The design and use of technical properties: illuminating the role of affect and discourse

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Abstract. What are the manoeuvres through which software designers seek to address resistance and persuade users to adopt their technical properties? We draw on an ethnographic work conducted within a start-up where we have traced the design of a virtual experiential environment, using game technologies, intended for geologists. In particular, we argue that existing discussions around design-use insufficiently account for the possible mediating role of affective-discursive positioning. Our study enriches existing socio-material accounts by demonstrating that in the development phase the conceptualisation and materialisation of affordances results from a 4-ways informal negotiation. Our main finding is to identify design as a tension between vanishing and foregrounding positioning. While the programmers' narrative of gamification needs to vanish, geologists foreground their own views on pedagogy.