



**RUSTLAB**

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*It is a process, you know...*

*“And practice!”, one shouts.  
A challenge, I’d say.*

*A gurgling “fluid” from afar,  
becoming louder  
and then...?*

*In the RUSTlab 2020*

## 1. Introduction: What is coding for?

This document is a frozen moment of a collaborative process of discussing what we desire from the RUSTlab.

The RUSTlab consists of two rooms outside the campus of the Ruhr-University Bochum that offer space to experiment with material things, including methods and data as well as concepts. The lab also is a form of working and learning together and experimenting with the forms of working and learning in academia. The lab experiments with formats of togetherness both in academia as well as in earthly conditions where technologies, nature and humans are intricately linked. The lab is a physical space where we provide means and objects to engage in high- and low-tech mapping, showing, writing and telling. But the lab is also the set of experiments, practices and points of view that we follow, and a continuous reflection over our ways of acting. As a lab, we are committed to a way of working together, supporting each other, and opening quotidian scientific practices to students, non-scientists and the public.

This document that we call the “coding” is accessible to every lab member. It can be made available to our friends and co-laborators so they can understand how we work and why we are interested in the making of knowledge, technologies, standardization or ecologies. Many people have contributed to this collective document. The lab coding book is a situational material compound to our lab. We enact it in a variety of ways, and we will remain to experiment with it as a description and inscription of our lab work. It does not easily translate into practice and this unease is what we want to be attentive to.

Coding is a constant process and remains a matter of concern in everything we do. It offers the work in progress of our commitment, practices and codes of conduct for being together in the RUSTlab. It serves as a record of our work and serves navigation purposes since in it we note our wishes for the future and things to take care of in the present. It transpires what the lab desires, materializes our imaginaries, and documents our experiences. But most importantly, its existence and iterative

revisions are devices for continuously reminding ourselves to consider how we do academia and if this indeed corresponds to academia as we want it.

This lab coding emerges out of local discussions and is tightly knitted into our experiences in academia and our fields alike. We were inspired by the CLEAR Lab book of the Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research in Turtle Island (<https://civicLaboratory.nl/>) and the introduction to this book by Martina Schlünder in 2019. Readers familiar with Science & Technology Studies (STS) vocabulary will recognize implicit references to STS work. However, we have refrained from referencing work explicitly, as we want to read the lab coding more as a flow of reflections on practice than as a scholarly text. We hope our document can work as an inspiration to other labs as well. Each lab-code, however, will require a precise localization to each individual desires and philosophy. Coding cannot be simply implemented.

The coding book is also meant to highlight what often remains implicit and invisible in academic life. While heroism, individualism, and hierarchy are very powerful in academia, and we recognize that our lab does not exist outside of them, we attempt to counteract them by caring for the solidarity and relationality that is also part of (academic) life. You are not individually responsible for being good, but you are asked to question what makes it so hard in academia to show solidarity and be relation-oriented, in society and the world.

The coding should serve for external people to get to know the lab and help its members to understand it better and reflect on it. For now, our coding includes different sections where we describe how we think of ourselves and how we (hope to) behave among each other. The sections describe the settings where we meet, the rules and expectations of participation in these settings, procedures to become a member, student involvement, friends and networks, and tries to set the ground on how we communicate internally and externally, what are the roles of our members, and how we position ourselves to tricky constraints such as power dynamics and funding our togetherness.

## 2. The RUSTlab: Who are we? Why RUST?

RUSTlab stands for Ruhr University Science & Technology Studies Laboratory. The lab is affiliated with the Chair of Cultural Psychology and Anthropology of Knowledge at the Ruhr-University Bochum (RUB). The lab infrastructure first and foremost is a specific place that we care for, filled with tables, books, coffee, plants and more. The lab also is a virtual space. A webpage, a runway of emails, a Twitter account and Slack. Its spatiality and temporality are, therefore, multiple, collective and always in process.

The RUSTlab's central conceptual heritage lies in the interdisciplinary and international "Science and Technology Studies" (short: STS). The field develops creative methods and theories through empirical studies to examine science and

technology in action. Having STS as a field, we stitch in many other interests and competencies that change with the lab members (see the section on membership). The lab is a way of relating things, people, controversies, methods and approaches. The following list points to some of our current interests:

ANT, anthropology of knowledge, algorithms, artificial intelligence, classifications, data, ethnography, feminism, health technologies, infrastructures, materiality, political ecology, posthumanism, practice, ruins, social anthropology, sociology, standards.

