JANUARY 9, 2020
14.00-18.00

SALA SEMINARI 1
via del Santo 28, Padova

MAKING TECHNOLOGY HUMANLY SUSTAINABLE

HOW CAN WE ANTICIPATE THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON PEOPLE AND SOCIETY?

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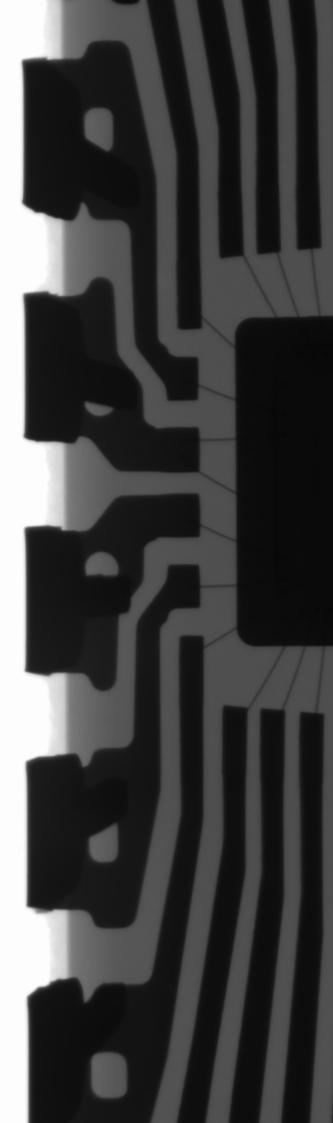
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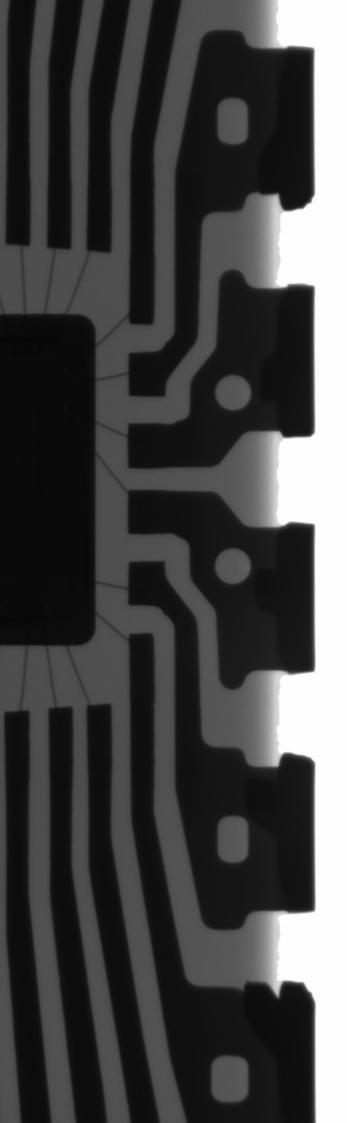
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CONTEXT

Ethical issues connected to new and emerging digital technologies keep arising. From social media competing for our attention, to virtual home assistants envisioned as family members, to wearable devices and digital apps collecting our data and changing our identities and habits, the questions about the impact of these systems on our lives and society are becoming compelling. Public debates and policies addressing these issues highlight the need for an ethical assessment of technological applications.

Emerging technologies are not intrinsically good or bad. It is the way they are designed and embedded into specific (digital or tangible) products that makes them risky or beneficial to people. It is all about details: how the information is represented, what data our wearables collect, how and when the user is asked to interact with a digital device, what values and biases are inadvertently conveyed and reinforced by the solution, and so on. However, little attention is currently paid to these ethical aspects during the design of tech-based solution. It is important to start asking what consequences such solutions will have on people, once they are released on the market and spread in the society.
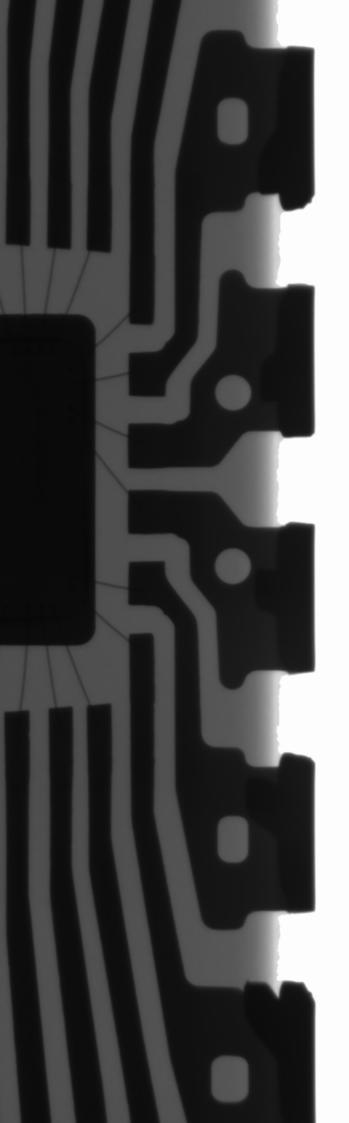
SEMINAR

This multi-disciplinary seminar is aimed at discussing the need to design "humanly-sustainable" technologies, and viable ways to achieve that goal.

The seminar will consist of:

• a presentation of relevant ethical issues connected to emerging technologies;

• the introduction of the *Tech Footprint tool,* an in-development, qualitative design tool for anticipating and assessing the impact of tech-based solutions on people and society. The tool provides a roadmap to reflect on how tech-based solutions can potentially affect people on multiple levels: from physical skills, cognitive abilities, and behaviors, to relationships and societal structures.

• an open discussion on the ethical, philosophical, and social aspects connected to the Tech Footprint tool, including how we can design for shared values, and how we can make users more aware of the risks of technology.

SPEAKER

Dr. Sara Colombo
Senior Research Associate, Lecturer
Design Lab | Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Sara Colombo is a senior Research Associate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Design Lab, where she leads projects on designing future user experiences enabled by emerging technologies. She is also Lecturer in interaction and experience design at MIT (CMS/W).

Sara Colombo earned a PhD in Design from Politecnico di Milano, where she was adjunct professor in interaction design and design&engineering before joining MIT. During her doctoral studies, she explored implicit, tangible, and multi-sensory forms of communication performed by dynamic products. She has published widely on these topics through journal articles, conference papers, and books.

Sara Colombo has served as a chair, board member, and reviewer for conferences and journals in the fields of interaction design and HCI. She holds two patents on interactive devices for children's health and wellbeing.

Her current research interests concern the impact emerging technologies have on users when embedded in everyday objects, and their consequences on human experience and behavior at the individual and societal levels. She believes in the power of design to envision future realities, and to inspire a more ethical development of technology and society.

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LINKS

https://www.ted.com/talks/tristan_harris_how_better_tech_could_protect_us_from_distraction/discussion

https://humanetech.com