Call for Abstracts

16th Annual STS Conference Graz 2017

Session 16: Digitalized industry and social emancipation

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The digitalization of industries does not only bring about significant transformations in the organization of production, but raises critical issues of social justice in highly technologized societies at large. In this session, we invite contributions with an analytical focus on the connections between digitalized industries and social emancipation.

The idea of social emancipation through new technologies has been a recurring theme in STS scholarship. Networked, digital fabrication technologies like 3D printing were hailed as an empowerment of grassroots level “produsers” and open source communities. Networked communication technologies, coupled with the ubiquity of private computers were seen as a material precondition for flat hierarchies. More recently, advances in medical technology sparked hopes of body modification as enabling free development of the subjects beyond the restrictions of dominant body norms.

This session aims to critically examine this emancipatory potential of the digital transformation. We welcome papers that situate industrial production in larger social contexts. From this starting point, analysis can go to different directions, including: does the digitalization of industries have emancipatory potential for (a) industrial structures themselves or (b) non-industrial contexts? Or do (c) social transformations outside of industries open up possibilities for emancipation within them?

Along those lines of inquiry, the following questions could be posed, among others: If most digital technology is produced in social contexts of domination, is this domination inscribed into them, or can they be used for emancipatory purposes as well? What does the increasing inclusion of computer-enabled organizational decentralization (e.g. Open Innovation) into capital accumulation mean for alternative forms of organizing? How do digitally enabled forms of mass customization impact body representation in the production of medical- and consumer goods? And can such technologies be appropriated by user communities to upend the ways such goods are produced?

We base these questions on a broad understanding of emancipation as the elimination or reduction of domination on different levels, such as: gender, class, ethnicity or (dis)ability. Analysis at the intersection of these categories are especially welcome. Papers presented in this the session should have an emphasis on analysis, avoiding pure description or rushed normative claims. We welcome empirical, historical, as well as theoretical analysis.

KEYWORDS: industry, digitalization, emancipation, capitalism, domination
Abstract Submission

Abstract submission deadline: 30 January 2017

The abstract needs to be submitted online via the [conference website](#).

It should not exceed 500 words, max. 5 keywords, and the abstract with authors’ contact details should be submitted by using the online form.

Please choose the number of the session in which your presentation should be included.

Abstracts and full papers (to be submitted after the conference) will be published as online-proceedings (ISSN).

Notification on abstracts by: Mid of February 2017

Conference language: English