Why RUST? In a world of industrial ruins, shiny and clean material becomes rusty. Rust is a “becoming”, a process of transformation from provisionally well-defined and contoured shapes to a rough and fragile existence. Rust is part of ghostly landscapes in a time of domination by the Anthropos. We live with rust and constitute rust. Rust is beautiful, an aesthetic pleasure. Rust is also the surname of a German teenager and amateur pilot who in 1987 crossed the iron curtain and landed in Moscow near the Red Square. This action indicated the possibility of the impossible and the ability to point to weaknesses of powerful infrastructures.

Rusting and living with rust is not always a choice, but a requirement of living on post-industrial earth.

Taking rust as a metaphor that applies to various conditions of life on this planet, to aesthetics and courage, our lab seeks to contribute to better ways of engaging with the science and technology-intensive cultures that give rise to and are affected by these conditions. Embedded within the field of STS, the lab themes are subsumed under the broader questions of knowledge production, technology development, naturecultures and socio-material entanglements.

Our approach and the challenge we take upon ourselves is ethnographic at its core. Building on the different shapes and shades that ethnography went through and is still going through, the RUSTlab aims to contribute to and develop participatory, sustainable, open-ended, experience loaded and creative approaches that push the boundaries for engaging with scientific and technology-intensive cultures.

### 3. “Coding” instead of “Code (of Conduct)”: What is coding and how is it performed? What do we stand for?

Contrary to other current endeavours in STS similar to this, we decided to refrain from calling it “code of conduct,” as this notion carries problematic colonial connotation. Furthermore, we settled for the verb “coding” – instead of the noun “code” – to emphasize its processuality. This lab coding is not primarily a set of rules, a code to refer to in conflict. Rather, it is a device for thinking collectively about what we do, and particularly about how we do what we do.

The lab emerged from existing practices within the Ruhr University Bochum, and a desire to have an open working space to engage more experimentally with our

research interests. This entails maintaining existing traditional academic formats while at the same time exploring and developing approaches that have gained attention in STS, namely re-tooling, co-laborating, and experimenting with emerging modes of participation in academic life.

The lab is situated in disciplines, in societies, and in a world that we are accountable to. Even though we would like our lab to be a place of harmony and acceptance, we do not shy away from confronting behaviour that makes us uncomfortable. The lab, in this sense, reaches beyond its members and makes itself accountable to the world by stepping outside of our lab group and academia.

We are convinced that the lab performs an alternative to a progress/growth-driven world in noticing care and struggle as techniques of maintenance and survival. While many of the disciplines with which we collaborate (and co-laborate) maintain growth-driven ideals, we developed from these encounters a position of caring for assemblages of humans and technologies. Instead of pointing fingers and blaming, we make ourselves accountable for our research and research partners. For example, engineering sciences tend to assume neutrality in their political agony, but at the same time, they call for ethical considerations and studies measuring the social impact of technologies.

We propose situated ethics that are sensitive to local environments and hence cannot be abstract and general, but situated and specific. What is considered “good” depends on the situation it is part of. There is no abstract good deducible from general rules, principles or logic alone. If we keep distancing general rules and ethics from situated practices, the messy, impure and imperfect actions of daily life will always fall through the grids. The lab consists of practices that highlight connectedness and impurity rather than purity and cleanliness.

Our coding is not general, but specific and it is not distanced but dirty. This demands us always being accountable for our coding, to continuously work on it and reconfigure it. What is good, is not printed in this document, but should emerge through its localizing and enactment. What follows is a mixture of small and specific issues and more overall desires and horizons, resonating with how the concrete and the abstract amalgamate in our everyday practice.

#### 4. Lab desires: How do we want to be?

Our lab is a place for experimentation, playfulness and creativity. Part of our activity entails design, inventing games, crocheting, drawing and mapping.

With all its openness and exploration, the lab fosters accountability to the research fields, our scientific communities, our co-laborators, our friends and partners and ourselves. We believe that unless explicitly challenged, individualistic tendencies will increase in academia and beyond are increased. Therefore, by committing to support each other, we commit to being accountable to each other. Whenever we

give advice, we relate to each other's challenges; we do not distance ourselves after the session or project ends.

We believe in the value of equity, emphasizing different social positions and histories. Equity differs from equality in that it aims not to treat every person the same (here we follow and agree with CLEAR's Lab book, see p. 2). Different people have different competencies and struggle with different things. We acknowledge the different positions, and we work on methods to enact equity.

