

Session Title:

Present Perfect Progressive: On the Past and the Imaginary

Type: Open Session

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Abstract:

In the context of Science and Technology Studies (STS) and other disciplines investigating science, technology, and society, the concept of the socio-technical imaginary is famously “future imperfect” (Jasanoff and Kim 2015, 1.) In English, this verb tense expresses an action or event predicted to occur prior to an undetermined point in the future. Therefore, the concept of the socio-technical imaginary is configured to study the ever-continuous social and technical mediation of collective action in expectation of something. The future-oriented imaginary frequently intersects with the past, such as through the consequences of expected social trajectories conjured in the past, the aesthetico-political refurbishing of a bygone era to legitimate or justify a planned future or the material result of a particular imaginaries use of the cultural and physical environment. Despite the apparent relationship, a sustained discussion about the imaginary concept(s) and the past has yet to occur. This lack of clear scholarly discussion about the relationship between the past, the imaginary and technology suggests that it would be prudent to gather a panel to discuss and clarify the relationship. This topic also encourages the joining of history of technology approaches with topical discussion. Thus, this panel invokes the grammatical capacity of the “present perfect progressive” to urge on this discussion. In English, the present perfect progressive is a verb tense which describes an action that begins in the past, continues in the present and may continue into the future. In proposing a shift in conjugation, this panel seeks to invite diverse contributions which articulate case studies of specific sciences, technologies, infrastructures, and more which work to access, construct, maintain and destroy the past (whether representations or the evidentiary materiality itself) *and* provide insight into how the vague notions of the past, the imaginary and technology relate. We welcome all manners of reflections on questions such as, is a ‘past’ integral to a socio-technical imaginary? Is it an accessory? Congruent? What are the particular dynamics of representations, knowledges and techniques related to the past in socio-technical imaginaries? How are they valued, utilized, and performed within the landscape of an imaginary, or a landscape of imaginaries? What is to be gained or lost, analytically or politically, through the further specialization of a “historical imaginary”? Further, we invite contributions that refurbish old texts and conversations in the history of technology, reexamine the assumed and unassumed boundaries, or attempt to make, or *unmake* new spaces of inquiry.