

Untapped potential? Scoping review of how boundary objects are used to embed research into practice

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What is a boundary object? (paraphrased from Star & Griesemer, 1989)

An object that:

- Can be adapted to local needs whilst maintaining a common form
- Is 'weakly-structured' in common use, but becomes 'strongly-structured' in individual-site use
- Can be abstract or concrete
- "... has different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognisable, a means of translation."

In short, something that (used judiciously) enables different groups of people to
work together

What do boundary objects look like?

Star & Griesemer's typology (1989)

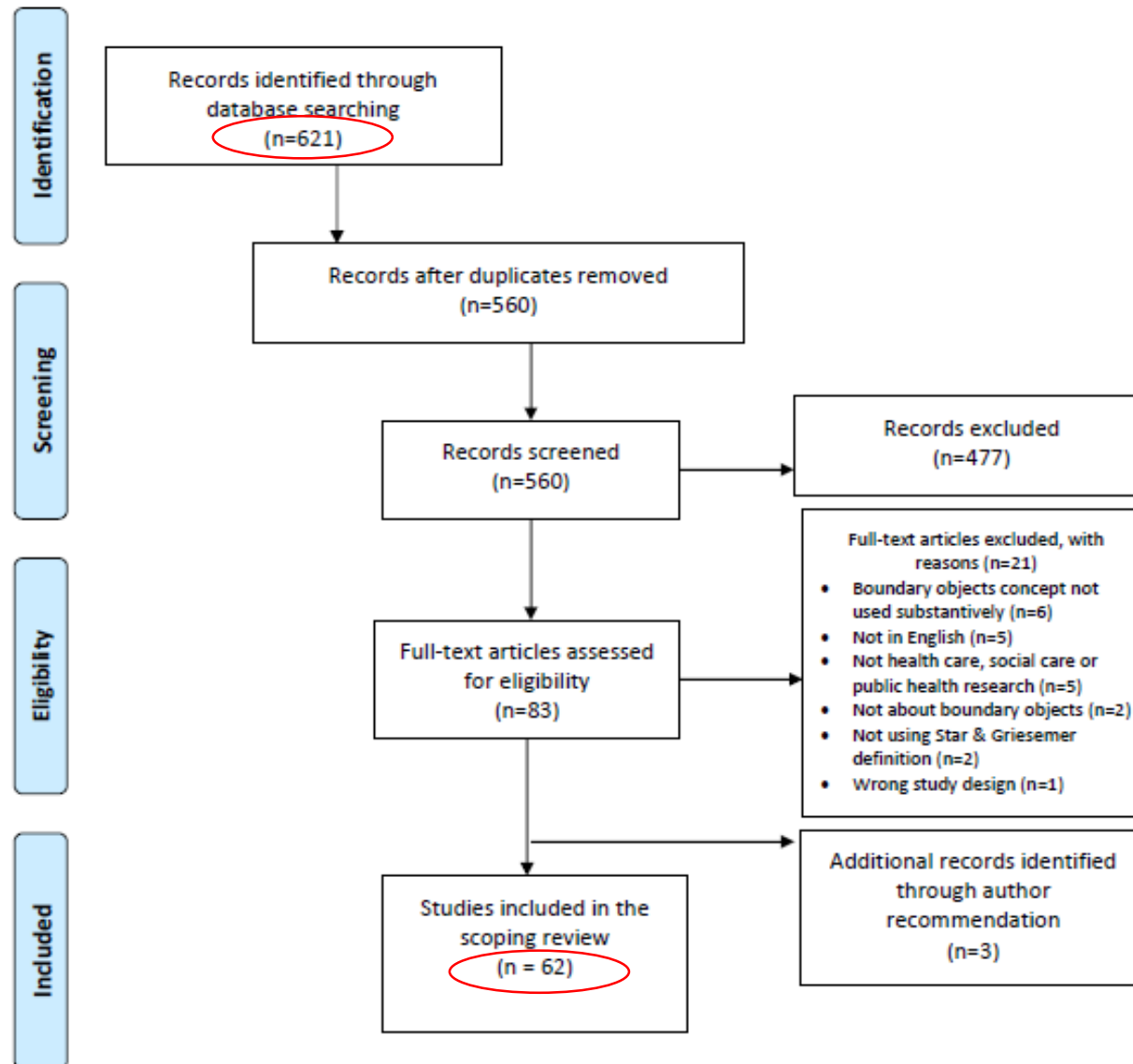
Type	Description	Example	How used?
Repository	Indexed information	Library catalogue	Enable access to information
'Ideal type'	A representation or abstraction	Circuit diagram	To communicate 'enough' about a process or plan
Model or map	Representation	Political or topographical map	To show different features of an area or system
Form	A form	Unclear	Unclear

