

Queering STS conference – 1 September 2021

Paper abstracts (in order of presentation)

Kane Race (he/him)

Pharmacopornographic Feeling: rereading *Testo Junkie*

Paul Preciado's *Testo Junkie: sex, drugs and biopolitics in the pharmacopornographic era* (2013) is a queer and contradictory piece of work. In the registers of the book most redolent of humanities scholarship, a grand new theory of biopower is proposed linked to the machinations of the late 20th century pharmaceutical and pornographic industries whose stimulating, psychotropic, and biomolecular creations (synthetic hormones, porn, oocytes, antidepressants) really get beneath the skin; they are said to control and determine subjectivities, ultimately emerging as 'ingestible panopticon' – the latest disciplinary devices late capitalism (or grand narratologists) would have us swallow. But in the book's auto-theoretical register, the author-narrator BP – struck by the grief of having lost a remarkable friend and cultural provocateur, GD – embarks on a program of illicit experimentation that involves self-administering testosterone gel every day or two (despite the experiment deviating in every way from all normative indications and prescribed applications that would seek to define this substance and its proper uses, a protocol is devised). BP proceeds to document the sexual, affective, intellectual and relational adventures and escapades this occasions in the diverse circumstances and intimate situations in which it all takes place. If *Testo Junkie* is an experiment, what kind of experiment might it be? I argue that the contrapuntal registers of *Testo Junkie* discussed above can be hung fairly conveniently and constructively across Whitehead's bifurcation of nature. Where the argument about pharmacopower trades in claims about the primary qualities of biomolecular entities, the auto-experimental sections of the book diverge and instead attend provocatively, intensively, compulsively to sensuous relations, capacities for feeling and aesthetic fabulation. Framing *Testo Junkie* scientifically and symmetrically, as an embodied, material experiment, enables us to make new and unexpected claims about testosterone effects, their preconditions and precursors, however wild and fantastic these turn out to be (Some lesser-known side-effects of Testogel consumption: Undoing gender, devising new theories of biopower, sex marathons, etc.). But the question of what testosterone is and does becomes impossible to disentangle from aesthetic cares, concerns, attachments and instaurations in the process. Rereading *Testo Junkie* front to back, back to front, leads us to ask afresh (again) what and how are psychotropic substances (here, Testogel) becoming?

Preciado, Paul. 2013. *Testo Junkie: sex, drugs and biopolitics in the pharmacopornographic era*. New York: The Feminist Press, 2013.

Session 1 – Making Up Bodies

Christopher Olive (he/him)

Trans Utopias: How our Desires could Conquer Truth and Science

In a world of violent sex assignment of birth and diagnosing of nature, our deviancy is legitimised only through institutionalisation and subjectification of once radical identities – flattened into pathologised typologies of ourselves. This paper seeks to open new lines of possibility by investigating transition's embodied and experimental resistance to science's monopoly on truth. It utilises data produced in 2019 by a qualitative empirical and theoretical study of utopian longing within ten participants who have undergone social and/or medical transition in widely varying ways. Two methods of research were used: respondent-generated data over a 3-6 week period in the form of a creative transition log, and retrospective interviews in triangulation with the artistic data.

By appropriating the theoretical approach of Ernst Bloch's *Principle of Hope* (1986), viewing utopia as an analytical tool to decipher desires and hopes for transformation found 'at work everywhere, in all objects of culture,' we may ask questions which connect participants' everyday navigation of transition to their extraordinary longings for change (Jameson, 1976: 56). The creative data will also be treated as *fabulation* – a Deleuzian concept meaning 'art [as] resistance' and 'other models for an increasingly hemmed in existence' – to locate possibilities for subversion of nature in transgender desires, hopes, and hopelessness (O'Sullivan, 2016: 206; Deleuze, 1995: 174). From the findings, the paper will necessarily critique ontological concepts of trans life such as the medical 'trans as condition' model, and the monopoly of authority by cisgender researchers and scientific methodologies which construct biological life as 'objective reality' (Pearce, 2018: 9; Blencowe, 2013: 18). The imperative of this paper is thus to educate desire and provoke hope – within our deepest utopic longing lies transformatory power. By performing and choosing new biologies which reject established science on physical sex, authority is redistributed and new knowledges can be formed.