- The lab is a place that encourages and is accountable for diversity (gender, nationality, language, preferences, abilities and political points of view).
- The lab is a safe space. We can present the wildest ideas that are not in the shape of being put into traditional academic formats of presentation.
- The lab is a composition of many individual research interests. While we in general share approaches and methods, it does not exclude anyone for their research topic. The lab is a place to foster strange cross-relations between research fields by looking for similarities instead of differences. In that way, we can partially connect our fields and controversies, materialities and ecologies.
- Everyone is invited to stay a member when they leave university. We hope the lab reaches beyond our time as students, professors, post-docs or PhDs.
- We need to take care of our rooms. The lab is also the space. We have in mind that there are other academics at RUB that urgently look for rooms and we have the luxury of having our own.

## 5. Reflexive Coding, (Re-)Assembling the Author: Learning how to write collaboratively

(Susan Leigh Star 1995. *The Cultures of Computing*. Sociological Review Monograph Series. Oxford, UK: Blackwell. :7)

We all have individual projects and careers. Nonetheless, producing texts collectively is a vital activity and goal of the lab. This coding document is the first exercise of writing collectively that emerged during our RUSTlab Retreat 2019 and over the following weeks/months/years. We decided that the process of thinking and writing the coding together would be continuously reflected and documented as part of the document itself. This way, we enact an old lesson from STS: observe science (and technology studies) in action instead of ready-made science (and technology studies). But even more importantly, we want to understand better the ways we engage with each other and the text to facilitate and support this collective process.

## Guide of procedure for collective lab work

This is the procedure we have set for the coding.

1. Turn on “Track Changes” whenever you feel your contribution may be controversial or should be discussed. Else, please turn it off and write as a collective author.
2. BEFORE EDITING, always make a copy of the document, increment the version number and update the date in the document name (e.g.: “Lab\_coding-0\_0\_1-18092019.docx” -> “Lab\_coding-0\_0\_2-20092019.docx”). Also, update the version number in the header/top of the document. Then make sure to be working on the newly created version of the document, not the old one. Also, tell everybody in Slack that you are working on the document so nobody creates a conflicting copy.
3. Help to polish the document: correct typos and make minor changes without hesitation.
4. Bring your notes, doubts and ideas to Slack, or a “Machine Room” session, or to a conversation on the lab sofa.
5. After editing, hit the save button again and upload the file to the Sciebo folder “lab Coding.” Move the older document version (the one you copied and renamed in step 3) to the subfolder titled “coding-archive.”

## 6. Communications and modes of public engagement: How do we communicate internally and externally?

We draw inspiration from different places in our effort to communicate and engage with each other. With their humanist heritage, systems, tools and approaches are challenging our shared understanding of actors and events as situationally distributed phenomena. Though, we don’t want to reproduce notions of actors as individualized persons (acting rationally or irrationally in following their intentions or feelings). Therefore, in adopting specific practices from humanist approaches, we try to avoid taking “the individual” for granted or even as the core unit of communicative interaction.

Here are a few basic principles to adhere to in terms of communication among team members during RUSTlab activities and events such as discussions, meetings, lectures, or machine rooms, virtual or in-person:

- Take care of the language you use when talking to colleagues. E.g. Instead of saying ‘it is wrong’, say: ‘I have a different opinion’.
- Disengage from systematically occurring, harmful micro techniques (like micro interruptions, saying pfff, or using annoying body language when you don’t share other people’s opinions (of course this does not mean you have to take care of spontaneous reactions, just don’t be rude).
- If you feel someone is rude or said or did something that hurt you, avoid thinking of it as having been intentional. If possible, address it humorously or

surprisingly that makes the other participant aware of the effect and allows for increased response-ability.

- We don't like judging statements. However, everyone judges sometimes; this is not about being a bad person.
- Try not to personalize. While taking care is our guiding attitude, we do not intend to go against disagreements and lively discussion. Remember politics is agonistic, so defend your point of view with respect and without fear.
- Also, try not to internalize and personalize guilt when you made a mistake (e.g. "I'm so terrible because I did something wrong!"). Instead, try to recognize the error without self-attributing guilt and try to find a way of regenerating the connection.
- Be confident. Try to overcome impostor syndrome!
- At the start of each session, we decide if we need a moderator to facilitate balanced turn-taking. We also sometimes might need a timekeeper (probably). The moderator/timekeeper has the power at their disposal (a clock).
- The lab encourages listening to others. During lab sessions, only one person is speaking at a time.
- In some sessions, we may want to actively increase the chances of every participant to engage in the discussion and to discourage disproportionate over-contribution (e.g. when discussing texts). "Robin rounds" ([https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Round\\_Robin\\_\(Informatik\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Round_Robin_(Informatik))) can be an excellent way to give everyone the option to speak and not be skipped because someone else wants to contribute multiple times (which, otherwise, is very common in German academic contexts). We have also used different versions of creatively developed cards that make the rounds less rigid: "Workshop à la carte: A cardboard set for an egalitarian reading group methodology" (<https://workshopalacarte.wordpress.com/>).
- The lab aims to make decisions collectively and based on consensus. If there are conflicts, we will try to resolve them before they scale. Talk about what bothers you, and in case of absolute disagreement, talk to other members of the lab who can mediate a conversation. In other words, "don't go to bed mad!"