How do boundary objects 'work'?

Carlile (2002)

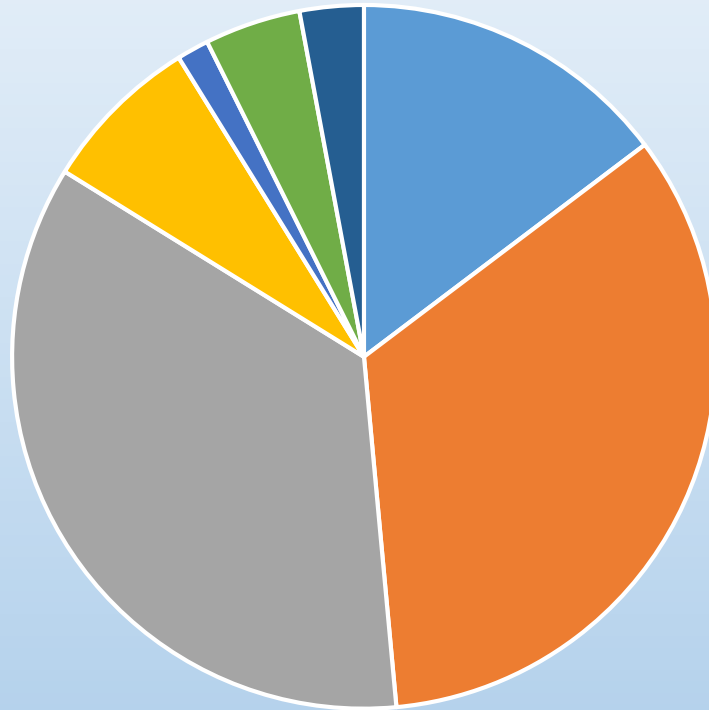
1. Establish a shared language
2. Provide a means to communicate concerns or questions
3. Empower people to transform their own knowledge

Preliminary Flow Diagram based on PRISMA 2009



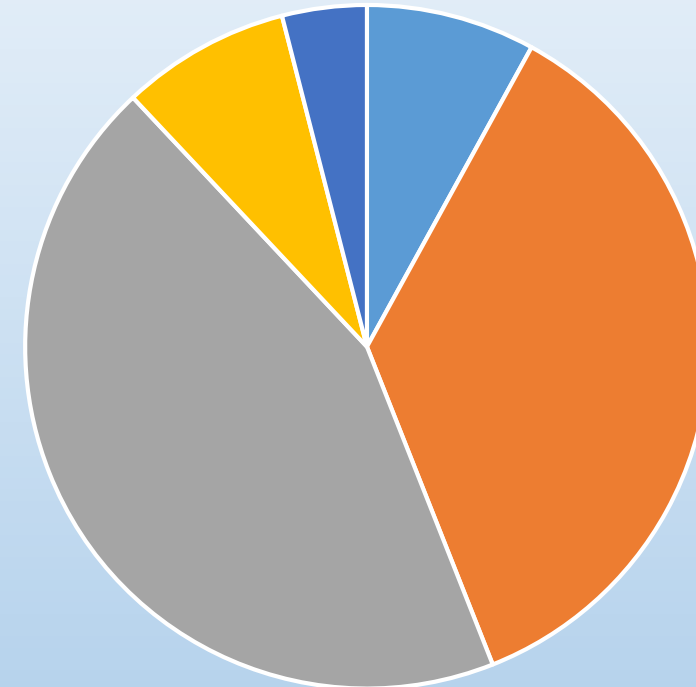
Where have boundary object studies been conducted?

