

Abstract

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Title:

Technologies of the social self

On the production of virtual networks from a "governmediality" perspective

From:

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Abstract:

The construction of subjectivity in the process of establishing electronic networks can be localized in the context of current societal transformations. Today, very different forms of computer networks, mainly the services of the Internet, are used for "virtual cooperation". Sociologically speaking, the *design* of these technologies is based first of all on models of how social exchange works. Accordingly, it includes also models of the *sociality* of subjectivity. From a "governmediality" perspective the relationship between the social and the technical can also be questioned the other way round: What kinds of conceptions of sociality and subjectivity are produced in the context of technology design? And how are they part of the current (neoliberal) knowledge order? How can this be analyzed in the course of the investigation of technology production? What are the images and practices of the software designers when creating applications for 'community building' and 'virtual teams'? These questions aim at an extension of the research framework of micro-sociological studies of technology. In referring to Michel Foucault's studies on power and governmentality I argue that the integration of his later works opens up new potentials for critical analysis of current sociotechnical transformations. This means to focus on the epistemic and normative orders underlying the developmental process of virtual networks. Consequently, I consider technical and social processes of construction as continuously overlapping, simultaneously emerging and mutual productive.

In my paper I will exemplify some central theoretical and empirical outcomes of my qualitative field study on "virtual cooperation" platforms carried out in the computer science. I will argue, that the making of electronic networking is not only based on normalized conceptions of the social. The result of the technology design rather appears itself a continuous procedure of networking which is at least grounded in a performative and ongoing process of the making of 'netsubjectivity'. To put it more in general, the "social" becomes a central *object of knowledge* about the self. Further, in the course of networking the sociality of the participants occurs as an *object of development and self-practice*. In consequence, I understand the construction of electronic networking as part of the current 'technologies of the self', i.e. as technologies of the *social self*.

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CV – short version

Cultural- and social scientist, born in 1966

1985-1994: studies in russian and german language and culture, educational and social sciences, philosophy (mainly in: Marburg, Bochum, Moscow and Frankfurt/Main)

1994: degree in Frankfurt/Main, Germany

1995-1997: data processing coordinator in participatory software-developmental processes at the GTZ (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit mbH) in Eschborn, Germany

Since 1995: coordination and leading activities (honorary) in the Women's Software House (Frauen-Softwarehaus e.V.), Frankfurt/Main, Germany

1997-1998: research scientist (wiss. Mitarbeiterin) in the model project "New technologies/media as a challenge for educational science" (Neue Technologien/Medien als Herausforderung für die Erziehungswissenschaft) at Philipps-University of Marburg, Germany

1999-2004: research scientist at the Department of Social Sciences (industrial and organizational sociology) at the University of Kassel, Germany

2004 Ph.D. degree (Dr. rer. pol.), Dissertation: "Netzsubjektivität/en. Konstruktionen von Vernetzung als Technologien des sozialen Selbst. Eine empirische Untersuchung in Modellprojekten der Informatik" (Publikation: Münster 2005)

Since August 2004: assistant professor (Wiss. Assistentin, C1) at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies on Women and Gender, Faculty of the Humanities at the Technical University of Berlin, Germany

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Fields of research:

science and technology studies, construction theories und constructivism, theories of networks, governmentality studies, qualitative methodologies, transformations of work, theories of subjectivity, engineering studies