Kiran Pienaar (she/her)

Posthuman relationalities, 'viral' intimacies and COVID-19: Making publics in a pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed sexual relationships into sharp focus as strict containment measures (including physical distancing and 'stay at home' restrictions) were initiated to control the spread of the virus. Governments in some jurisdictions prevented contact between non-cohabiting sexual partners (except for couples in pre-existing relationships), while community organisations recommended people limit casual sexual encounters. This article analyses Australian media articles, commentary and public health messages published during March to October 2020 to explore the normative assumptions underpinning these measures. Applying posthumanist perspectives and Warner's (2002) conceptualisation of 'publics', it considers how COVID-19 public health advice enacts the (human) subject of public health as monogamous, coupled, and living with their partner or nuclear family. Those in non-normative relationships and households are not only excluded from this narrow enactment of the 'ideal' public health subject, but are rendered potentially risky disease vectors by virtue of their alternative kinship arrangements. I explore the implications of these findings for the more-than-human relationalities that shape health inequalities and processes of marginalisation during public health crises, and offer suggestions for public health measures that address the needs of diverse 'publics'.

Madeleine Pape (she/her)

Beyond Biofeminism: For a Queer Vision of Gender Equity in Sport

Over recent years, the participation of trans and gender diverse people has emerged as a defining issue for women's sport. A dominant narrative in such debates has been that women's sport will be forever changed by the increased participation of trans and gender diverse people, including women with high testosterone. Underpinning this position, promoted by a growing number of purportedly pro-women's sport organizations, is the notion that binary sex difference is a biological "fact." According to Fair Play for Women, for example, "[b]eing male or female is coded in our DNA and in every cell of our bodies" and "[t]his matters, especially in sport." I call this phenomenon biofeminism: the use of scientific claims about binary, biological sex difference as a platform for the alleged advancement of women. In this paper, which draws on feminist Science and Technology Studies (STS), queer theories of gender liberation, and postcolonial approaches to sex and gender, I ask: given the extent of genuine grievances that (all) women continue to face in sport, and which are in no way addressed by the exclusion of trans women, how is women's sport harmed by biofeminist agendas? Where and how might common ground be identified between cis and trans women in the context of sport? In other words, what is the queer alternative to biofeminist visions of gender equity, and how might it also be attentive to the intersections of race and nation? Given the prominence of scientific discourses of sex difference in debates over inclusion in women's sport, I suggest that clearer articulations of the intersections that exist between feminist, queer, and postcolonial STS are needed. I chart these intersections within the lineage of STS and show how a queer reading of the gendered (and racialized) body can be liberatory for women's sport.

Jaya Keaney (she/her)

Crafting Likeness: Enacting Racialised Kinship in Queer Reproduction

This paper explores how queer people enact racialised kinship when creating their families through the reproductive technology of donor-assisted conception. When conceiving a child with a sperm or egg donor, race plays a central role. Fertility clinics universally categorise donors by race, and racial preferences propel gamete markets worldwide. In critical scholarship and clinical practice, racial preferences have primarily been theorised through the concept of "race matching": the idea that prospective parents want donors who looks like them, to create a family resemblance. This literature has focused on commodification, choice-making and stark racial hierarchies that structure sperm and oocyte markets. While keeping these concerns in view, in this paper I argue that "race matching" is only one situated mode of knowing race, which can reinforce ideas of race as genetic, and elide the productive and affective force of race as it is experienced. Analysing a corpus of interviews with queer Australian parents, I instead draw on theories of enactment from science and technology studies to explore the multiple iterations of race in queer family formation, which trouble the heterosexual conventions underlying "race matching." I subsequently conceptualise donor conception as a situated process not of matching but of crafting likeness.

