

Panel Discussion

„Going Beyond the Laboratory – Ethical and Societal Challenges for Robotics“

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Abstract:

“Hype or Hope? Hybrid Constellations of Human/Robot Inter-Agencies.

Robots at home and hospitals differ from machines in the factory: they are designed to show more mobility, to develop a sense for bodies and places, and to interact smartly and softly with people. To construct humanoid robots is a challenge for the computer scientists and engineers: it means to mimic human action and interaction in order to be accepted as a playmate of equal value, to do the job of a chauffeur, or to take care as a mechanical nurse. But it is also a challenge for the social scientists, professionals and users: how can we learn about the expectations and the adaptations in human/robot encounters? How can we distinguish between faults and functioning? How can we distribute the activities and interactivities between human actors and robotic agents? How can the risks be evaluated, and to whom or what can the responsibilities be attributed?

The answers cannot simply be transferred from our experiences with other machines and human-computer-interfaces, because the body-to-body- interaction and the capacity of Inter-Agency shows different characteristics. The hybrid constellations of human/robot-interaction have to be observed and tested in changing environments over a longer time of mutual adaptation in order to get to know the particular grades of autonomy and of control in different situations.

Hypes are catalysts of creative and inventive action; but the hope to solve the problem of human care may turn into Pandora's hope, if people, especially helpless and handy capped people, are left alone with mechanical nurses and playmates.