

## **Robots as “active co-creators” of the social world?**

### **Ethical challenges for emotionalized social robot companions**

Social robots are on the rise. Several research projects design and engineer robots that should not be mere tools but instead be capable of engaging in social interaction. The capacity of these social robots to show emotions plays a central role for creating the advertised social bond between user and robot.

In this paper we want to take a *practice-theoretical* perspective on the topic of emotionalized robots and discuss a challenge that presents itself for designers of these new artificial companions. The challenge arises due to the special function some emotions play in the kind of social interaction designers of social robots try to mimic or even reproduce. Our claim is that when social robots show emotions, they express an “evaluative comment” on the ongoing social interaction. An insight from practice-theoretical accounts is that “emotional commenting” is not only directed at the momentary interaction but also influences the social relationship itself and has an effect on the reproduction of social practices in general. We therefore argue that, the more sophisticated, complex and “social” the interaction the robot comments on is, the more robots become active co-creators of the social world. The challenge is precisely that while “emotional commenting” makes interaction with a social companion “more real” it also might lead to giving up a certain amount of control over the relationship with the robot and over the reproduction of social practices in general.