## Internal communication

*Here some guidelines about our primary communication channels among us:*

- Digital communication, and due to recent events, digital teaching, and meetings (!), are a key pillar of the lab.
- So far, we have found out that **Slack** (aside from face to face of course!) is our quickest, safest and easiest way of communicating among lab members. Slack is composed of channels with different topics where we can discuss and post interesting links and ideas.
- All communication platforms are performative; including face-to-face and Slack, twitter, etc.
- While everyone is encouraged to check Slack regularly to know what is being discussed, there is no requirement to be active in Slack. We should avoid taking decisions in Slack, and when done, these decisions should be

confirmed (or rejected) in face-to-face meetings. We value face-to-face (if necessary, online) meetings more than Slack communication. This is particularly important also because lab members engage very differently with Slack. Let's not forget that different engagements (quantitatively and qualitatively) are understood, and it is the lab's responsibility to keep learning how to deal with these differences.

- We need to be careful not to engage in Slack 24/7 and indeed take days off Slack. If you don't remember when you have last had a day without looking into Slack, please take that day off right away!
- Slack can become quite messy, and a mess might result in inaccessibility. Please use Slack carefully, working with the different channels and layers of discussion to keep things transparent and accessible.
- Mark people with @ so that the addressed persons do not miss out on the message. If the message can be sent directly to someone through the private channel, please do it, so we don't spam the others.
- We try to talk with each other and not about each other by addressing people directly using @.

### **External communication**

- The lab-coordinator takes care of Twitter and other external communication.
- We use a mailing list to inform interested colleagues about lab activities.
- We have a website (<https://rustlab.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/>) that presents ways to contact us and details about our activities, interest and aims.
- The lab has a Twitter account that we use to tell about our activities and keep an informal channel of communication with friends and colleagues. We don't want to tweet too much. The lab coordinator leads the twitter account, although any RUSTlab member may tweet from the RUSTlab account (contact the coordinator if you don't have the password).
- We use a Google-Calendar of lab presence. lab members are invited to this calendar, and they are encouraged to register their presence to let non-key holders – including students – into the rooms (e.g. to work or use our library).
- In general, during our classes, we should mention the lab and the benefits it offers to students (room, books, lectures; speaking to us).
- We encourage members to follow the Twitter account and share posts in their networks, but this is not mandatory and we also respect those who are not fans of social media.

## **7. Membership and roles: How do we work? Who makes up the lab?**

While the lab is a physical and virtual space, a crucial part of the lab is its people.

We expect the lab to be a friendly space, where we see where we consider ourselves equals while recognizing and encouraging our differences in our ways of doing and thinking. Nonetheless, the lab exists within a university structure in which people have different employment positions that grant them different material, discursive and social values. The university directly employs some of us; others are not employees; some were active in the RUSTlab but now have taken different paths while remaining connected to us.

All these positions do not disappear in the lab. Still, we seek to provide equal discursive and social opportunities to all, independently of the status individuals carry due to their employment position. Lab members have different personalities, different competencies, and other resources that each grant them different possibilities to participate in lab activities.

Part of the lab is to experiment with our roles as teachers, professors and students and become issue experts, affected, caregivers and care receivers. The lab is not one entity among other institutionalized entities at the university. Members of the lab are always involved in other groups and things. Activities of members and the lab itself reach out to other groups and people. The lab is located in one building with the interdisciplinary Centre for Anthropological Knowledge in Scientific and Technological Cultures, CAST, and right below the research Centre for Advanced Internet Studies (CAIS). We are situated in these spatial conditions and collaborate as neighbours and friends. The lab is also the people who often carry the sensibilities of ethnography with them. We needed a material space to serve as a compound for our sensibilities and reflexivity and hence the lab. The lab is always enabling as well as a result of our work in different constellations.

