

STS Sensibilities in the Pedagogies for the Built Environment (P384)

Combined Format Open Panel

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Short Abstract (<300 characters)

STS sensibilities allows architectures to break away from their modernist dualisms and grand promises to address the complex ethical, ecological, and sociotechnical entanglements of construction and urbanisation. However, the built environment is a native contributor to generating STS sensibilities.

Short Abstract (<300 words)

The Latour-Yaneva dynamic school of thought offers new worldviews on how to teach architecture with a renewed “sociology of associations” (Latour, 2005; Yaneva, 2010, 2022). Architectural educators engage with methodologies drawing from the sociology of science and ethnography of design, and they expanded the subfields of architectural humanities and the social studies of architecture.

An STS sensibility allows architectures to break away from their modernist dualisms, grand promises, master architects, and iconic starchitects. It decentres the pedagogy and practice of architecture from the figure of providence and panopticon vision to the distributed network and oligopticon insights. It endows architecture and the built environment disciplines with realist attitudes to reconnect with their ground as collaborative practices of disturbing, reassembling, and constructing. It is the kind of sensibility central to addressing the complex ethical, ecological, and sociotechnical entanglements of contemporary and legacy construction and urbanisation.

However, the built environment is a native contributor to generating STS sensibilities. It foregrounds the situatedness of scientific knowledge production within excavation, construction, and destruction processes. It platforms site-specific and environment-oriented practices while envisioning future worlds. It endows materialities and agencies to objects actively participating in the making of spaces of inhabitation and infrastructural landscapes. It situates the study and understanding of innovation within networks of knowledge exchange, laboratories, and circulating references.

We invite academics, researchers, and practitioners who teach future professionals of the built environment (arch, urban, landscape) to theoretically and empirically reflect on how they engage STS sensibilities and integrate STS methodologies in their pedagogies. In the hope of organizing a Combined Format Open Panel, we encourage the submission of academic paper presentations and welcome experimental formats of knowledge expression such as written reflections on an STS-inspired studio brief, visual reflections on student design work, and cataloguing STS engagements during professional design practice.

Extended Abstract

In 2008, Bruno Latour co-authored with Albená Yaneva what would become a key text for architecture: “Give Me a Gun and I Will Make All Buildings Move: An ANT’s View of Architecture”¹ (2008). Parodying Archimedes again² (see Latour, 1983), Latour and Yaneva’s brief text critiqued “internalist visions” of architecture and questioned the fields’ extensive network of human and nonhuman agencies. Since then, Yaneva has been crafting STS and ANT-informed research on architectural design and pedagogy and translating Latour’s STS sensibility from studying the making of science to exploring the making of the built environment. Her work looked at processes of making (Yaneva, 2009a, 2009b, 2020), mapping controversies (Yaneva, 2012), relational politics (Yaneva, 2017; Yaneva & Zaera-Polo, 2015), programming (Novoselov & Yaneva, 2020; Yaneva, 2022), and “site-ing” (Yaneva & Mommersteeg, 2019).

This dynamic school of thought offered new worldviews on how to teach architecture with a renewed “sociology of associations” (Latour, 2005; Yaneva, 2010, 2022). Architectural educators engaged with methodologies drawing from the sociology of science and ethnography of design, and they expanded the subfields of architectural humanities and the social studies of architecture (Shayya, 2021; Kourri, 2023). Students of architecture engaged with tracing heterogeneous relationships between human and nonhuman actors, where a renewed critique of sociotechnical and ecological relationships looked “...not *away* but *toward* the gathering, the Thing” (Latour, 2004, p. 246).

An STS sensibility allows architectures – although not necessarily architects – to break away from their modernist dualisms, grand promises, master architects, and iconic starchitects. It decentres the pedagogy and practice of architecture from the figure of providence and panopticon vision to the distributed network and oligopticon insights. It endows architecture and the built environment disciplines with realist attitudes to reconnect with their ground as collaborative practices of disturbing, reassembling, and constructing. It is the kind of sensibility central to addressing the complex ethical, ecological, and sociotechnical entanglements of contemporary and legacy construction and urbanisation.

An STS sensibility introduces a concern for the sociotechnical (see Akrich, 1992; Latour, 2005; Murphy, 2006) – not the technocentric, an eye for associations (see Callon, 1986a, 1986b; Akrich et al., 2002a, 2002b; Latour, 2005)– not the anthropocentric, and a recognition of the multiple (see Law, 1987, 2002; Mol, 2002)– not the absolute.

However, the built environment is a native contributor to generating STS sensibilities. It foregrounds the situatedness of scientific knowledge production within excavation, construction, and destruction processes. It platforms site-specific and environment-oriented practices while envisioning future worlds (Moore & Karvonen, 2008). It endows materialities and agencies to objects actively participating in the making of spaces of inhabitation and infrastructural landscapes (Kärrholm, 2016; Jensen, 2018). It

¹ The text was published as a chapter in the book *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research* (Birkhäuser, 2008).

² In 1983, Latour wrote a text titled “Give Me a Laboratory and I will Raise the World.”

situates the study and understanding of innovation in atmospheric envelopes and material circularity within networks of knowledge exchange, laboratories, and “circulating references” (after Latour, 1999).

The field of STS is uniquely positioned to enable inter- and trans-disciplinary pedagogies that build on its deep engagement with the ecological and societal dimensions of science, technology, and innovation. It fosters a deeper understanding of the multidimensional processes that make up the built environment, unlike the proponents of Architecture – with a capital A – who “go to the mattresses” prioritizing structures that shape the built environment *from the outside* or romanticizing formal and cognitive aesthetics that create an essence of the built environment *from the inside*.

We invite academics, researchers, and practitioners who teach future professionals of the built environment (arch, urban, landscape) to theoretically and empirically reflect on how they engage STS sensibilities and integrate STS methodologies in their pedagogies. In the hope of organizing a Combined Format Open Panel, we encourage the submission of academic paper presentations and welcome experimental formats of knowledge expression such as written reflections on an STS-inspired studio brief, visual reflections on student design work, and cataloguing STS engagements during professional design practice.

Abstracts can respond (but are not limited) to the following themes:

- What does an STS approach offer to pedagogies of the proposed/built/ruined environments?
- What can an STS sensibility offer to decentre the increasing professionalisation of industry-oriented education?
- How does an STS methodology contribute to a better understanding of buildings and cities in the making for architecture and design students?
- What kind of STS insights can be mobilised in design thinking? Equally, how does an interdisciplinary pedagogy of the built environment further knowledge in science, technology, and innovation?
- How can STS inform studies of the proposed/built/ruined environments as a hybrid of a retrospective tracing method (the sociology dimension) and a projective prototyping method (the design dimension)?
- How does STS help academics and students of the built environment disciplines expand the figurations (or topologies) of inhabitation beyond the conventional figures of the building and the city?
- How can an STS sensibility help the built environment disciplines reframe their problem-space and positionality?

Submission Guidelines

Call for Abstracts: <https://www.easst4s2024.net/callforabstracts/>
Panel <https://nomadit.co.uk/conference/easst-4s2024/p/14468#>

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