

PRACTICES AND POLITICS OF DIGITALIZATION: WORK AND ORGANIZATION IN STS

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Abstract:

Issues of work and organization have always been at the core of STS. Concentrating on laboratories, research centers, innovation processes, centers of coordination, medical settings and other organizational contexts characterized by technologically dense practices, STS have put under scrutiny the role played by technologies, physical and virtual architectures, material and information infrastructures.

Nowadays, as the digitalization of tasks increases and the automation of processes surrounds many jobs, the spatial boundaries and temporal dimensions of work and organization have become fuzzier, the materiality of work seem to disappear, and “work” and “organization” themselves appear as increasingly evanescent concepts.

This track invites researchers to present work on the digitalization of the workplace and on automation of work and organizational processes. Of special interest are research papers that offer a conceptual contribution to STS-research on work and organization in ways that grow out of empirical description and analysis of empirical observation. A concern we are seeking to address through this panel is whether the field’s interest in work and organization is dwindling and whether this may be due to a situation in which digital technologies obscure boundaries and ‘recognizability’ of work and organizing practices. In particular, we are interested in:

- the ways digital technologies (artificial intelligence systems, algorithms, information infrastructures, software and online platforms) support, automatize, disturb and reorient work and organizing practices;
- the different modalities of work and organization allowed for or hindered by digital technologies;
- work and organizing practices lurking behind the functioning of digital technologies;
- the mingling of digital and organizational processes;
- imaginaries of ‘the future of work’ and the forms of labor such imaginaries entail or take for granted;
- analyses of what counts as “work” and “organization” in increasingly digitalized contexts;
- collateral and hidden dimensions of the use of digital technologies in work and organizations;
- the politics and the power dynamics surrounding digitalization processes in work and organizations;
- innovative methods and concepts with which to study and understand digitalized work and organizations.

Contributions inquiring into the theoretical, analytical and methodological resources we have in STS to tackle ongoing digitalization and automatization process in work and organization processes are all welcomed, as are alternative forms of presentation.

Key words:

digitalization; work; organization