

TRACK 14

ENGLISH VERSION

The new role of R&D networks and evaluation processes in times of 'Big science'

Convenors:

1. Professor Franc Mali, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, e-mail: franc.mali@fdv.uni-lj.si
2. Professor Anuška Ferligoj, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, e-mail: anuska.ferligoj@fdv.uni-lj.si

In the last two decades, STS scholars and R&D policy decision-makers have shown growing interest in finding new evaluation mechanisms to measure scientific productivity, scientific excellence as well as the social and economic impact of scientific results at both the national and transnational levels. It is assumed that these new evaluation mechanisms will increase the accountability and transparency in science, policymaking and funding bodies, and promote the quality of scientific production in national and transnational science systems. Such trends for the more accountable and transparent use of evaluation mechanisms already have a long tradition in Europe's leading scientific countries. Yet, in the last 25 years, especially following the political turn in the 1990s and joining the European Union, various research agencies, ministries of science and other governmental institutions in Central and Eastern European countries have also paid attention to evaluation mechanisms so as to provide more objective tools for use in science decision-making processes. Here, the entry of an audit culture in the public sector has further fostered the introduction of R&D evaluation models. Of course, there is no consensus on which evaluation model is theoretically the most appropriate and practically the most efficient. Still, theoretical and practical re-thinking on this challenging issue of the social regulation of modern scientific systems is increasing.

In recent times, fresh impetus has come from social network analysis which has attracted considerable attention in STS communities because it contributes new interdisciplinary knowledge about the impact of various types and levels of scientific collaboration on the production of scientific knowledge and its output during these times of 'big science'. Science network analysis has developed in the last 30 years, having started rapidly from relatively simple descriptive statistics, through deterministic approaches, to the recent stochastic agent-based modelling of network dynamics. The last approach is especially useful for analysing complex phenomena of modern science and R&D policy.

While pursuing this track, speakers can debate and discuss a range of themes about the new role of R&D networks and evaluation processes in these times of 'big science'. However, potential contributions are not limited to these topics. We also encourage the submission of papers that present a wider perspective on the recent complex processes of the policy regulation of R&D in national and transnational contexts.