

Society for the History of Technology (SHOT) Annual Meeting, Milan, 24-27 October 2019

Open Session Proposal

Atomic Heritage: Assembling Atomic Cultures, Communities and Knowledge

Panel organisers:

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Nuclear technology has served as a nexus for assembling new social and political collectives, collectives that find their expression not only in atomic cities, regions and landscapes, official and un-official memory projects, but also in different forms of popular culture, art and design. In this open session, we will approach these atomic assemblies critically to investigate their cultural, social, political and environmental histories.

The proposed conceptual focus is on the ways in which social actors create and use atomic heritage – a field of activity which includes, but is not limited to, such forms of the cultural expression and organisation of nuclearity (Hecht 2012) as museum expositions, historic heritage sites, the architecture of nuclear power plants and natural sites, and popular culture and professional art works dedicated to nuclear themes. Public presentations of nuclear power and nuclear weapons have played a central role in the development of nuclear science and technologies; urban spaces and natural landscapes have served as forms of cultural mediation employed by both industry lobbyists and anti-nuclear activists and cultural critics. More recently, an entirely new professional field of nuclear cultural heritage has emerged and is growing rapidly. It is therefore central for the history of technology to analyse the construction of nuclear “assemblies” (Latour 2005) and the nuclear “exhibitionary complexes” (Bennett 1994) and their social and political consequences in different societies.

We invite papers that explore, both critically and historically, the cultures, politics and technologies of assembling atomic heritage. We are particularly interested in comparative and transnational studies that explore the making of atomic heritage in non-European and/or international contexts. This panel session will ask, what forms of assemblies emerge around nuclear technology and what makes them durable? How did the narratives employed to articulate nuclear technology through cultural means emerge and change

during the last century? In what ways does the notion of atomic heritage disturb the existing notions of culture and nature? What is the impact of atomic heritage on the social understanding of temporalities, especially deep time and extreme long-term futures? Finally, can atomic heritage open up the nuclear industry to a genuine public engagement?

Papers exploring the following themes are particularly welcome:

- Assembling atomic heritage as a critical device
- The role of expert and non-expert communities in the making of atomic heritage
- Atomic past: culture, design and materialities
- Internationalisation of atomic heritage

Please send your proposals with current contact information to:
e.rindzeviciute@kingston.ac.uk to arrive by March 25, 2019.

Proposals must include:

A one-page abstract (maximum 500 words) (If you would like to be considered for the Robinson Prize, please be sure to indicate this on your abstract page AND send the SHOT secretary a separate email indicating this, at SHOT.Secretariaat@tue.nl).

A one-page short CV with current contact information (maximum 300 words)

The two pages should be submitted as one file (abstract on page 1 and CV on page 2). Please name this file with your last name and the word "proposal," e.g., "smith_proposal.pdf".