

EMOTIONS AT WORK: THE AFFECTIVE DRIVERS OF TECHNOLOGICAL WORKPLACES AND FUTURES

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Abstract:

This session will engage with emotions at work. On the one hand, we seek to explore the different emotions felt at workplaces of knowledge production and technology development. On the other hand, the session foregrounds how emotions work in these settings. We observe that current phenomena at technoscientific workplaces such as agility, rapid prototyping or the entrepreneurialization of technology development enwrap workers in affective language and practices about promising technoscientific futures. Feelings such as passion, joy and enthusiasm in (agile) companies, makerspaces, research labs, home offices and platform enterprises illustrate how workers become responsabilized to engage emotionally with their work, often having the aim to drive national, institutional and personal progress.

In this context, feminist (STS) scholarship highlights the importance of asking what emotions do. They point our attention to the emotional side of daily life as well as the discursive dimension, power-laden structures, and representations that drive collective affect (Ahmed 2004). Affective attachments to tech work normalize its often-precarious norms and scholars therefore argue that workers' emotions are entangled with corporate objectives and neoliberal logics (Cockayne 2016; Davies 2017; Gregg 2011). Thus, emotions at work are characterized by exploitative dynamics of (affective) oppression, control and invisibilized devalued labor (Amrute 2019; Crain et al. 2016; Resch et al. 2021). However, attending to the sensations at workplaces, the involved bodies, emotions and identities also uncovers solidary feelings and care work, which open up new paths for emancipatory ambitions (Coban and Wenten 2020).

This panel seeks to extend such scholarship by exploring the intersection between affect, work and tech/knowledge production. We invite papers (and also other forms of input) that discuss the ambivalent feelings of technoscientific work, their risks and challenges, but also the political opportunities for emancipatory technoscientific futures.

Potential foci include:

- The emotional investment and bodily sensations of technoscientific progress
- Socio-material intimacies between workers, materials, technologies and workplaces
- Feeling in/equalities in the workplace
- Affect as a driver of care, emancipatory moments or resistance at technoscientific workplaces
- The historicity and context-specificity of emotions at work
- The increasing affectivity of knowledge work through pitching, hackathons, user-centered design, etc.
- The in/visibilization of care and emotions by AI, automation technology, workplace standardization, etc.

Key words:

Affects, Work, Technology Development