

MUSTS inaugural biennial event, 2020

Thematic focus: Embodied Expertise in Art, Science and Medicine

<http://www.maastrichtsts.nl/musts-thematic-event-embodied-expertise-in-art-science-and-medicine/>

The aim of this online-virtual gathering was to articulate what brings together MUSTS scholars working on embodied expertise or using embodied methods, and building upon that, to create an articulation of what creative, innovative contributions MUSTS has to make to STS more broadly on the theme of embodied expertise. The specific focus was on methodologies, in order to hone discussions in our time together. Here are some of the ideas and insights gathered at the event from some participants:

- Our research related to embodiment considers the ontological, epistemological and methodological concerns of embodiment as productive and generative for our work.
- There are different notions of ‘method’ at work, in matters of embodiment: methods to generate/articulate new questions; methods to sensitise ourselves to new sensations; methods to discover new insights (in response to questions); methods to witness, document, record, share; and methods to evidence propositions. Rather than keep these collapsed under the same umbrella of ‘methodology’ it seems useful to think through different terms/vocabularies for these as different research practices.
- Whichever way method is thought of, some of us acknowledge that studying embodiment in embodied ways has the potential to change our perspective on our research topics. This may involve specific experiments in embodied thinking or attending to the embodied ways we inhabit archives, do interviews and engage in other methods in our work.
- When it comes to publishing and sharing our research, this is not only an STS topic of study (see for example the strong research line in MUSTS in conference histories and ethnographies), but some of our work also explores its boundaries in our own dissemination practices. In sharing material, many of us are pushing traditional modes of publishing, engaging with local, new, diverse communities, at the same time acknowledging the practical, logistical challenges of this and the need to prioritise purpose and audience.
- Questions that arise for some of us when sharing material in multimedia forms include: How might different media afford other ways of thinking? What does this mean practically for how we do fieldwork? And finally, how to present multimedia - for its own sake or use it in argumentation in making a point? And in terms of writing, questions included: How does experimenting with different forms of embodied writing generate thoughts and narratives? How can we use

language and text in ways that are evocative, but also performative in other (embodied) ways? In what ways is academic writing performative and how can we use this as embodied researchers and not just see this as a limitation?

Inspired by the audio podcasts many of us listened to prior to the event, questions that arose included:

- Methods in the making - how do our methods evolve to different situations, improvise and adapt and get formed in the process of our research? How to train ourselves as research instruments? How to hone skills, and develop a site-specific rigour and attention?
- How can we attend to the vulnerability of bodies? Where is the border between method and outcome when dealing with embodiment?
- How can we explore more ideas of walking in place with others and with our own work - exploring methods that attend to the local specificities of place, during fieldwork, supervision, teaching and also reading our work while moving (our own notes, the work of others)?
- What are new ways to explore how to translate our research on embodiment in multimodal forms other than text such as film and sound, and how to engage playfully with new formats e.g. Zoom, audio - in doing and sharing our research?
- Can we bring non-human bodies into the conversation - and if so how and where?