

Encountering automation: storying technological change for future cities

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Abstract

Politically and economically, the future of resource work is currently high on the agenda in many countries. In Australia, for instance, this year's general election revolved around the promise of jobs in this sector for regional communities. Yet the intensification of automation is rapidly changing this sector, with potentially far reaching implications for the people and places involved. In this paper I explore the changing nature of work in the resources sector in Australia where increased automation means that an increasing proportion of jobs are moving from regional to urban centres. Where much writing on the future of automation is characterised by either boosterist or dystopian narratives, in this paper, I turn to overlooked questions of embodiment to complicate these narratives. Through fieldwork with workers differently positioned in the resources sector, I speculate on how automation becomes differently disclosed through the aesthetic dimensions of encounters. I explain the political and ethical value of admitting ambiguity, incoherence and confusion as qualities of our relations with technological change.