

Call for Open Panel STS-hub.de 2023 Circulations

March 15th-17th 2023 at Human Technology Center Aachen

Critiques of Circulations – Circulations of Critiques?

Authored by the Robert K. Merton Center for Science Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

What is science's role in how critique circulates in society? Sparked by claims of post-truth politics and by a global pandemic, the voices of scientists have been very public and often in a critical register. Furthermore, debates around Open Science, research integrity, and similar concepts have prompted scientists to criticize their own fields, e.g. due to poor reproducibility of studies, or a research culture of "publish or perish". Do these moments capture a vital critical role for science in society, either momentarily or permanently, or have scientists just become one of many sources of critique in society?

This call for an open panel wants to tackle the question of how forms of critique emerge in science, and how this "science critique" circulates. We pose this question against the background of recent sociological debates distinguishing field-specific forms of critique, amongst others social critique and artist critique (Boltanski/Thévenot 2006, Bogusz 2010). We suggest, as a heuristic, to differentiate three forms of science critique: a) an epistemic critique, which is usually grounded in subject or discipline-specific content and is part of highly specialized academic discourse to establish truth-claims (e.g. scientific controversies, organized skepticism); b) a critique addressing the conditions of scientific knowledge production, which is not discipline-specific (e.g. Open Science, critical accounts of metrification); c) a critique of science toward society or societal problems, and, vice versa, the critique and questioning of science, its role, and its purpose in and for society. For these three levels, we can observe different values implied in the critiques, different aims and goals of critique, different constituencies and different dynamics concerning its circulation, amounting to very different understandings of what it might mean to be "critical" on each of these levels.

Against this background, the call invites both empirical and conceptual contributions that discuss the twin issues of critiques circulating in academia and critiques of academic circulation. Contributions may address, but are not limited to, one or more of the following questions:

- What forms of critique are specific to science or characterize science?
- How does this critique circulate, e.g. between different disciplines, and what happens to critique in the process of circulation?
- Which critiques can circulate between the three levels described above, e.g. when epistemically rooted critiques transform into critiques of the conditions of academia?
- What is the role of critique in the evolution of disciplinary territories and cultures, e.g. by consolidating disciplinary distinctions?
- How is the relationship between skepticism and reflexivity towards the canons of knowledge and critique organized within and between scientific communities?
- How is the circulation of a "science critique" facilitated or hindered by the existence of specific infrastructures or artifacts?
- How is critique of science linked back to the production of scientific results and artifacts, e.g. mock-ups, prototypes, demonstrators etc.?
- Which values or normative orientations can be used to legitimate and ground critique in science?
- How is critique organized in situations of trans- and interdisciplinarity, e.g. when established notions of quality are challenged and disciplinary jurisdictions become unclear?

Please send your abstracts (max. 500 words) until **Oct 15th** to hesselfe@hu-berlin.de.

References:

Bogusz, T. (2010). Zur Aktualität von Luc Boltanski: Einleitung in sein Werk. Springer-Verlag.

Boltanski, L., & Thévenot, L. (2006). On justification: Economies of worth (Vol. 27). Princeton University Press.