Session 2 – Technologies of Sex

Chase Ledin (he/him)

Queer Speculative Health: Towards a Technosociocultural Health Criticism

Biotechnologies in sexual health are commonly theorised as part of a ‘somatechnics’ produced by pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributed by scientific and medical experts, and consumed/internalised by individuals in crisis. They are situated as phenomena that are configured by scientific reasoning and constituted by technosociocultural entanglements – that is, through encounters with medical doctors, healthcare professionals, individual consumers, health promotion, marketing, and broader cultural media. As previous STS criticism has demonstrated, these entanglements produce both normalised and subversive epistemologies – e.g. both prescribed and unprescribed consumption practices – which create queer biotechnological encounters and in turn create new consumption practices. This is especially evident in recent studies of the unprescribed use of “doxy PrEP” or STI prophylaxis. Doxy PrEP has raised new questions about how scientific knowledge is produced, contested and negotiated across biomedical and public cultures. Some clinicians have discouraged the use of STI prophylaxis based on documented antibiotic resistance from doxycycline’s broader uses. Other clinicians have encouraged individual forms of unmediated and untested experimentation as a means of enabling scientific progress. This paper seeks to investigate the forms of knowledge production that emerge from this ongoing entanglement of biomedical, scientific, and “lay” experimentation with STI prophylaxis. It brings together STS media analysis and queer social theory to construct a form of technosociocultural health criticism that keeps the social, cultural and historical avenues of STI biotechnologies open for scientists, clinicians and individuals exploring new ways of eradicating common STIs. Specifically, this paper draws from my PhD research by presenting several examples of the discursive mapping of biotechnological experimentation across health advocacy and educational materials, institutional health promotion campaigns, and broader health media. I present a critical theory that helps to configure a health criticism capable of capturing the increasing use and legitimisation of “speculative health” tactics: that is, the rationalisation of multi-scientific practices within experimenting sexual cultures.

Cornelis Rijneveld (he/him)

Between Critique and Celebration: A Personal Reflection on Studying Undetectability

HIV-positive researchers working on treatment-as-prevention find themselves in the peculiar position of scrutinizing the ‘power effects’ (Race 2001) of the very technologies on which their survival depends. I spend my days articulating a pithy critique of the biopolitical implications of the discourse of ‘Undetectability’ and my evenings (and sometimes days) grateful that I can hook up with strangers without having to disclose, or can disclose with relatively little fear of rejection. Conversely, an article that claims the potentially detrimental effects of ART have been downplayed in the turn to treatment-as-prevention (Sangaramoorthy 2018) may derail my day by triggering health-related anxieties, even as it boosts my argument. And during ethnographic fieldwork, I oscillated between being an agent of treatment-as-prevention – by ‘educating’ peers about the importance of treatment adherence, for example, or by explaining U = U and PrEP to an audience of undergraduates – and a student of it. I fought with my boyfriend over his friends’ refusal to accept my non-contaminate status even as I theorized about the forms of epistemic hegemony and conceit on which the Undetectability consensus hinges. How does one study an emergent ‘biomedical-juridical-technology assemblage’ (as one reviewer put it) that one is so intimately invested in? My paper will explore this question by drawing on both ‘fieldwork’ and personal experiences, including challenging conversations with a romantic partner and a disorienting encounter with a ‘natural healer’ who had persuaded a research participant/friend to swap ART for silver particles. Although I am not yet sure where this inquiry will take me, it will engage (but certainly not resolve) the tension between the Foucauldian critique prevalent in both Medical Anthropology and STS and the biomedical triumphalism of treatment-as-prevention.

Adam Christianson (he/him) and Alex Aldridge (she/her)

