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Conference Theme: Gender – Technology – Environment

Renewing the relationship between technology and work? The case of technical support in elderly care

For many years, there was a strong focus on the connection between technology and work across different disciplines, not only in industrial sociology (see Zündorf 1979, cf. Pfeiffer 2010), but also in the field of technology and technology assessment (Bechmann, Varenkamp, Wingert 1979, Hausen, Rürup 1975, Valenduc, Vendramin 1992). In the last years however, this relationship has becoming weaker and seems no longer be in the centre of the scientific discourses. Reasons for the decline of the topic lay in the change of the general economic structure, before industrial work was very much in centre of the scientific discussions of technology and work. Nevertheless, especially with the rise and development of new technologies, the relationship between technology and work is still there and important to analyse, however it remains 'under analysed'. This has been already mentioned and criticised by some scholars (e.g. Pfeiffer 2005, Wajcman 2006). In my talk I draw from an actual study on technology use in elderly care to show how current developments in technological fields and technological innovations like e.g. Information- and Communication Technologies or robotics affect working conditions, working relations as well as occupational identities in the social sector (Krings et al. 2012). Such a case example can – however – be only a starting point for conceptual discussions on normative preconditions as well as structural changes due to technology use in the field of work.

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