

Towards an Historical Ecology of Research Environments

The rediscovery of the laboratory as a major research topic in the history of science in the last decades has shown: Laboratory research takes place and is shaped in historically contingent material, instrumental and spatial settings. Accordingly, the historical reconstruction of these *technical* conditions has become indispensable to the explanation of the *epistemic* output of laboratory research. In spite of this revaluation, the task at the end stayed the same: The analysis of laboratory settings is meant to be an *explanadum* to the knowledge generated by laboratory research.

In our panel we would like to reverse this vector of explanation and focus the laboratory not from the perspective of historical epistemologists but as historical ecologists. Hence, we understand the laboratory not as a mere technical milieu to scientific knowledge production but as a habitat of human inquiry more broadly, taking it serious as an *existentiale* of research. We will argue that a constitutive part of the knowledge produced in these habitats does not fit the distinction epistemic/technical. This is why it remained largely invisible in historiographical analysis. We will shift the focus from the epistemic ends of experimental science to the world of laboratories as habitats in their own right.

In order to elaborate the historical specificity of this approach, we will revisit the emergence of the research laboratory in 19th and early 20th century asking for the new 'habitat-knowledge' that constituted and consolidated this modern research environment.