

SYMPOSIA 4

Sociological perspectives on Gerontechnology. Theoretical and empirical reflections on current technology development processes

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Participants: C. Endter (GER), H. Künemund (GER), S. Merkel (GER), S. Meyer (GER). **ISSUE** Gerontechnologies have a high potential to improve the quality of life of older people. The development of these technologies is a challenging task in which social sciences and gerontology have recently played an increasingly important role in understanding what older people need. **CONTENT** With this symposium we address the interdisciplinary alignment of engineering and computer sciences with social sciences and gerontology in the field of gerontechnology, to reflect on recent interdisciplinary achievements and investigate the methodological potential of future research in this field. Our aim is to show the epistemological benefit of social sciences and gerontology in technological development. Therefore, we discuss (pre-)conditions of interdisciplinary research for both social and engineering sciences and elaborate benefits and pitfalls. How, for example, can the complexity of ethnographic observation be translated into knowledge formats for technicians? Which kind of 'language' and mutual understanding is necessary in order to actually work together? Which role play social science and gerontology in regard of artificial intelligence or socio-emotional robotics? What are the driving forces behind gerontechnology? How can we meet (future) demands of gerontechnology? **STRUCTURE** Sebastian Merkel examines research and design processes in the field of Gerontechnology, and argues in favor of rethinking those against the background of insights from social Gerontechnology. Cordula Endter reflects on digital ethnographic methods and their benefits for gerontechnology to enhance the quality of life of older people. Harald Künemund argues in favor of a solution centered design as a consequence of a critical analysis of the process of gerontechnology development. Finally, an open discussion on the strategies and processes of technology development for old age will top off the session. **CONCLUSION** The symposium offers participants a scientific reflection on the challenges on social science and gerontology in the field of gerontechnology. It will also address requirements for future research to meet both the rapidly developing technology and the needs of older people by questioning the role of social sciences and gerontology from empirical as well as theoretical perspectives.

Keywords: technology development, interdisciplinary collaboration, methodology, quality of life

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