Even though most lab activities implicitly prioritize some forms of participation over others (for example being present during the meetings), we seek to make it possible for people to participate in different ways such as staying connected to Slack channels or come through skype to the meetings (STS and social science suggest various forms of participation: 'the other', 'outsider' or 'trickster' (Haraway), 'Woman who makes a fuss' (see Stengers & Despret), 'Gino', who doesn't want to be cared for (see Callon & Rabiharisoa), cyborg, etc.). We value all contributions and all our activities involve shared ownership and allow people to contribute legitimately in different ways.

As the lab has general inclusive interest, and in connecting with interested colleagues inside and outside the university, we encourage people to participate in lab activities and to become lab members. Aside from the core active members, there are several other occasional participants: bachelor, master and doctoral students, postdocs, student assistants, assistants to events and friends or collaborators from other universities and public and private institutions. We treasure and engage with a strong network of STS labs and institutes (you can see here)

All current members of the lab have different circumstances, and the common trait that defines membership is care and participation. In other words, a member is part of the core group that takes care of the lab, participates in lab activities, and meets regularly with us (virtually or physically). Even though the regularity and manner of

participating vary, this definition of membership includes a lot of different engagements, from plants' quiet participation over students involved in one or two activities to colleagues at other universities or abroad passing by once in a while and to those engaging daily in on- and offline relations with the lab.

The following are some of the most explicit roles and activities that give some orientation about the lab's structure. These roles are fluid and can be assumed by different people:

**Members:** A group of stable members – who you can get to know through the lab's website overview – take care of the lab and plan its activities. The lab members have different roles that enact the lab and make it function. Regular attendance of stable members is expected but not enforced (it can be via video conferencing as we continue to improve our online platforms!). We also understand that it is not necessary to participate in every single activity of the lab or even most of them to be part of it. Among current members, there are varying intensities and proximities. It is possible to relate and participate in a close and intense way (being present and active in almost every lab activity or even setting up new ones) or to relate and participate more distantly and less intensely (attending the Lectures and MR sessions but not the reading group, instead, contributing by other means), or anywhere in between. Being considered a member will come out organically (see section 8). Joining and having a contract with the chair comes with expectations regarding membership to the lab. Nonetheless, if you don't have a contract or have a different kind of affiliation (e.g., “Lehrbeauftragte” or student), you can still be a full member. In that case, expectation regarding your participation is somehow lower in terms of intensity, as we know you must spend your time studying, making a living or cannot be expected to incur expenses to attend meetings. Nonetheless, your interest and investment are most appreciated, and you will be considered a full member regardless of your employment relationship with the Ruhr University.

**Head of the lab:** Estrid is the person legally responsible for the lab, the formal link between the lab and the university, the financier, and often the final editor of our contents and most of our activities. In the case of fundamental disagreements or conflicts, she is the ultimate person to mediate and make a hard decision. Estrid's decisions can be disputed, and even though she cannot be dismissed as the head of the lab, lab members can surely require of her to change decisions, attitude or behaviour, in case these are detrimental to the labs functioning in accordance with the coding.

**Lab coordinator:** Currently, our lab coordinator is (tba). While we are all encouraged to collaborate and participate in organizing activities, we recognize the need and value of having a person in charge (with the power this implies) of this collaborative organizational stuff. The coordinator's role includes taking care of our website and Twitter, preparing the schedule of the RUSTlab lectures and machine rooms, organizing the office hours and the schedule, looking out for funding opportunities for the lab, and being the primary plant caretaker. The lab coordinator is appointed by Estrid, ideally among university employees, whose contract will compensate for the work that coordination involves. More info can be found in the section on lab coordination.

**Coding coordinator:** While this document is the product of a collaborative writing process, we appoint one person who makes sure coding is not forgotten. They do not work as moral police but put coding on the schedule and remind us to write assigned parts in the document or clean our comments from time to time. The current coding coordinator is Jan (summer 21). Past coordinators were Olga (winter 20-21), Stefan (summer 20), and Susana (winter 19-20).

**Keyholders:** Only people with a working contract have a key that gives access to the lab. Nonetheless, we have come up with a schedule to have open hours for students to use the lab (consult [here](#)). Also, we are flexible to the reach of our unique possibilities to open the lab at different times. If you don't have access and need to use it, please get in touch with the lab coordinator to request access.

