

Expanding Analytical Tools for Interrogating Boundary Technologies

A SHoT 2023 Open Session Proposal

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Organizers:

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Abstract:

Boundary technologies are diverse in their scope: material, environmental, socio-cultural, ontological, and epistemological. They can also be used in a multitude of consequential ways, such as defining relationships, charting territories, mitigating uncertainty, and facilitating optimization, among others. Both societies and cultures of knowledge production tend to actively, and intentionally, use boundaries as technologies of governance [i.e. bounded rationalities, political borders, spatial envelopes, paywalls, models, narratives, identities, prejudices, to name just a few], to establish hierarchies, divisions, and other sociological conditions, which privilege and/or conceal power dynamics embedded within innovations, individuals, collectives, values, and/or alternate ways of being. Although societal agents often frame these boundary technologies as stable, scholarship has revealed that these technologies produce 'between' zones and edge conditions that are inherently contextual and mutable, producing indeterminate and/or obfuscated zones rife for exploitation and exploration.

This panel sees boundary technologies as entwined with, but distinct from, the more meta-level analytical tools scholars use to examine boundary technologies, and the kinds of evidence that reveal them. Utilizing the scholarship of History, STS, and the Social Sciences, we seek to expand the analytical tools/ approaches/ methodologies available to understand, [re]construct and operationalize boundary technologies, their agents [human and non-human], and their potential consequences. How may these analytical tools be applied to boundary-related questions, to reframe, reveal, and/or facilitate more robust, nuanced, and just understandings? We imagine this work contributing to aspects of existing suites of boundary-related analytical tools, such as: classification, demarcation, boundary objects, boundary work, trading zones, immutable mobiles, black boxes, large technological systems, closed-worlds, cyborgs, misframing, otherness, and other STS or Postcolonial frameworks. We are particularly interested in scholarship that interrogates existing and/or develops new analytical tools. We welcome novel, contextually rich, and inclusive approaches to boundary-related questions.

Procedure:

Those interested in proposing presentations for potential inclusion in this session will kindly prepare one-page abstracts and a one-page CV with current contact information. **Please submit materials to Meredith Sattler [msattler@vt.edu] by March 20, 2023.**

If you will be a first-time SHoT presenter, do not hold a tenure-stream position, are a graduate student [or no more than two years from receipt of a terminal academic degree], and wish to be considered for the Robinson Prize, please indicate as much in your abstract. [Find information about the [Robinson Prize](#) at the Robinson Prize page at the SHoT website.]