Concept Paper for the establishment of a Network for Science and Technologies Studies in Africa (STSAfrica)

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Aims of the Network

The Network for Science and Technologies Studies in Africa (STSAfrica) connects scholars from all over the world working with STS on African issues and at the same time creates a space for African scholars to strengthen their positions by using STS. The network does not only promote Science and Technology Studies but, at the same time, facilitates postcolonial critique of STS in order to overcome its Eurocentric origins. Out of this critique the network generates tangible knowledge that might help to improve science and technology policy and practice in the region. STSAfrica is complementary to existing STS organizations but distinguished by its regional focus on Africa.

Designed to cross over political, geographic and organizational boundaries, STSAfrica will have the following aims:

- Promote and critically advance Science and Technologies Studies with a specific regional focus on Africa as a whole
- Stimulate, organize and institutionalize academic research and teaching by using approaches from Science and Technologies Studies
- Support Postgraduate and PhD education, and relevant publications
- Assemble scholars and students from Africa that associate to the aims of the network and support their relations with researchers from outside of Africa
- Assist with funding opportunities for projects related to the aims of the network

Organization

Steering Committee

In order to prioritize activities of the network, a steering committee will coordinate a number of activities. Every member of STSAfrica can be part of this steering committee. Members of the steering committee will be appointed (by the members of STSAfrica) for a two years term in the following positions:
- Chair – Coordination Activities
- Vice Chair – Coordination Activities
- Communication Officer – Editor of email list, website and newsletter
- African Universities Representative – Responsible to represent and communicate the interests of the network to African universities
- Funding Opportunities Representative – Responsible to create a database of possible funding opportunities and assists in proposal writing or similar.

The Steering Committee positions and appointment processes might be subject to changes, depending on the organizational needs of STSAfrica and its members.

Meetings
STSAfrica will aim to support scholars to organize regional and international meetings related to the aims of the network. In the medium-term a biannual conference should be institutionalized. At these meetings, which should be hosted at different universities in Africa, members of the network come together and present their works.

Information exchange
STSAfrica will also serve as an infrastructure to exchange ideas, publications, or news (e.g. job positions, CFP, etc.) between its members. STSAfrica will provide a website and an email list to facilitate this kind of communication.

Scholars from Africa
STSAfrica will in particular support African scholars that include Science and Technology Studies in their works. At a later stage, when the funding has been clarified and arranged, the network can ideally give a limited finical support to some selected individuals. Travel grants should be established in order to give African members of the network the chance to be part of regular meetings. Scholars supported by the STSAfrica should be active within the Steering Committee.

African Association for the Social Studies of Science (AASST)
After several years of successful operation the network might consider the establishment of a professional association, as they do exist in the US (4S), in Europe (EASST), in Latin America (ESOCITE), and in Asia-Pacific (APSTSN).

Planned action and future steps
Informal Round Table Copenhagen 2012
During the 4S/EASST meeting in October 2012 we will invite people that are interested in the network to an informal roundtable. In this meeting we hope to engage more people to actively work on the aims of the network. We will also discuss further details about the organization of STSAfrica. The existing informal steering committee composed of Norman Schräpel and Richard Rottenburg should be expanded to include at least another three members in order to get things moving.

Website, transparency & email list
We aim to establish a website (www.sts-africa.org) that keeps track of the activities of the network and is communicating the aims and ideas of the network to a wider audience. STSAfrica will be in particular concerned to make decisions transparent through documents that will be made available through the website. An email list will be established where members of the network and those who are interested can communicate and exchange information. A list of individuals that work within the broader field of STS in Africa will be produced and updated. This will become an extensive database about scholars and publications related to the interests of the network.

Funding opportunities
At the moment the challenge is apply for grants to run a second foundational workshop after the first one in Halle in July 2012. We are working on this and appreciate any advice.

Next meeting
We shall announce in time a date and a location for an informal meeting in Copenhagen during the EASST/4S meeting in October 2012.