro level. This process can be called experimental when it is induced, facilitated, supported by scientific knowledge bases and new research strategies. Since no equation will predict the match of factors or will early on warn of a mismatch, success can only result from intelligent trial and error, careful observation, systematic accommodation, new evaluation, and, by so doing, repeated recursive interaction. Network analysis of this kind of experimental settings can be rendered to be one of the most vibrant interdisciplinary research activities of innovation studies.

One of the outstanding features of experimental innovation strategies is the transport of scientific instruments, methods of modelling, data collecting and processing, and its hypothetical reasoning into fields outside the proper domain of (laboratory) science. Societal learning increasingly assimilates features of research including the expectation and monitoring of unexpected events. Dealing with surprise thus becomes a core practice of an experimental society and monitoring innovation an important concern of science in contexts of application. In some quarters of STS a general trend towards a societal “self-experimentation” as an increasingly important feature of modernization has been proclaimed – tying in with ideas already articulated by

philosophers (John Dewey, Karl Popper), sociologists (Robert E. Park), psychologists (Kurt Lewin) and ecologists (C.S. Holling).

Heterogeneous constellations of conjoint research and innovation efforts in real-world experimental settings can be observed in various fields such as trials in medicine, security testing of high tech installations, design and marketing of new products, modelling and adapting to climate change, regulatory experiments with genetically modified crops, observation and control of low radiation exposure, educational reform, ecological restoration, urban restructuring and development. Depending on context, projects in these fields are generally accepted, highly controversial, or performed under cover. The track should cover case studies, theoretical background as well as models for proposing collective strategies of experimental learning from as many fields as possible.

In today's STS there is an increasing awareness of this shift from supporting and controlling science within its institutional limits toward doing research in projects of innovation in the 'real-world'. Current labels are, among others, niche management, CTA, real-world experimentation, experimental system innovation, action research, transition management or the many shades of current transdisciplinary projects and theories thereof. The convenors wish to bring together these and other views, experiences and observations from various fields and analytical tools. They also invite suggestions for improving present innovation research, reform policies and business practices. Current themes are as follows:

- Theoretical and methodological issues around research on innovation in networks;
- Analysis of self-organising/experimental learning between innovative actors in R&D networks;
- Comparative analysis of cases from various fields;
- Niche experiments;
- New concepts of framing experimental activities outside the realm of science;
- New forms of experimental governance, participation, and legitimation (science policy models);
- Historical cases of conjoint innovation efforts;
- Transdisciplinary attempts at integrating scientific expertise and experience from practice.

However, we are eager to consider new topics and theoretical approaches, so participants should not be restricted by those listed above.

Convenors

Petra Ahrweiler is Professor of Technology and Innovation Management at University College Dublin, Ireland; Director of the Innovation Research Unit (IRU), Complex and Adaptive Systems Laboratory UCD CASL; Research Affiliate at the Engineering Systems Division, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her areas of research are innovation networks, complex social systems and agent-based simulation.

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Matthias Gross is Senior Researcher at the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ) in Leipzig, Germany and lecturer in sociology at the University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany. His recent research at UFZ focuses on the revitalisation of large scale contaminated sites, the development of site specific sustainability indicators, and the development of experimental strategies of research in public.

(<http://www.ufz.de/index.php?de=5479>)

Wolfgang Krohn is Professor Emeritus at the Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld University, Germany. His recent research interests refer to the 'aesthetic dimensions of science', epistemology of transdisciplinary research and origins of modern science.

(<http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/iwt/personen/krohn/>)

Michael Stauffacher is Research Group Leader and Lecturer at the ETH Zurich and Coordinator of the Human-Environment System Project. Currently he is researching the following issues: Development of sustainable community energy strategies; Contested infrastructure projects; Sustainable urban development.

(<http://www.uns.ethz.ch/people/staff/smichael>)