

NEWSLETTER – March 2020



This is the quarterly Newsletter from AsSIST-UK. The Newsletter is sent to all registered members of the Association. Please ensure your contact details are up to date, and if they have changed, contact the Executive Secretary, Andrew Webster at andrew.webster@york.ac.uk

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For all ongoing news about the Association visit the website at www.assist-uk.com

The Association sends all its members its support and best wishes during these difficult times and hope that you are keeping safe, as well as managing a healthy work-life balance when our usual institutional life is now on hold.

Executive Committee News

The EC has met three times since our last newsletter. The main items for discussion have been around the next national workshop, STIS training in RRI, policy engagement, STIS expertise on REF UoA Panels, upgrading the website, and the Annual PhD Prize.

- STIS training in RRI: The Engineering and Physical Science Research Councils (and UKRI more generally) recently required that students at their Centres for Doctoral Training receive research training in the area of Responsible Innovation. AsSIST-UK members have become involved in providing this kind of training across a wide range

of CDTs. It raises a number of challenges about how to deliver (and assess) this kind of teaching to doctoral students in science and engineering. AsSIST UK is therefore organising a workshop to exchange experiences and opportunities for further collaboration (for example through sharing teaching resources). The workshop has been arranged for Tuesday 21st April in collaboration with Jack Stilgoe at UCL.

However in light of the impact of recent government restrictions on movement the meeting will either be held virtually or postponed. Even so, please contact Robin Williams (R.Williams@ed.ac.uk) if you are interested to take part or would like to be kept informed of these developments.

- Nominations to REF UoA Sociology Panel: AsSIST-UK has been invited to submit nominations to the REF Sociology panel related to members' expert in STS/environmental studies. We have already made one nomination in last years round who will be considered now and have another colleague to put forward.
- We have made provisional plans for our next national meeting which would be held in the second week of September: this will be devoted entirely to ECR/PhD students. In the current uncertainties relating to Covid19 we will be taking stock of plans at our next EC meeting in early April and let all Members know our next steps.
- Policy engagement: we are exploring new possibilities for policy engagement with Westminster through using existing policy networks hosted by members' universities (such as at Manchester).
- We will be upgrading the website over the next month and be seeking input from Members: for example, we would like the site to carry brief reports from current PhD students on their research. We will send out an invitation relating to this in the near future
- The Call went out for the annual A-UK PhD Prize: three members of the Exec are now considering those that were submitted and we will be announcing the successful submission in the near future.

Commentary on the Coronavirus Pandemic

Rachel Hale, Executive Committee member, Cardiff University

***Note:** Rachel been working with the WHO for several years as an Independent Expert Advisory Group (IEAG) member for the WHO Influenza Implementation Research Focal Point (Initiative for Vaccine Research) and as an External Consultant for Tailoring Influenza Immunization Programmes (TIP FLU).*

Drawing on my ethnographic doctoral study which analysed the UK experience of the 2009-10 H1N1 influenza pandemic using an actor network theory (ANT) approach (Hale, 2016), there are transferrable insights to the current coronavirus pandemic. First, is the role of local, devolved, national and supranational networks in UK pandemic response/s. Since 2005, the World Health Organization (WHO), European Commission (EC) and European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) have helped to insert pandemic preparedness strategies into European nation states by providing guidance and support. However, while it is important to be aware of the global-scale in pandemic networks, as an ANT approach highlights, it is only ever the local-scale where action takes place.

In the UK, there are UK-wide pandemic preparedness plans. However, each devolved nation also has its own pandemic preparedness plan, which is in line with the UK-wide National Framework (but adapted to fit their particular needs). My home country, Wales, is reported to have less healthcare capacity to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, coupled with a legacy of deprivation and an older population, compared to some of the UK. In the 2009-10 pandemic, different resources and structures in the devolved NHSs (and individual healthcare organisations) also led to different pandemic responses. Likewise, devolved UK governments (and those in non-UK countries) have started to take different measures in this pandemic, with similar concern from being expressed by publics about these divergent pandemic responses.

