

Panel Proposal for SHOT 2019 Annual Meeting in Milan

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Panel Title: Rethinking Global Networks in the Cold-War Period

Panel Abstract: In the past decades, scholars have gradually liberated themselves from binary positions such as new-tech vs. old-tech, industrialized tech vs. non-industrialized tech, and are increasingly aware that they actually coexist and sometimes even inspire each other. Still, we largely remain the shadow of Cold War dichotomies, in which socialist and capitalist blocks were mutually exclusive. However, this was not the reality. In fact, Stalin's industrialization was greatly supported by trade with Germany (Schwendemann, 1993). Maoist China had extensive trade contacts with Hong Kong, Macao and Japan, which supplied important goods and technologies for its development. North Korea also benefited from economic ties with Japan (Huges, 1999).

Nevertheless, such aspects have been largely neglected in current scholarship. Important mechanisms, especially the actors and networks involved in such connections, are worth further investigation. Anthropologists argue that transnational interaction emerged through the flow of diaspora, migration, technology, global capital, new media and ideologies which created "ethnoscapes", "technoscapes", "financescapes", "mediascapes", "ideoscapes" (Appadurai 2003). Thus, nation-states or socialist/capitalist camps might not be the most meaningful analytic unit. This panel advocates the adoption of interdisciplinary and interregional perspectives, bringing together scholars from different geographical foci and aims to reconceptualize the history of technology on the exchange and dynamics between Eastern and Western blocks in the cold-war period.