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EMOLAB: A SPECULATIVE DESIGN APPROACH TO EMOTIONAL BIOPOLITICS IN A CAPITALIST WORLD WITH PERFORMATIVE TECHNIQUES.

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DOI: 10.63442/XSSG5623

**KEYWORDS | SPECULATIVE DESIGN, EMOTIONS AS A COMMODITY, BIOPOLITICAL POWER,
CRITICAL PERFORMATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

ABSTRACT | “EmoLab: A Speculative Design Approach to Emotional Biopolitics in a Capitalist World with Performative Techniques” introduces a 180-minute workshop leveraging speculative design to explore the commodification of emotions in capitalist societies, incorporating performative techniques to allow participants to engage with various emotional states physically and psychologically. The workshop aims to dissect and critique the biopolitical mechanisms governing emotions, fostering immersive learning to challenge and rethink these dynamics. Through a sequence of activities, attendees will examine and embody emotions as both tradable commodities and pivotal elements of speculative capitalist scenarios, moving from abstract understanding to tangible experience and creative speculation. The journey encompasses discovery, consumption, manipulation, and the creative reimagining of emotional dynamics, employing props and performative methods to facilitate a comprehensive exploration. “EmoLab” seeks to inspire innovative thought and speculative solutions regarding emotional engagement and governance, challenging participants to envision alternative futures beyond current biopolitical and capitalist constraints.



1. Description

"EmoLab" presents a unique 180-minute workshop employing speculative design principles to delve into the commodification and manipulation of emotions within capitalist structures. This workshop integrates performative techniques, offering participants a safe space to embody and experience a range of emotional states. The aim is to critically examine and challenge current biopolitical power structures, using emotions as a lens and tool for immersive and experiential learning.

Participants will actively engage in a series of thoughtfully curated activities designed to examine, produce, and secure emotional states. These activities will not only allow participants to experience emotions as tradable and disposable entities within a speculative framework but also enable them to embody these emotions. The workshop is structured to facilitate a transformational journey, moving from conceptual understanding to physical embodiment, and ultimately to the creation of new perspectives on emotional commodification.

Utilizing the potential of speculative design, the workshop invites participants to challenge existing paradigms and envision alternative futures. This approach emphasizes the importance of performative embodiment, enabling participants to physically and emotionally experience the impact of various emotional dynamics set within speculative capitalist scenarios.

Phase 1 - Discovery of Emotions (30 minutes): This phase introduces participants to emotions as experienced in different societal constructs. Through physical movements, role-playing, and performative enactments, they explore how various biopolitical structures might influence emotional expression and perception.

Phase 2 - Consumption of Emotions (45 minutes): Here, participants engage in interactive games and improvisational activities to simulate the commodification of emotions in speculative societies. These activities, enriched with performative techniques, highlight the fluidity and tradability of emotions in different power structures.

Phase 3 - Manipulation and Control (45 minutes): Focusing on the manipulation of emotions under diverse biopolitical regimes, this phase involves exercises in empathy, mindfulness, emotional regulation, and performative reenactments. Participants gain insights into the control and manipulation of emotions in various speculative contexts.

Phase 4 - Reflection and Creation (45 minutes): In this culminating phase, participants use their experiences to develop speculative design projects. These projects aim to reimagine the role of emotions in society, challenging existing biopolitical structures and proposing alternative models for emotional engagement and governance.

The workshop employs a variety of materials and techniques, such as emotion cards, physical props, and tools for project development. This diverse range of resources ensures a comprehensive exploration of emotional dynamics in a speculative design context.

In summary, "EmoLab" offers a profound speculative design journey into the complex interplay of emotions, biopolitics, and capitalist structures, enriched with performative techniques. This workshop is an invitation to question, reimagine, and redesign the way emotions are understood and utilized in our society. Participants are encouraged to think innovatively and critically, using the workshop as a platform to consider how alternative realities and embodied experiences can inform and transform our understanding of emotional commodification and the role of biopolitical power in shaping emotional landscapes.

About the Author:

Katarzyna Anosowicz is a Service Designer, UX Researcher, and Innovation Strategist with a distinctive track record in developing the CX division at Player, a leading VOD platform by TVN Warner Bros Discovery. She established Player Labs and has successfully led over 100 projects that deepened immersive narrative experiences in streaming films and series. In her capacity at WBD in Poland, she conducts workshops aimed at redefining future media landscapes, prioritizing community engagement, and ecosystemic sensitivity. Educated with a Master's in Psychology and a postgraduate in Service Design from SWPS Warsaw, she is now completing a Master's in Theatre Studies at the Academy of Theatre in Warsaw, focusing on performative arts. Additionally, she is a recent graduate of Futures Studies & Strategic Foresight at the Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies and will soon be lecturing on Critical Futures, Speculative Design, and Design Fiction at SWPS University. Her work is dedicated to advancing social and gender justice through speculative design. She is constantly developing her methodology centered around feminist futures, performative presence, and speculative design, aimed at analyzing spatiotemporal ecologies and fostering social and environmental change. Her passion lies in existential, total, and post-feminist theatre. She resides and works in Berlin.

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This contribution was presented at Cumulus Budapest 2024: P/References of Design conference, hosted by the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest, Hungary between May 15-17, 2024.

Conference Website

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ISBN Volume 1: 978-952-7549-02-5 (PDF)

ISBN Volume 2: 978-952-7549-03-2 (PDF)

DOI Volume 1: <https://doi.org/10.63442/IZUP8898>

DOI Volume 2: <https://doi.org/10.63442/TADX4016>

Conference Organisers

Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest (MOME)

mome.hu

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