Pandora's Box: Exploring the queer ecologies of sex on drugs

This paper is mobilized by our discomfort as queer scholars with the current landscape of sex-on-drugs research. The current approach to 'chemsex' forwarded over the last decade has proved productive for resisting the pathologisation of sex on drugs. By situating the phenomenon as an embodied response to a particular set of social and material conditions, this body of work has pushed beyond normative 'harm reduction' and criminalization strategies, reframing 'chemsex' as a queer cultural practice as opposed to a deviant one. However, these analyses still appear to disproportionately privilege the knowledge and experiences of 'men who have sex with men' (or 'MSM'), held over from HIV discourse. While it is undeniable that sex on drugs has become an important cultural practice for subcultures of predominately gay men, we are interested in the simple yet glaring question, what is sex on drugs when it's *not* chemsex? What is neglected by this approach and what can STS contribute? Drawing on the work of feminist STS scholars Epstein, Clarke, Star and Puig de La Bellacasa, we examine the queer 'ecologies' of sex on drugs from the perspective of a queer drug user. We conduct an adapted rhizomatic analysis of the stories told by Pandora ('Pan;') a 'gay passing,' non-binary person, on their experiences of sex with men while on drugs. Tracing his/their movements through the often-neglected terrains of sex on drugs - at once clearly inside but also beyond the traditional bounds of 'chemsex' - we speculate on what a queer approach to sex on drugs might contribute to furthering our understanding of technologically enhanced bodies, their politics, and their possibilities.

Session 3 – New Geographies of Queer STS

Ellie Armstrong (she/her)

Queering the Astronaut

Much work in queer science studies focuses on medical and biological sciences as the examples for developing STS theories and frameworks. In this paper, I will extend these queer science and technology studies concerns about space sciences by bridging the humans and the technoscientific formulation of the 'astronaut'. Demonstrating the potential of an analytical turn away from focusing on LGBT+ identity (e.g. the 'Out Astronaut Project'), this paper proposes moving towards queering the 'astronaut's' relationship with broader sociological concerns, and thus drawing space sciences into the domain of queer-informed STS research.

I use provocations to demonstrate the potential of queer critique of series of cases including: the astronaut as representative of the nation-state; the long shadow of eugenics through the NASA space programme; colonial structures and 'imperatives' of outer space imaginaries, reproduction and sex, and transgressing the boundaries of human, non-human and machine in the context of space. I will close advocating that these queer critiques can form the basis of queering physical sciences, and gesture to some of the ways in which this may be possible.

Banu Sabramaniam (no preference) and Sushmita Chatterjee (she/her)

Queer Transnational Ecologies

Environmentalism and its social movements have been often critiqued for heteronormativity in upholding reproductive futurity, family values, and essentialized visions of nature. Queer theories have helped situate the proliferation of disparate queer ecologies, and messy, and entangled naturecultures. Queer environmental entanglements remain suggestive of the myriad ways through which “queer” and “environment” get de-territorialized and re-thought in connection with each other. Our essay works through one such de-territorialization in expanding the scope of these entanglements to transnational arenas. What might the transnational contribute to queer entanglements? And, how does this shift the “nature” of queer environmental entanglements? Our attention to enlarging the scope of queer environmental entanglements draws on two bodies of work. First, consistent tropes in Indian folklore and their occurrences in contemporary Indian society, i.e., a woman marrying a tree. These marriages defy reproductive rationales, ostensibly for astrological reasons. For example, a woman might marry a tree in order to break a curse so the individual can marry again without harming her future male partner. But significant questions jostle for attention in this frame including the ontological status of the tree as a partner, the redefinition of marriage in the context of an ecological partnership, and the reliance of heteronormativity on the natural world. Second, the porous boundaries of multispecies living and the queer ecological entanglements that unfold about life in India are evoked in recent work in Plant Studies. We contend that studying various local practices from around the world, such as marrying a tree, can help unravel various ecological relational practices that un-do and stabilize our regimes of gender and sexuality.

Monica Mellini (she/her)

Disposable Bodies, Invisible Lives: Weeding the Fields of Agricultural Technoscience

The social construction of science privileges rationality and androcentric bias and devalues bodily lived experience. State-sponsored industrialization of agriculture in the United States has featured a co-morbidity of violence against women and against nature under a capitalist patriarchal world view of “progress” and “development” that has created political, economic, and social tensions and injustices which fall disproportionately on the marginalized.

Technological intervention in corporate agriculture under the banner “innovation” is an overarching project of colonialism, in that it dispossesses women of land, degrades reproductive capacities of nature, and displaces life itself with engineered and patented life forms, which through combinations of natural means, engineered capacities, and state enforcement, achieve domination as corporate-owned, state-sanctioned invasive species. Themes of abandonment, displacement, invisibility, and ignorance have played out continuously under colonialism in agricultural practice and even in scholarship. Global neoliberalism expressed as patriarchal capitalism trades on power and fear to justify self-serving intervention at the cost of lives.

