

Affective Subjectivation —
How Subjects Are
Formed Emotionally

Call for Papers



Studies
in Subjectivation

Call for Papers

Affective Subjectivation — How Subjects Are Formed Emotionally

Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria

4–5 March 2027

Conference of the Sociology of the Body and Emotions
Section (Austrian Sociological Association, ÖGS) and the
Network for Empirical Subjectivation Research (ÖGS Section
on Subjectivation Research, Working Group on Subjectivation
Research within the DGS Section on Sociology of Knowledge
and the DGS Section on Biographical Research)

Subjectivation describes how people become subjects within different social, cultural, and material orders—and how they individually and collectively shape and transform these orders. Although subject formation never takes place in a purely discursive or cognitive manner, research approaches in the field of subjectivation often remain cognitivist. This conference addresses the question of the significance of feelings in the study of processes of subjectivation. To what extent do emotions support or hinder the formation of subjects? Which feelings and affects accompany processes of interpellation and the adoption of subject positions? And how do people develop a sense of their situation and their capacity to act?

As embodied individuals (*Körper-individuen*) (Lindemann, 2022), subjects are connected to others through encounters

and experience what happens to them and how it happens. More often than not, it is precisely through feelings that subjects are addressed, encouraged to work on themselves, and bound to normative orders (Bröckling, 2017). Conversely, emotions, affects, and bodies are themselves socially, culturally, and historically shaped (e.g., Hochschild, 1983; Reddy, 2001; Pernicka, 2024; McCarthy, 2025). Subjectivation is inscribed into bodies, shaping modes of perception, capacities to be affected, and relations to the self and, as „affective subjectivation“ (Sauer & Penz, 2014), is therefore always mediated through sensory and embodied experience. Feelings are thus both the outcome and the driving force of processes of subjectivation. Moreover, emotions play a central role in contemporary society in shaping conceptions of the subject and modes of subjectivation (Reckwitz, 2017; Illouz, 2024).

Against this background, the conference adopts a dual perspective, focusing both on subjectivation through feelings and on emotions as effects and expressions of processes of subjectivation. Feelings should not be understood as „inner“ states of already existing subjects. Rather, they are themselves objects of social, political, and cultural formation while simultaneously constituting a central medium through which subjectivity is produced. Emotions are lived, classified, normalized, regulated, and increasingly also technologically mediated. They structure how individuals experience themselves, relate to themselves, and are constituted as particular kinds of subjects. The cultural modelling of emotional phenomena therefore always also entails the modelling of subjectivity (Pritz, 2024).

The conference is interested in both processes through which subjectivity is produced: the historical and social formation of feelings, as well as the affective and embodied production of subjects. It thus directs attention equally to the reconstruction of feelings within historical and social orders of touch (Lindemann, 2022; Frevert, 2011) and to people's concrete lived experiences of feeling, which find expression in social reality and can be reconstructed empirically (Brodersen et al., 2026).

Qualitative and interpretive approaches face the challenge of studying phenomena that can neither be fully verbalized nor directly observed but instead unfold in relational, situated, and often fleeting practices. From a methodological and methodological-theoretical perspective, different levels of analysis can be distinguished (Thanem & Knights, 2019), each addressing specific aspects of processes of subjectivation. Discourse-analytical and narrative approaches examine the socio-historical formation of emotions within orders of

knowledge, normative regimes, and cultural scripts, as well as the subjectivation offers associated with them (e.g., Campbell, 2010; Penz & Sauer, 2020; Malli, 2024). They investigate both the performative power of public emotion discourses and visual representations and the situated production of affects within interactional practices (e.g., Flam & Doerr, 2015; Wetherell, 2012; Bargetz & Eggers, 2023; Schürmann, 2022). Subject-centred approaches reconstruct, on the basis of interviews, diaries, or other forms of verbalization, how emotions are articulated and situated within biographical narratives (e.g., Kleres, 2010; Schütze, 2022).

Ethnographic, video-based, and practice-theoretical approaches foreground embodied, situated, and multimodal enactments of affect as well as the emotional involvement of researchers themselves (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2012; Knoblauch et al., 2019; Gould, 2015; Traue & Tröndle, 2026). Finally, spatial and material perspectives explore how atmospheres, objects, and artefacts contribute to the production and stabilization of subject positions (Kibel, 2026; Miko-Schefzig, 2026).

A central challenge lies in bringing these different analytical levels together within triangulated research designs in order to empirically capture the interplay of discursive formation, interactive production, embodied practice, and material arrangements (Schürmann et al., 2018; Bosančić et al., 2019).

At the same time, the analysis of affective subjectivation has become increasingly important in light of contemporary societal polarization (Bargetz, 2021). Recent studies point to emotions such as wounded pride, fears of loss, the desire for submission, or malicious pleasure as driving forces of political subjectivation and the

construction of an affectively charged „anti-subject“ (Ahmed, 2014; Butler, 2016; Dietze, 2017; Hochschild, 2024; Spissinger, 2024; Amlinger & Nachtwey, 2025). The analysis of emotions and affects thus opens up crucial perspectives on contemporary processes of subjectivation.

We welcome theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions addressing, among others, the following questions:

- What significance do feelings have for the study of processes of subjectivation? Which new perspectives emerge from bringing subjectivation research into dialogue with the theories and findings of social and cultural research on emotions, affects, and the body?
- How can the individual and collective feelings accompanying processes of subjectivation be conceptualized theoretically and investigated empirically?
- What role do emotions play in contemporary social conflicts, crises, and transformations? To what extent do they support particular forms of subjectivation or hinder the adoption of subject positions?
- Which feelings govern people's lives? How do subjects develop a sense of their situation and their capacity to act? How can contemporary diagnoses of the present be critically reassessed or further developed from the perspective of subjectivation research?

The conference invites scholars at all career stages from the social sciences, cultural studies, and related disciplines whose work engages with questions of subjectivation, the body, emotions, and related subjective experiences or broader processes of societal transformation.

We welcome abstracts of **up to 500 words in German or English**. Please include a short biographical note (max. 100 words) together with your contact details. Abstracts should be submitted as a single PDF file by **31 October 2026** to **emotionen@jku.at**.

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