

**The Labs of the Parliament:
Making Use of Laboratory Studies for Investigating Political Work**

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Taking STS to the parliament can be done in different ways, since the field has developed a variety of theoretical and methodological traditions. One way is to focus on laboratory studies and on the question of how to make use of their specific innovations for the study of parliamentary politics.

Although there have been a number of different ways of doing laboratory studies, they afford some common features and implications. Most notably, they all contribute to an unusual and new understanding of science by showing that scientific objects (like microbes or high-energy particles) are not natural givens discovered by scientists, but get culturally and politically fabricated *in* the lab. For example they are constructed by context-specific symbolic classifications, technical procedures, literary techniques of persuasion embodied in scientific papers, or political strategies of scientists forming alliances with human and non-human actors. Thus, lab studies, at least in my view, do not claim "that nothing extraordinary and nothing 'scientific' (is) happening inside the sacred halls" (Latour 1983, p.141) of science. Rather, I think lab studies demonstrate in detailed ways that science does not necessarily fit the formalized and idealized accounts of scientists.

According to this view, what a social studies of politics can gain from lab studies is not a way of showing that there is nothing 'political' going on in parliaments, but a way of examining how politics is being done in and across its everyday work contexts. It can examine, among other things, how political objects are not the result of ideologies or the mental products of individual politicians, but how they are being fabricated in the lab-like locales of politics. Thus, in my paper I will discuss three points: (1) I will review the 'laboratory' as theoretical notion rendering it not just as a locale but also as a site or habitat producing epistemic benefits; (2) I will focus on the methods and methodological principles deriving from that notion; and (3) I will discuss some possibilities for making use of the aforementioned conceptual and methodological innovations for the study of political labs. Here I will refer to an ongoing project studying the fabrication and utilization of political positions (politische Sachpositionen). As I am currently negotiating the possibility of doing fieldwork in a parliamentary office (Fraktionsbüro), to what extent I can draw on my own empirical data is dependent on the course of my fieldwork.