Women who grow food are particularly rendered invisible and their knowledge erased, while nature’s fertility is obliterated through systems that oppress all except the powerful actors that reap the profits. This essay will take up the project of interrogating the alterity of family farmers and the concomitant devaluing of nature under systems of power. Feminist theorizing locates hostility of science toward the earth, while “queerness as utopian” discourse of José Muñoz flips the knowledge/ignorance dualism. If queerness is imagined as a rejection of neoliberal ideologies of agricultural enterprise, then contemporary practices of sustainable family farming are a queering of institutionalized knowledge distribution systems and divisions of labor. Thus, a “queer horizon” offers possibilities for democratized knowledge that privileges ways of knowing outside of patriarchal science, restoring the legitimacy of nature and traditional farming practices.

Session 4 – Queering STS Theory

Alex Giesen (he/they)

Queer Kinds: Classification and Bodily Imaginations

In this paper, I will propose a queer mode of classification based on the usage of bodily imagination. Philosophy of science uses the notion of “natural kinds” to designate the division between things in the world. The term implies a *naturalness* prior to its meaning: a (natural) kind is an essential structure. Although the division and classification of things serves a purpose in scientific practice, kinds’ essentialism has historically had negative consequences (e.g., the natural kinds of gender, race, and sexuality). Hence, it is vital to rethink classification. I will suggest that what Jane Ward calls ‘queer methods’ – particularly a focus on the body, ‘fluid or “messy” categories’ and ‘shifting classifications’ – can help transform the notion and usage of (natural) kinds in classification (Ward 2016: 71). I will look at contemporary kinding of the sex/gender binary, Karan Barad’s usage of queerness in understanding wave-particle duality, and Gemma Anderson’s reimagining of mitosis. Here, what I will call *bodily imaginations*– the body performing, corporeality, and choreography – can help develop novel insights into the classification of the natural world. Queering kinding can then allow a disruption of homogenous classificatory conceptions, enlightening fluidity – queerness – in nature. From here, queer kinds can emerge, ones removed from the myth of essentialism, where one embraces their imagination or aesthetic creation. Bodily imagination will relieve not only the pressure of essentialism but also the issue of natural kinds halting scientific advancement through their assumption of having already uncovered reality.

Lars Aaberg (pronoun ambivalent)

Cruising as method and methodology: toward a queerer actor-network theory

In this paper I propose cruising as method and methodology. Latour’s actor-network theory (ant) serves as a foundational text from which to place into dialogue feminist epistemology and queer theory’s treatment of the practice of cruising. This paper will draw out the similarities between cruising and ant’s practical and interpretive practice, both of which advocate for the acknowledged participation of the researcher, the suspension of the deconstructive impulse, the importance of replicability, and attention to ecology and non-human objects. The study of deviant genders and sexualities requires the privileging of actor’s own understandings of gender and sexuality. This is both a queer political commitment to self-identification but also pragmatic as gender/sex behaviors and identity vary across geographies and networks. At the same time, the researcher must figuratively and literally follow actors where they go, often with access decided by the actors themselves, while attending to the formation of networks of people and objects at turns sustained and broken up by regularity and controversy. Much of the work for the ant scholar, similar to that of the cruiser, is to surmise an *explanandum*, or a critical description, of where and why things happen and with whom.

The paper comes as a response to the particularities of my doctoral fieldwork conducting an ethnography of LGBTQ workplace diversity and inclusion (D&I) advocacy in India. Some of the challenges of studying a small social movement, spread across the highly securitized offices of India’s special economic zones (SEZs), include the uneven access to corporate offices and business executives. I argue that cruising as methodology gives value and pleasure back to research that

speaks to repetitiveness and the agency of actors, but is also uneven, at times irregular, and often departs from the norms of long-term and stable relations between researcher and researched.

