

Call for abstracts

Open Track 4S/EASST 2016 – Barcelona, August 31 – September 3 2016

Exploring the role of materials in practices and sustainability

What is the role of materials for social practices and sustainability? How well do theories of practice capture this role? How should we study this? How can such studies inform sustainable transitions? These are some of the questions covered through paper presentations and discussions.

A “practice turn” has led to practices becoming the unit of analysis for much of the research on consumption, everyday life, technology use, sustainable transitions, etc. This has involved various conceptualisations of materials (e.g. things, devices, systems of devices, infrastructures, ‘natural’ objects, bodies, etc.), including: ‘arrangements’ that organise the ‘plenum’ of social life (Schatzki); ‘elements’ of practice (Shove et al.); and ‘participants’ in practice (Reckwitz). This theories of practice literature has contributed to new perspectives in the STS field, e.g. by partly replacing discussions about human and non-human relations with a (now) widespread understanding that materials are given significance through (re)production of social practices. However its shared sociotechnical points of departure means that much can still be gained from relating theories of practice literature back to its STS roots and the wider STS literature. This track invites theoretical/empirical explorations of materials in professional/everyday practices and what that means for addressing sustainability. Examples of relevant themes include (but are not limited to):

- The ontology of practice and the role of materials
- Material histories and practice trajectories
- The relationship between sustainability and material flows (of practice)
- Different forms of materiality (e.g. natural and built environments)
- Envisaged material futures and its consequences
- Material interventions in practices
- Strategies and consequences of “skilling” the material rather than the social (e.g. automation)
- Materials as boundary objects between different practices and sites of performance
- Materials as co-constructing temporalities of practice
- Bodies and materials as sources of agency (e.g. distributed agency)
- Novel methodologies for researching materials of practice

If you have any questions or queries, please feel free to contact the convenors: Dr Toke Haunstrup Christensen, Danish Building Research Institute, Aalborg University, Denmark (thc@sbi.aau.dk); Dr Chris Foulds, Global Sustainability Institute, Anglia Ruskin University, UK (chris.foulds@anglia.ac.uk).

Submit abstract before 21st February 2016 via the conference website: <http://www.sts2016bcn.org/>