

Open Panel – Annual Meeting of the Society for Social Studies of Science (4S)
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120. Remediating remediation: Imagining alternatives for assessing and redressing environmental harm

Organizers:

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Description:

Environmental remediation, or the myriad processes and schemes through which a certain damaged ecology or species is looked to be restored to a more functional or sustainable state, faces a serious paradox. On the one hand, in the face of climate change, environmental contamination, and widespread biodiversity depletion, to enact successful and comprehensive remediation schemes appears more urgent than ever. On the other hand, the common failure of most actual remediation schemes to really achieve their stated aims has caused a growing sense of skepticism among practitioners and analysts alike about the capacity of such interventions to truly help to heal damaged landscapes (or indeed, the planet as a whole). STS scholars have so far importantly contributed to enact such a paradox, mainly through developing case studies critically assessing the multiple shortcomings of current remediation schemes, especially those undertaken as technical, expert-driven processes.

This open panel aims at challenging such state of affairs. Without denying the multiple shortcomings of actual remediation schemes, it looks to go beyond critique and instead explore novel ways to enact remediation through experimental renderings of both the damaged environment and the possible paths for its transformation. Following the conference theme, we solicit interventions that seek to innovate, interrupt, or regenerate remediation practices. Explicitly avoiding modernist dreams of purity, such novel remediations would fully embrace the messy and intermingled character of life on earth, practicing remediation as a socio-technical ensemble involving a heterogeneous array of entities – certainly experts and technical devices, but also multiple publics and nonhuman agents.

Potential themes include:

- Conceptual explorations of the notion of environmental remediation, its capabilities and shortcomings.
- Critical engagements with actual environmental remediation schemes, especially focusing on ways to transform them.
- Analytic case studies of experimental forms of remediation, especially examples that challenge usual environmental governance frames.
- Practitioner accounts on the practice of novel remediations, engaging with its own shortcomings and barriers found.
- Speculative designs for alternative remediation schemes, from methodologies to technologies.

Deadline: Feb 1, 2019

Submissions: <https://www.4s2019.org/accepted-open-panels/>