

Harpreet,

You have a really good paper in your hands. I think Instagram will also be a compelling topic exactly because of the worlds it contains and because so many of those worlds were created organically by users and the ways they chose to use the app. With that in mind, I think you'll have enough evidence to create a compelling paper, and what I think could make it even more compelling is to dig a little into the early Instagram and how it was marketed at first, who mainly used it and for what purpose. If you're going to write about all of these cultures that exist on Instagram, I'd love to learn more about the early culture. I've been using it since around 2011 and I feel there has been a shift at some point where people started to break the mold of what Instagram was to be used. Was it the "invention" of the selfie? Was there a moment when Instagram users had a different profile?

Furthermore, I see you will present several examples like beautification, the micro-influencer, and cyberbullying that will serve as case studies as you make your point. I think you should find specific cases within those to try and make your paper a little bit more specific. As it stands, it's quite a broad topic, and having only 8 pages at the maximum might make your life harder. One way you can do this is by choosing a time period (like I suggested above, making it a historic comparison or the creation of a specific hashtag like #selfie) and analyzing all of those case studies within this time period or after/before the creation of a hashtag. Once you make your points more specific, it might be worth it to incorporate the importance of using the interpretative flexibility method throughout the paper on each case study you write about, instead of only having one paragraph about it. You have an ambitious, interesting, and definitely, rich paper to create here and I think you're on the right track!

Nathan,

What an interesting topic! I think writing about the military in an STS setting is very relevant, especially because it brings a topic that always feels so alien closer to our own context and illuminates some of its impact on civil society. As a history major, I like how you'll track change over time and have a critical eye on why those changes happened and what are the conditions that allow for failure. So, from your outline, I was left curious about the supply chain involved in all of this. Where are these weapons and technology coming from? Who's the brain and who's the arms of the military-industrial complex? What does it take for the United States to have the defense system it needs? Maybe that could be broken between the second and third paragraphs; it might make the paper even more STS-focused to explain the supply chain that resulted from those relationships in Congress and the bad politics involved. I also think that your strongest argument is the path-dependency theory as it relates to the United States' refusal to buy weapons from other countries. What are the consequences for American society and the military as an institution when policy is made not always out of logic, but relationships and internal expectations?

Maybe this might be a side-point to your paper, but your outline made me think about real-life scenarios of war. What if the United States were forced into war tomorrow, based on the points you were making in your paper, how prepared would the military be? With all its flaws and path dependence shortcomings, is the United States' military better or worse than it was 60 years ago? I think somewhere in your conclusion an informed reader would want to know what are the real-world consequences of this behavior you exposed and how it ultimately impacts American society.

Mason,

I feel like I have a lot to learn from your paper. I like how your outline leaves us at the edge of your argument and I was definitely curious to see where you'll go with it. Your paper seems to rely on infrastructure and the conditions necessary for knowledge and innovation to occur, especially when it comes to federal financial support. Maybe it's already part of your plan, but I was left wondering how this federal support shapes the type of projects and knowledge that is diffused in university laboratories. There must be a gap between what these agencies set out to do and what they actually do once they go through the politics depending on government funding. Furthermore, while you are offering the history of DARPA, it would be interesting to know in what sociotechnical context did the agency exist and what types of problems it was trying to solve.

I was also interested in two points you plan to expand on in your paper: the non-hierarchical nature of DARPA and would like to understand what are the real-world consequences of that, how it makes it better or worse and why would you want something like that when you're dealing with such high-stakes projects. And also the labor relationship between these agencies and university researchers doing the labor. How are the (often underpaid) academic researchers making this innovation possible and who is held accountable in this chain of command? I think there is a lot of space for you to do an STS inquiry in what is the human and social cost of having militaristic endeavors (whose end goals are usually destructive) mixed with university research (associated with innovation and progress). Excited to see what's going to come out of it!