All Studies (N=68)



- Nordic Countries (Iceland, Denmark, Norway & Finland)
- North America (Canada, USA)
- UK & N. Ireland
- Rest of Europe
- Tanzania
- Israel
- Australia

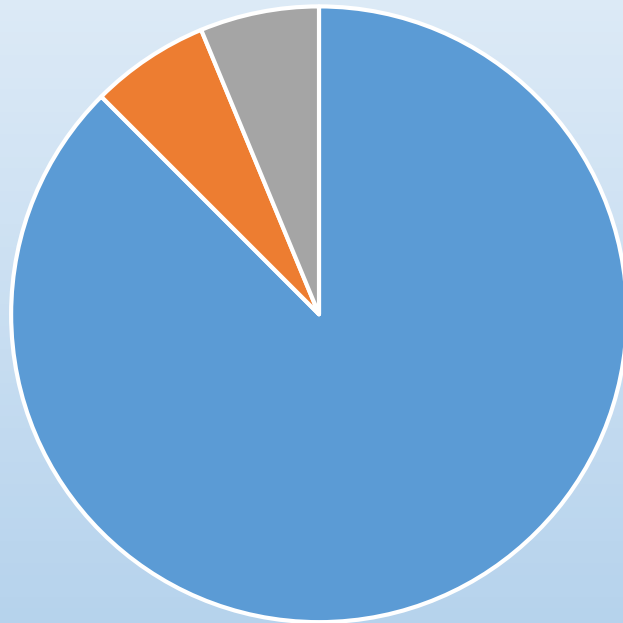
KT Studies (N=25)



- Nordic Countries (Iceland, Denmark, Norway & Finland)
- North America (Canada, USA)
- UK & N. Ireland
- Rest of Europe
- Australia

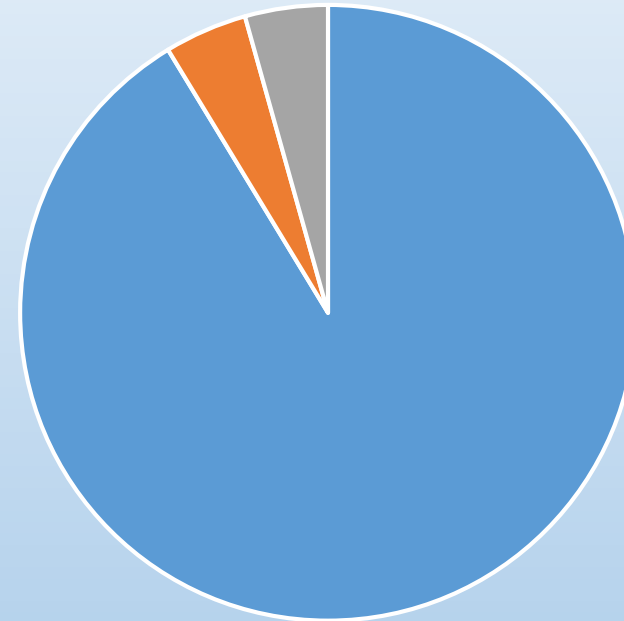
In which fields have boundary object studies been conducted?