During the 2009-10 pandemic, Welsh NHS networks were in the process of being re-assembled into seven Local Health Boards, and this was reported to have affected the flow of vaccines to healthcare workers. With coronavirus vaccines not expected until 2021, the reassembling of the EU supranational network with the unenrolment of the UK, may result in the UK being outside the network for access to the first flow of vaccines produced in EU nations.

Hale, R. (2016) An actor-network analysis of the Healthcare Worker Influenza Immunisation Programme on Wales 2009-11. PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham.

EASST/4S Prague

Many AsSIST-UK members will be hoping to attend the EASST/4S meeting in Prague in late August. As we know, the local committee is still to make a final decision whether to go ahead, in light of the challenges created by Covid19. The date of notification of acceptance/rejection of all abstracts has been postponed to **April 30**. Please do check the website this next month to keep informed of any decisions being taken. We hope that the meeting will go ahead or alternative (virtual) arrangements might be made.

PhD Scholarship

PhD scholarship in STS and the Public Communication of Artificial Intelligence

The objective of the project is to study public communication around Artificial Intelligence in order to describe opportunities and challenges for the future development of AI in society. The aim is to provide valuable knowledge with regard to the handling of communicative aspects of responsible AI in Europe and to contribute to an unfolding research agenda in innovation communication. The position is within a research group on Responsible Technology lead by Maja Horst at the Technical University of Denmark. Danish PhD stipends are 3-year positions with a salary (not a student grant).

<https://www.dtu.dk/om-dtu/job-og-karriere/ledige-stillinger/job?id=9849d499-23dd-4aa0-9881-7b1422f74e65>

Calls for participation and events (NB all events-related will be Covid19 affected so do check websites for updated information)

1. Julia Kasmire (University of Manchester) has put out two calls as follows:

- new projects – I am hoping to apply for a funding bid to get a bunch of people together to work out a collaborative book/training course on how to gain skills in both social science (thinking like a human) and computational methods (thinking like a computer). If you have experience or insight into what should be included, or if you want to get involved, contact me!
- upcoming events – I am hoping to organise a symposium at the [9th Modelling and Simulation conference](#). Anyone who has something interesting to say about using publicly accessible data sources within modelling and simulation research, please contact me.
Her email address is: julia.kasmire@manchester.ac.uk

2. Please note that the following event will be subject to Covid19 restrictions so do check the website at SPRU:

26th SPRU PhD Forum: **‘Grand Challenges in Science, Technology and Innovation in Policy & Practice’** Thursday 14 and Friday 15 May, 2020, Jubilee Building, University of Sussex Campus, Falmer, UK

The SPRU PhD Forum is a unique, free, two-day event for PhD students, organised by SPRU’s first-year PhD cohort. It is focussed on giving doctoral researchers at all stages the opportunity to present their current research around Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy to a range of other doctoral students, researchers and academics from SPRU and around the world.

The theme of the 26th edition of the SPRU PhD Forum is **‘Grand Challenges in Science, Technology and Innovation in Policy & Practice’**. This milestone event aims to bring together rich and diverse perspectives for dealing with the complex issues that our world faces.

We welcome presentations from all discipline, as well as interdisciplinary research, from the following research areas:

- The future of Science Technology and Innovation (STI) research and policy
- Disruptive technologies, digital platforms and agile business models
- STI practices towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
- Collaboration for STI

- Globalization and STI

Call for presentations

To submit a proposal to present, please register with a short bio (max. 100 words) and an abstract (max. 500 words) by **March 13th, 2020**.

To submit a proposal or register to attend the Forum, please click [here](#).

(<https://forms.gle/V9kjFy3Bzo6C1UmNA>)

The event is completely free to attend, and includes refreshments and lunch on both days as well as an evening dinner for all presenters on Thursday 14th May. Please note however that travel expenses cannot be provided for those attending or presenting their work.

