

8th STS Italia Summer School jointly organized with STS Austria

AI and the future of healthcare

7th – 10th July 2025: University of Trieste

STS Italia and STS Austria, respectively the Italian and the Austrian societies for Social Studies of Science and Technology, are co-organizing the Summer School, “AI and the future of healthcare”, from July 7th-10th 2026.

GOALS AND MAIN TOPICS

This joint Summer School pursues a twofold aim: to critically explore AI for healthcare, with a focus on emerging applications in clinical and public health settings, and to provide foundational STS training for early-stage scholars. Students will examine how AI in healthcare is shaped through infrastructures, institutions, sociotechnical imaginaries, and power relationships. The program thus is meant to equip early-career researchers to interrogate AI’s assumptions, impacts, and practices within the specific stakes of healthcare innovation. The programme builds upon core STS concepts and approaches, to allow participants to unpack dominant narratives around AI while developing essential approaches for studying science and technology.

We are currently experiencing what might be described as the peak of the “AI hype”, a period in which both the hopes and anxieties surrounding artificial intelligence have deeply permeated high-stakes domains such as government, science, education, employment, entertainment, cultural consumption, intimate relationships, and—critically—healthcare, broadly understood as the set of practices aimed at keeping people healthy or treating them when they become ill.

In this latter field, AI is often portrayed in the public sphere as a heroic solution capable of ensuring high-quality healthcare while simultaneously reducing public costs. AI systems are expected to increasingly contribute to diagnosing conditions, monitoring health, supporting therapeutic decisions, and organizing and supporting care arrangements. They promise to empower the professional practices of clinicians, healthcare experts and care professionals. They are supposed to improve efficiency and organizational processes and to ensure that the health and care needs of an ageing society are met. Yet Science and Technology Studies (STS) scholars have raised concerns that these

technologies may also amplify existing social inequalities, enable new forms of surveillance, fortify power asymmetries, replace direct contact between people with interactions with the system, and marginalize human expertise. The stimuli coming from this strand of studies is to investigate the internal dynamics that take place in assemblages that involve AI machines, pre-existing infrastructures, professionals, patients and other actors daily involved in the co-production of health and care—the domestication of AI.

Within this emerging landscape, fundamental questions emerge: What are the dynamics that are arising in heterogeneous assemblages in which different forms of agency coexist? Can we imagine a future of meaningful cooperation and integration between humans and non-humans? Or are we witnessing the rise of techno-scientific forces that may ultimately subordinate human agency?

Moving beyond both alarmist and overly optimistic perspectives, the 8th STS Italia Summer School jointly organized with STS Austria seeks to equip young scholars with conceptual and methodological tools to tackle these pressing questions through rigorous empirical research and critical theoretical reflection. Designed primarily for doctoral students, postdoctoral researchers, and early-career professionals, the Summer School offers intensive training opportunities for early scholars in STS, as well as for participants from other disciplinary backgrounds who wish to deepen their understanding of STS. Using the topic of AI in healthcare as a key entry point, the program will explore a range of timely theoretical and methodological issues, providing valuable insights not only for participants whose work focuses on AI and care, but also offering an introduction to STS for scholars whose primary research interests lie beyond these fields.

CONFIRMED SPEAKERS

Confirmed speakers: Doris Allhutter (ÖAW), Attila Bruni (University of Trento), Dorthe Brogård Kristensen (University of Southern Denmark), Silvia Gherardi (University of Trento), Juliane Jarke (University Graz), Katharina Kinder-Kurlanda (University of Klagenfurt), Francis Lee (Södertörn University), Teresa Scantamburlo (University of Trieste).

SCHEDULE, COSTS, AND ACCOMMODATION

The students will be hosted in the [University College AUXILIUM - Opera Children Of The People](#) in the city centre of Trieste. AUXILIUM will provide double or triple rooms as accommodation for 25 students. Teaching and workshop activities will take place within the buildings of the University of Trieste, to assure an intensive program. All participants are expected to attend the entire duration

of the Summer School and a Certificate of Attendance will be provided at the end. Selected participants are expected to be members of STS Italia or STS Austria or to buy their membership once accepted. The fee for participation is 400 € and does not include 2026 [STS Italia](#) or [STS Austria](#) membership.

The fee includes:

- Access to all lectures and workshops
- Teaching materials
- Breakfast, lunches and coffee breaks
- Welcome aperitif
- Social dinner
- Accommodation at University College AUXILIUM

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME

STS Italia and STS Austria have established a scholarship programme. Each scholarship covers the full Summer School fee, including accommodation. A total of 10 merit-based scholarships are available, distributed as follows:

- 4 scholarships for STS Austria associated members;
- 6 scholarships for STS Italia associated members.

IMPORTANT DATES

March 23rd, 2026: Application deadline

April 3rd, 2026: Notification of acceptance and scholarship eligibility

April 15th, 2026: Registration deadline

HOW TO APPLY

The application form is available [here](#). After space for personal details, the form requires a statement of interest (maximum 1500 characters), which should describe the applicant's current research and its relevance to the aims of the Summer School. Finally, it is possible to apply either for STS Italia or STS Austria scholarship. Once filled the form, applicants will be required to send their full CV as an attachment in pdf format to summerschool@stsitalia.org. The application will be closed only when the applicant will have done both tasks: form filling and CV sent. Applications not matching these requirement will not be taken into consideration. Any inquiry regarding Summer School must be

submitted electronically to the Summer School Organizing Committee at: summerschool@stsitalia.org.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION

All early-career students from any geographical affiliation are eligible to apply. In case the number of applications is higher than the maximum number of participants, selection will give priority to PhD students affiliated at European universities, as part of a broader effort to support the European STS research area. Participants will be selected by a joint committee who will also grant the scholarships. The criteria for selection are: fit of the applicant's research topic with the topic of the Summer School, career stage, CV. The same criteria will be used to identify scholarship recipients. Notification of acceptance and scholarship eligibility is March 25th, 2026. Registration deadline is April 15th, 2026.

SCIENTIFIC AND ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

- Simone Arnaldi (University of Trieste)
- Doris Allhutter (Austrian Academy of Sciences)
- Mónica Cano Abadía (BBMRI-ERIC)
- Christian Dayé (TU Graz, STS Austria Board)
- Paolo Giardullo (University of Padova, STS Italia Board)
- Juliane Jarke (University of Graz, STS Austria Board)
- Katharina Kinder-Kurlanda (University of Klagenfurt, STS Austria Board)
- Francesco Miele (University of Trieste)
- Annalisa Pelizza (University of Bologna and University of Århus, STS Italia Board)
- Ilenia Picardi (University of Naples Federico II, STS Italia Board)