All Studies (N=64)



Health care Social care Public health

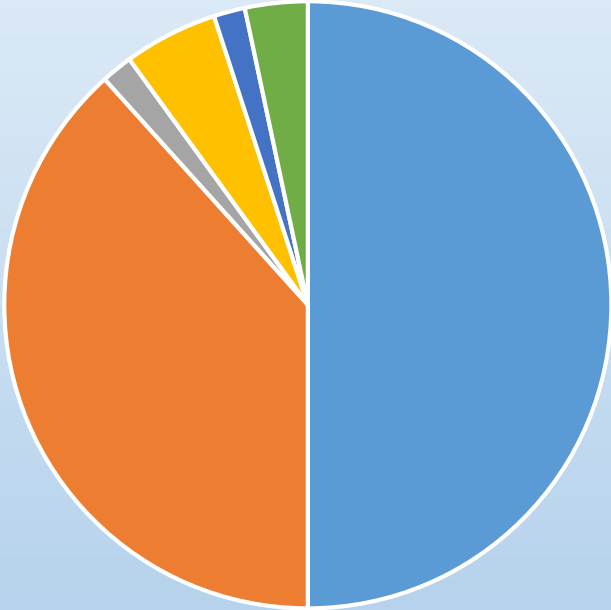
KT Studies (N=23)



Health care Social care Public health

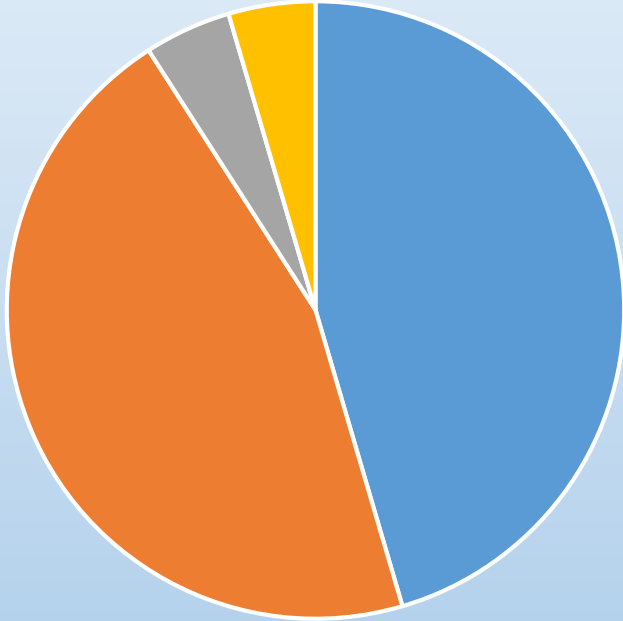
What types of studies have investigated boundary objects?

All Studies (N=60)



- Research project
- Doctoral research
- Expert review
- Reflective commentary
- Essay
- Not reported

KT Studies (N=22)



- Research project
- Doctoral research
- Expert review
- Reflective commentary

What methodology was used to investigate boundary objects?

Methodology: All Studies	N=63
Qualitative	13
Case study	17
Ethnography	11
Review, reflective commentary, essay	8
Action and participatory research	5
Other	8
Unclear	1

Methodology: KT Studies	N=23
Qualitative	4
Case study	7
Ethnography	4
Review, reflective commentary, essay	4
Action and participatory research	3
Other (Historical Sociology)	1

What kind of boundary objects were identified in studies?

Type	Boundary object examples in KT Studies	N=97
Repository	Health information system, standardised clinical vocabulary, field notes, mobile PDAs	21
'Ideal type'	Post-hospital discharge pathway, protocol, patient's symptoms, video vignettes	23
Model or map	Implementation framework, graphic model, a form to mark medical diagnoses, a locality model	11
Form	Single point of contact form, prescription, care pathway, protocol for escalating concern	16
Not fit typology	Communication tools, the concept of 'unmet need', phases of development, contracts	23
Many identified	Over 200 identified in one study	3

What are the key issues in boundary objects studies to embedding research knowledge into practice?

- *Challenging conventional understanding*
 - The concept prompts the question “how do we bring disparate fields together to change the way we conceive of a problem?” (e.g. Navon & Shwed 2012)
- *Transformative potential*
 - making marginalised knowledge visible
 - prompting redistribution of power (e.g. Håland 2015)
- *Theorising how ‘work’*
 - its inherent properties or the meanings that people ascribe to it or both?

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