**Plant caretakers:** non-human living beings are part of the lab, too. They need regular water and care. While one person assumes the role officially, others with key access are encouraged to help. But don't just water without coordinating with the official plant caretaker (currently: Laura), or we might have an "overcare" accident and drown our plant fellows.

**Coffee maker and tricks buyer:** this is a vital role since we aim to make the lab a pleasant and comfortable space where we can learn and discuss while eating nice things (and hopefully healthy) and drink good coffee (hopefully Columbian). We are all encouraged to assume this role and to always thank the one who carries it in a specific meeting. But if you can't do it for logistical reasons, don't worry, you will find another way to contribute. In a secret box, you'll find money to purchase snacks and drinks. No one apart from Estrid is asked to add funds to the secret box. Ask other members where to find the box.

**Pixel Pushers / Designers:** The lab needs people who contribute to it by creating and maintaining a range of forms and formats for the lab's communicative channels. Currently, this is mainly (but not exclusively) taken care of by Miriam. At the moment, it is first and foremost a matter of producing visual layouts for posters, flyers and web content. But we hope, in the future, to broaden the scope to also include other modes of artful engagement and production. These forms of commitment are just as much part of the creative processes of the lab as is the production of text and, therefore, should be acknowledged in the same way. If you are interested in contributing this way, please get in touch.

**Students:** Student involvement is a significant aim that may start by using the lab space for seminars. Students who have visited the RUSTlab during seminars will get a short introduction to the lab and can henceforth use it according for their own work during the opening hours. Students are explicitly addressed when advertising for lectures and machines rooms. They are also encouraged to join as more stable members and discuss and carry out their thesis with the lab.

## 8. Becoming a member (how to engage with the lab actively?)

As we wish that people join the lab, we have come to think about how new people become a member. We have come to think of the process of becoming a member and the concept of a member itself to be quite fluid and organic.

How one person becomes a new member, or when and how they feel part of the lab, is something that is going to be eventually fluid. There are many different ways into the RUSTlab. New employees of the Chair, for example, will almost automatically become members whose active participation is expected. Students might also join anytime during the semester.

Other enrolments unfold more organically. Crossing the border between non-membership and membership of a social group is always tricky. To acknowledge this, we decided to describe one imagined enrolment process, based on our experience and wishes. Most often, it will probably happen differently. Still, we hope that making these thoughts explicit helps guiding the journey across the border to the lab. We don't want to be overtly ritualistic, but we do consider that as a small group, a new member will pass through some sort of steps or stages to become a full member:

- What deploys the process is an interest in working on STS related topics, working with the RUSTlab team, and the willingness to join lab sessions such as Lectures, Machine Room sessions and other semester activities.
- The lab exists within a university, and therefore academics of all backgrounds are welcome. But as a part of a public university, we also welcome people outside academia to join the lab as members.
- One step in becoming a member can be to join Lectures regularly and to express interest in being more closely related to the lab.
- The person to which interest is expressed is expected to tell the other members and suggest inviting the interested person also to non-public meetings and our Slack-Channel. This will allow the prospective member to get to know the lab better. Slack is where our real-time interaction happens. Therefore, to be there is to be in the "virtual" side of the lab.
- If continued interest persists, the new - or coming - member will increase his or her activity and be invited to further meetings and events. It is also possible that this person decides not to continue his or her engagement with the lab, which is also entirely acceptable.
- When engaging more regularly with the lab, new members are asked to read the lab Coding (this book) carefully, write down his or her thoughts, comments and questions. We are interested in newcomers' perspectives, as newcomers often see issues that old-timers don't. If you discover sections of the lab coding that do not correspond to the reality of the RUSTlab, please share this with other lab members, as these sections may need revision. Newcomers will become a part of the process of "coding", which is both shaping and being shaped by how we want the lab to be.

- At some point, new members will be invited to be listed with (or without) their picture on the lab webpage. When this happens, the process of becoming a member can be considered complete.

### **Leaving / Exiting the lab**

At what instance a member stops being considered so is something that within the lab, we have not fully experienced yet. That someone gets a new job somewhere else, or simply finishes his or her engagement with the Ruhr University does not necessarily mean that he or she stops being a member. We mark the level of engagement through the position of our photos/images on the website. Anyone can exit anytime upon request. Yet, we understand that being less present will initiate a new phase of kinship with the lab, where you stop being an active member and become a lab Friend or part of our academic network.