Angel Samuel Perez (he/him)

Queer Techniques: Technological Resistance and Emerging Subjectivities

Human identity can be understood as constituted throughout our interactions with the environment. The following theoretical approach brings queer theory to the discipline of science and technology studies (STS). It proposes a new perspective which rejects the notion of the subject as fixed, to allow us to think of the subject as an entanglement or assemblage of interactions with human and non-human actors. Through reviewing STS literature, such as actor-network theory, the social construction of technology and technofeminism, this paper lays the foundations for understanding how society and technology are mutually constitutive, and how identity (sexuality and gender) is constituted through our interactions with technology. By exploring those interactions in the context of self-tracking technologies, we demonstrate the ways in which normative social structures like, heteronormativity, are scripted and reinforced in technologies by design and use, respectively. Finally, with the support of theoretical frameworks from anthropology of techniques and queer studies, we formulate the concept of queer techniques as a form of technological resistance. Queer techniques provide a new theoretical approach through which to study how social groups, that engage in processes of technological resistance, constitute the subject.

Jeffrey Christensen (he/him)

Queering biomedical (e)valuation

Science and Technology has had a longstanding interest and deep engagement with laboratory tests, instruments, and valuation practices. Over time, the field has progressed with studies moving out of the lab and into farms, nursing homes, and a host of other sites. This paper however, turns back toward the lab in order to reinvigorate the foundational insights of STS by working through the empirical case of laboratory testing. Drawing on fieldwork with HIV testing practices in particular, I show how the values of 'sensitivity' and 'specificity' are said to be of use when evaluating the quality of testing devices. Analysing material from agencies such as the WHO and UNAIDS, I show how these values come to govern laboratory tests through a quantitative evaluation. However, my further conversations with professionals working with these values in practice enable me to show how the sensitivity of diagnostic tests are becoming 'detuned' or decreased in order to make them more useful for surveillance practices. To further complicate the situation, I discuss how surveillance tools are sometimes drawn back into clinical practices, and sometimes even being called upon in legal situations and used to prosecute people affected by HIV. Analysing this case with sensibilities fostered in STS, I thus queer the values of sensitivity and specificity to ask just how we might evaluate testing practices otherwise. In offering an ethnographic account that is sensitive to the specificities I encountered during this fieldwork, I aim to turn these governing values back upon themselves and offer a different evaluation of HIV testing, one that affirms the value of such tests while calling attention to their vulnerabilities and limitations. By doing so, I also demonstrate how queering values can become a novel approach to the study of science and technology in practice.

Session 5 – Queer STS in Practice

Stephen Molldrem (he/him)

What could an applied Queer STS do?

In a book chapter published in 2019, Kane Race asks, 'What possibilities would a queer [actor-network theory] generate?' Along with a blossoming of other recent work at the intersection of LGBTQ/sexuality studies and science studies, that paper inquisitively suggests a range of new experimental approaches and relationalities with the world that scholars in queer science and technology studies (Queer STS) might pursue. In a parallel vein that takes up the question of STS's relationship to the world, Eva Kotašková (2018) and others have suggested that scholars 'institutionalize applied STS.' Applied STS is a body of literature that remains undefined, but is also implicit in recent STS-driven interventions in the fields of data ethics and critical data studies led by scholars such as Anna Lauren Hoffman, Luke Stark, Ruha Benjamin, Roderic Crooks, and David Ribes. Further, many of STS's sister fields exist on the more applied side of the research spectrum. These include science and technology policy (STP), human-computer interaction (HCI), computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW), critical development studies, critical health informatics, and bioethics. All of these fields have queer and trans tendencies. In the spirit of bringing the insights of these and other varieties of Queer STS further into the world in novel ways (and while also recognizing that non-'applied' research is just as 'in the world' as 'applied' research is), this presentation brings these threads together to ask: 'what could an applied Queer STS do?' While deliberately leaving open the question of whether or not creating a distinct subfield of 'applied' Queer STS research is desirable, the talk suggests several directions for applying Queer STS in a variety of settings. Owing to the positionality of the presenter, particular emphasis is given to how scholars might bring Queer STS into the institution of the academic health science center.

