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Prospects for the science and technology studies concept 'boundary-work' in studies of social sciences and humanities

Studies addressing demarcation, controversies and conflicts in science have been a common way to analyse science-society interaction in science and technology studies (STS). The emphasis of such studies has been on controversies of the natural sciences, technology and medicine, such as problems posed by climate change, nuclear power or innovations of technology and medicine. Only rarely have studies focused on controversies in social sciences and humanities (SSH). This emphasis has narrowed the view of science, limited the approaches of studies and marginalised disciplines that do not pose radical threats to the environment, the humankind or the economy. Following the work of the sociologist of science Thomas Gieryn, the studies have concentrated on mapping the arenas, identifying the actors and their motivations and intentions in the controversy situation. It is necessary to broaden the view of science in order to reach more deeply into the societal phenomena and cultural subtleties a controversy touches.

In my research, Gieryn's concept 'boundary-work', which means the separations of science from other spheres of life, is applied in the context of nursing science and gender studies. I develop an approach to the forms boundary-work takes inside the discipline, between different disciplines, between science and society and between science and other knowledge traditions. The approach deepens controversy studies, in reaching a multitude of societal and cultural spheres of which are touched by a controversy, and finds new ways to apply an STS concept to SSH.