*When you are about to leave:*

- We will have a farewell party with food and beverages (whether in person or virtually).
- Tears are allowed.
- Take all your materials and objects if you need them. Sort out any flip charts and posters that you have created during your lab time.
- Leave things in the lab if the members can use them or if you want to leave them as presents or evidence of your time in the lab.
- Give back the keys if you have any.

*The choice to leave or to be an e-member:*

- Tell the coordinator if you want to stay for a while on the webpage or if you want to be removed right away. It is your choice, and neither option is considered more appropriate than the other.
- Sign out from email lists and Slack if you want to stop participating or collaborating virtually. Inform the coordinator.
- If you decide to join our sessions virtually, you are most welcome to. It is also valid to leave slowly: that is finishing pending activities or start attending only some meetings.

## **9. Student participation**

There are several ways in which students can participate in the RUSTlab:

- Visit the RUSTlab in our [student lab time](#) or write us an email stating your interest in visiting the lab
- Take one of our courses offered by the [Chair of Cultural Psychology and Anthropology of Knowledge](#) and ask for lab sessions

- Come to the [RUSTlab Lectures](#) or join our [Machine Room](#) sessions
- Ask for an internship as a junior lab assistant

## 10. Lab Coordination, Activities and Events (how do we function daily?)

The functioning of the lab depends on a set of activities and platforms. As introduced above, the lab coordinator is the one in charge of logistical matters, but we are all encouraged to help and to participate. The following are some instances where we enact the lab:

### **Calendar**

As mentioned, the calendar serves to see collectively the lab member's activities and the classes we all give. We encourage members to add the lab calendar to their schedules so they can know what is going on and at what times.

An essential feature of the calendar is to set the times for lab attendance. Everyone can put in the calendar the time s/he is in the lab which should serve others and students to see when they can use the lab rooms. We have three different categories to mark in the calendar:

- (1) There are 'open hours' for the lab, 2h during the week (managed by the coordinator, he will be there).
- (2) There are booked student hours (students can write an email to the lab manager to ask for a specific slot. And then somebody will be there if it fits the schedule).
- (3) We are in the house but not available (e.g., having a class next door).

### **Lab Lectures and Machine Room**

With lab Lectures, we provide public events in which lab members or guests present a topic of their choice. While lecturers have always presented physically, we encourage members and outsiders to attend lectures by electronic means. We are continually working on improving the possibilities of this e-participation. As the world is rapidly changing, we are starting to consider the option that lecturers (or even all participants) join electronically. The experiment is open. But judging from our experiences during the first term amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems to work quite nicely. Even though not all Lecture formats translate into the online format easily.

Machine Rooms are more intimate and dwell on experimental matters. As most machine rooms, ours too powers the construction of the lab itself, works on its maintenance, repair and innovation. The Machine Room contains a lot of creative and unbound energy. Therefore, it requires some shielding to protect the vulnerable processes inside, as well as the world outside against the disturbance and the high potentials it facilitates.

## **Teaching / Regular Lectures and Courses**

We teach STS at the Ruhr University and aim for a coherent STS programme in the Social Sciences. We provide a full list of classes for each semester at the [CUPAK website](#).

Student participation generally is one of our core principals. We encourage students to get involved in lab activities and to request the lab room for their empirical projects. The lab is a place where students can come and find support for their fieldwork within Science & Technology Studies and related areas.

To encourage student's participation in the lab, we encourage lab members who teach to present the lab during their classes, to remember students about the public lectures, and to promote attendance explaining the benefits of using the lab or joining as members.

## **Collective Reading**

We aim to collectively read books each semester, either engaging the whole group or in smaller groups. This should help us to discuss exciting material, but it also encourages us to reflect on the process of writing itself. What does it mean to write well? For whom? How is a good book organized?

So far, we start by choosing a text that we all want to read. We do this in a machine room session where each of us brings one book idea and presents it to the group. Then we chose one book, and we program about three sessions during the semester and set reading goals for each.

## **Collective Writing**

So far collective writing has happened mainly with the coding, as explained above, and in small working groups concerning specific papers, presentations and collective applications. This has happened mainly electronically or during coding sessions.

But as working in the social sciences and humanities implies writing, we have also organized sessions about writing where we read an excerpt of our own or other people texts. We have had sessions to presents examples of good and not-so-good writing, and we have collectively reflected on what makes a text good or bad.

As writing in the social sciences and humanities is often approached as an individual task, we attempt to turn parts of it into a collective process. The lab convenes collective writing sessions twice a week. These have emerged out of individual projects but have now stabilized as open formats everyone is welcome to join – at least everyone who is willing to “shut up and write” for a couple of hours.