Magdalena Wicher, Anita Thaler and Daniela Jauk

Doing queer-feminist STS in pandemic times

Our paper aims at sharing our working methods and strategies in a pandemic as a queer-feminist researchers' collective. The Queer STS workgroup exists as a discussion, research, publishing and support network since 2011 and is indeed a space and "scaffold for emotionally and intellectually supporting" scholars working at the fringes of their discipline" (Molldrem and Thakor 2017, p.17). We understand Queer STS as queer-critical technology and science research, and also queering STS by breaking up hegemonic views, disturbing power relations and intervening in systems, like academia (<https://queersts.com/work-group/manifest/>).

Since 2016, we publish the Queer-Feminist Science and Technology Studies Forum (short Queer STS Forum) as an open access journal to share those queer-feminist perspectives on STS, open to scholars, practitioners, and activists of all genders and world regions. Covid-19 has highlighted a care crisis on multiple levels, one of them at the center of academic research and teaching. We did not want to add to the heavy workloads of researchers, but still contribute meaningfully with our journal to the many questions of our pandemic times. Therefore, we broadened the scope of our fifth volume of the Queer STS Forum and asked not only for scholarly papers, but collected voices, videos and art from our community to reflect on the following questions: How did and does the COVID-19 pandemic – and the measures taken in their countries – change their work, their research, their teaching, their daily routines and their relationships? We wanted to know what they think: Which consequences will only be temporary, which effects will last? And: How do they feel about all that?

In our presentation we want to reflect on the specific process of publishing the Queer STS Forum in 2020 and what we learned about promoting academic kindness in pandemic times:
<https://queersts.com/forum-queer-sts/queer-sts-forum-5-2020/>.

Mat Paskins (they/them)

This Is A Voice From Under The Floorboards

In August 2020 I left a career in academic research to take up a role as a support line worker for a charity which supports people living with dementia. While this change in career was a jarring and, in some respects, a traumatic shift, my new line of work is also continuous with some of the topics which preoccupied me as a researcher—about how anecdotes relate to formal regimes of knowledge, relational aspects of scientific and technological activity, and the place of utopian longings in everyday, embattled life. My concern with these questions has become more, not less, urgent through attempts to offer comfort and support in the midst of a calamity which has disproportionately impacted people living with dementia. This work has also offered a glimpse of some of the challenges involved in providing support for older LGBTQIA+ people, and how such challenges intersect with requirements for data collection and to develop robust evidence about how services could work better for queer elders. Finally, the change in career has given a way of working, with my voice primarily, which does not feel beholden to the demands for visibility which (in my experience) characterise academic spaces; even if I had remained in academic employment, I had come to hate these demands. Through discussion of these twining strands of critical knowledge production, service delivery, and personal growth this talk argues for a version of STS which can engage seriously with the intersections between queer flourishing and the varied institutions capable of sustaining it.

Ben Purvis (he/they)

Queer(y)ing interdisciplinarity: critical reflections from a queer undisciplined scholar

Cross-, multi-, inter-, trans-, and post-disciplinarity have received much attention within the STS community (Klein 1990; Cummings and Kiesler 2005; Barry and Born 2013). A growing body of literature within this area has explored ways in which relation to disciplinary boundaries shapes researcher identity (Holley 2015; Culpepper et al. 2020), frequently invoking metaphors of ‘home’ (Balaban 2018), ‘finding a space’ (Knaggård et al. 2018), and a ‘journey’ (Haider et al. 2018). Invoking the conceptualisation of the ‘undisciplined scholar’ (Robinson 2008), I present my own research journey, from a positivist natural sciences background towards an increased grounding in critical social sciences. This academic journey, through my undergraduate education to my status as an early career researcher, is juxtaposed with my personal exploration of my queer identity during this time. Through a process of critical reflection (Hickson 2016), I draw out the parallels between these concurrent journeys, exploring themes of uncomfortableness, alienation, pride, and privilege. In doing so, I suggest the mutual influence of the dimensions of queerness and disciplinary positionality in shaping my identity as a queer undisciplined scholar, as well as the inseparability of these dimensions as deviation from normative ways of thinking and doing.