Please feel free to contact the SPRU PhD team sprudoc@gmail.com with any questions related to the forum.

3. [The IVF Experience event](#)

Join us and become social researchers for a day!

We invite you to a workshop where all will have a chance to participate in a conversation about infertility, fertility treatment, scientific knowledge, embryo/medical imaging and patient decision-making. You will have the opportunity to hear more about our ongoing research in the area.

There will be snacks and drinks and lots of space for sharing ideas, opinions and experiences.

The workshop will take place in London on five dates across March and May 2020. For more information and to book your place, follow the links to our eventbrite pages:

14 March 2020. Timber Lodge café, 1A, Timber Lodge Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Honour Lea Ave, London E20 1DY. Starts at 2.30pm. SIGN UP [HERE](#).

17 March 2020. The Vagina Museum, Unit 7&18 Stables Market, Chalk Farm Road, London, NW1 8AH. Starts at 6.30pm. SIGN UP [HERE](#).

13 May 2020. Yurt café, St. Katharine's Precinct, 2 Butcher Row, London E14 8DS. Starts at 6.30pm. SIGN UP [HERE](#).

16 May 2020. Poplar Union, E5 Roasthouse, 2 Cotall St, Poplar, London E14 6TL. Starts at 2.30pm. SIGN UP [HERE](#).

28 May 2020. The Canvas: Café & Creative Venue, 42 Hanbury St, Spitalfields, London E1 5JL. Starts at 6.30pm. SIGN UP [HERE](#).

These events are funded by the Wellcome Trust and supported by Fertility Network UK.

Publications

1. Automation and the Future of Work: How Rhetoric Shapes the Response in Policy Preferences

Karen Jeffrey, Department of Political Economy, King's College London

Abstract: Using a large-scale survey experiment I show that exposure to politicised rhetoric plays a pivotal role in shaping how individuals' policy preferences respond to an automation shock. As respondents feel more vulnerable to automation they become less supportive of some redistributive policies; however, introducing rhetoric that increases respondents' concerns about automation-induced inequality increases preferences for redistributive policies. These effects are pronounced among more-educated respondents, who are expected to increasingly be exposed to automation going forward. This study contributes future-oriented insights into how policy preferences might evolve as more work is automated, and underscores the influential role of rhetoric in shaping that response.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3493878

2. See below a new commentary from the **TRAPS programme** on alcohol industry involvement in a \$100 million trial on moderate drinking:

Mitchell, G., Lesch, M. and McCambridge, J. (2020) 'Alcohol industry involvement in the Moderate Alcohol and Cardiovascular Health (MACH) trial', *American Journal of Public Health*, e1-e4 <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2019.305508>

3. Last years' A-UK PhD Awards holder **Clemence Pinel**, has published three papers based on her doctoral research:

Renting Valuable Assets: Knowledge and Value Production in Academic Science, *STHV*, 2020, pp 1-23

When more data means better results: Abundance and scarcity in research collaborations in epigenetics, *Social Science Information* 2020, Vol. 59(1) 35 –58.

Caring for data: Value creation in a data-intensive research laboratory, *Social Studies of Science*, 2020, p1-23.

4. Levidow, L. and Raman, S. 2020. Sociotechnical imaginaries of low-carbon waste-energy futures: UK techno-market fixes displacing public accountability, *Social Studies of Science*, open access at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0306312720905084>

Occupational mobility

Courtney Addison has taken up a lectureship at the Centre for Science in Society at Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand). The Centre for Science in Society is an interdisciplinary group of writers, historians, indigenous knowledge experts,

science communicators and social scientists. At CSIS, Courtney will be continuing to write about the social and ethical dimensions of new genetic technologies, while also starting new research into multispecies and chemical relations in the Anthropocene.

Julia Swallow has moved from her post at Sheffield to take up a Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellow in Humanities and Social Sciences | [Centre for Biomedicine, Self, and Society](#) | [Usher Institute](#) | University of Edinburgh Medical School