## Funding

In the lab, we support each other in our funding ambitions, and we share funding opportunities. Each semester the lab coordinator organizes a "funding session" to see upcoming calls and to discuss emerging funding ideas.

However, the writing responsibilities are a matter of concern for each new project-to-come. While it is not mandatory, we encourage members to apply for funding together and to engage in collective writing.

## Reviewer 2

If a lab member wants other lab members' peer-review, this person can ask for a devil's advocate machine room session to evaluate her paper. In that session, we play the game of being heartless evaluators and help the applicant with issues and questions that might emerge in one of those processes. Costumes and props are helpful for sticking to the role.

## 11. Re-Setting & Re-Tooling (how do we experiment in academia?)

The RUSTlab experiments with re-tooling social science methods for engaging with changing, distributed and heterogeneous socio-technical worlds. Among the well-known and innovative methods, we re-set, and mix in-depth observations, digital methods, participation, walkthroughs, storytelling, visualizations, data scapes, mappings, games, scenarios, emic comparisons, object ethnographies, etc.

We aim to update ethnography for rusty times and technological entanglements: collaboratively, engaging and participatory.

We are thinking about accessing and reusing ethnographic data while staying accountable to our study participants and fields.

Our formats include:

- Writing Group with interdisciplinary friends
- Graphic Recording
- Learning digital methods (Daniel's workshop, CAIS workshop, Open Science Foundation, Informatik'19, Seminar!)
- Fieldwork Crash-Course
- Open data spaces

## 12. Co-laborating

Many of us have roots in ethnography and commit to its participatory character. We foster the participatory competencies of ethnography in approaching our field not as distanced interlocutors but as co-laborators. We achieve this by opening the lab for co-laborators and organizing sessions where we discuss co-laborator's issues and ideas. This life of the lab as an open space enabling participatory formats resonates with the lab's coding as not simply critiquing reactively but working proactively towards intervening and building.

We take inspiration from groups in the field of STS that use data and data visualizations as boundary objects to foster heterogeneous engagement in "data sprints" (TANTLab.aau.dk) and develop tailored modes of engagement with our fields.

We often work in settings of heterogeneous actors, both within our fields and within our academic settings, hence one of the first intervention formats we explored was a mapping event with an interdisciplinary project group two members are part of. Using the publications from project members as source material, we mapped the co-occurrence of most frequently used terms in the papers (using semantic analysis software CorText). This gave us a mapping of the landscape of disciplines in the project. To follow our intent of proactive engagement rather than reactive description, we used this mapping to get into a conversation with project members. The project members interpreted the model themselves and found surprising clusters and explanations. The mapping was in the following used to discuss how formats of interdisciplinary encounters were working for the project group and what new formats were needed, e.g., to establish a further connection between the clusters in the mapping.

- In our research of cybersecurity and data governance, we often encounter cultures of secrecy and strict access control. Write about workshop with academia and industry actors
- Add Fieldwork Crash-Course?
- Interdisciplinary Writing Group
- "lab Visits" with SecHuman people

## 13. Participatory Formats

The lab space is open for everyone. In order to facilitate including non-members into our activities, we promote our events through posters, email invites and on twitter. In doing so, we hope to inspire discussion about our activities by physical and online discussion.

In addition, we work towards formats that allow explicit participation by the public. We employ some techniques suggested by colleagues in STS: We take inspiration from [TANTLab](https://tantlab.aau.dk/) to develop participatory formats using digital data and data stories. Resting upon the Scandinavian design tradition of "Participatory Design",

“Participatory Data Design” or PDD for short, involves stakeholders and heterogeneous users in the design of technological systems, visualizations and data stories. Throughout the entire “data pipeline” stakeholders are involved in deciding what data to collect, what to complement when data is missing, how to prepare the data and visualize it in a way that is appropriate to their concern. We engage in PDD in our teaching activities, which turned PDD both into a lab concern and an opportunity for students to co-design.

To give an example, In the winter term 2019/2020, we develop together with a class of interdisciplinary undergraduate students from Social Science and Applied Informatics, data visualizations on ecological issues. Students were asked to group together with 3-4 Social Science students and 2 Applied Informatics Students. They develop the group’s focus and participatory/political impact themselves and collaboratively with each other and with local partners. Students searched, cleaned and prepared data to tell stories that transpire change for local partners. The interactive maps are accessible to the public ([datastories.rub.de](http://datastories.rub.de)).

## 14. Contributors to the RUSTlab Coding

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