

Information for journalists and media representatives “Shaping Future”

Whether or not innovations become successful does not just depend on whether they are technologically feasible, but primarily on whether they are accepted by society. In order to ensure the inclusion of society's views at an early stage, the “Shaping Future” project has developed a new kind of approach that allows people to participate in devising long-term research agendas based on actual needs. In a series of workshops people who are interested (but not expert) in technology are given methodological support to enable them to express their hopes and ideas for how things might be in the future – with the focus on human-machine cooperation. The workshops are designed, moderated and evaluated using a combination of standard analytical methods from the social sciences alongside explorative and experimental design research methods. This makes it possible to expand the range of ways in which participants can express their views or in which the results can be presented. Experts then analyze the results of these participatory workshops and convert them into concrete technology roadmaps. This enables technological experts to integrate social perspectives into their discussion. In a further step, professional designers turn some particularly interesting ideas into “speculative prototypes”. These prototypes are put on display so as to generate a public discussion about technologies of the future and to gather reactions. With this innovative approach, non-experts can be actively included in the development of new technologies from the very start. The main phase of the project, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), began in 2014 and will run until 2017.

Further information:

www.cerri.fraunhofer.de/de/projekte/shaping-future.html | www.shapingfuture.de

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Shaping Future (1):

Methods taken from the field of design research enabled participants to present their ideas not just in words but with prototypes that can be touched. These objects demonstrate not only the function of a future piece of technology, but also its handling, interface and context.



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Shaping Future (2):

At the end of every workshop, participants use colored marbles to rate the prototypes for their level of innovation, market appeal, potential for social transformation, and ethical compatibility.



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Shaping Future (3):

Following the workshops, designers and social scientists analyzed and evaluated the results. After reviewing all the objects, they identified and described eight clusters. Boards were then put together to illustrate these clusters. Alongside the objects from the workshops, the boards present additional descriptive texts, illustrations, and objects printed in 3D. These express the key ideas and principles of the cluster.



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Shaping Future (4):

The results of the needs analysis workshops were discussed by experts in a workshop made up of Fraunhofer scientists from the fields of microelectronics, optics, materials, logistics, IT, production, industrial engineering, and medicine. The scientists identified those results that they considered to be particularly interesting, innovative, or viable for the future – and reflected on how a technological solution might look.



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Shaping Future (5):

Five professional designers transformed solutions that seemed particularly pioneering and fit for the future into speculative design objects – prototypes for potential technological solutions of the future. These could be seen from July 30 until October 26, 2016, at JOSEPHS® in Nuremberg. The displays served as a catalyst to prompt visitors to reflect on the idea of how the future might look for themselves as individuals and for society.



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