

## Multimedia project: Back to the Working Life of the Future

Germany-Wide Project for Science Year 2018 to Start on June 24 –  
Stop-Overs in Karlsruhe, Dortmund, Halle and Jena – Cross-Generational Discussions



The “Back to the Working Life of the Future” project aims to give historical perspective to the debate on the future of gainful employment fueled by Science Year 2018. (Photo: KIT, Institute for German Studies, Department of Science Communication)

With a series of discussion events across Germany, the “Back to the Working Life of the Future – Visions of Tomorrow’s Work in the Past and Present” project will be brought to the public from June 24, 2018. In Karlsruhe-Durlach, and then in Dortmund, Halle (Saale) and Jena, seniors, youngsters and experts will speak about ideas on the development of gainful employment. Carried out by Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) and partner institutions in Saxony-Anhalt, the project – one of 19 funding projects of Science Year 2018 – will be concluded with a documentary film.

What work visions were there back in the day? How did people deal with technological and organizational changes, say back in the 1960s and 1970s? Can deductions be made for the present, for our views of the world of work today? It’s with questions like these that the “Back to the Working Life of the Future – Visions of Tomorrow’s Work in the Past and Present” project aims to give historical perspective to the

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debate on the future of gainful employment fueled by Science Year 2018.

“Visions of the world of tomorrow are an amazingly timeless topic,” says Andie Rothenhäusler from the Institute for German Studies at KIT who is responsible for the scientific conception of the project. While current outlooks focus on artificial intelligence, self-driving cars and the Internet of Things, half a century ago discussions were dominated by assembly line production, the first robots, and the fear of problems due to automation. “By comparing past and modern visions,” Rothhäusler explains, “it not only becomes clear where visions are right or wrong but also which hopes and fears were particularly important in a specific decade – and may continue to be.”

The methodological approach of the project is a cross-generational, oral history-type discussion with citizens, dubbed “discussion workshops” which will take place in Karlsruhe, Dortmund, Halle (Saale) and Jena. The aim is to particularly address the generations of grandparents and grandchildren as contemporary witnesses. “We found it especially important to include seniors. They are often overlooked in science communication,” says Philipp Schrögel from the Institute for German Studies at KIT who developed the concept for the whole project.

First up on **Sunday, June 24, 2018 from 2 to 5.30 pm is a discussion workshop at Durlach senior club** (Rappenstraße 5, 76227 Karlsruhe, free entry). Under the title of “Durlach between steam engines and digitization” Dr. Bettina Krings from the Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis at KIT, Professor Rolf-Ulrich Kunze from the Institute for History at KIT, Karlsruhe councillor Hans Pfalzgraf, and Durlacher community official Alexandra Ries will host discussions with visitors. Further workshops will be held in Dortmund in July, in Halle (Saale) in August and in Jena in September.

The output of the project – 60 to 70 short interviews from the workshops, 14 longer interviews with seniors and students, as well as talks with historians, labor researchers, futurologists and politicians – will be incorporated in a documentary. The film will be shown during the final project presentation in Halle (Saale) in November and will then be disseminated at cinema evenings, film festivals and as part of a media partnership.

The “Back to the Working Life of the Future” project is a collaboration between the Department of Science Communication at the Institute for German Studies at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), the University of Halle-Wittenberg and science2public. The project takes

place as part of Science Year 2018 – Working Life of the Future and is funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF). The Department of Science Communication at the Institute for German Studies at KIT as well as the associated Science – Media – Communication study program have stood for ambitious projects for the communication of science and technology since their establishment in 2013.

**As “the Research University in the Helmholtz Association”, KIT creates and conveys knowledge for society and the environment. The aim is to make significant contributions to global challenges in the fields of energy, mobility and information. To achieve this, around 9,300 employees are working together on a broad disciplinary basis in natural sciences, engineering, economics, humanities and social sciences. KIT offers research-oriented studies to prepare its 25500 students for responsible tasks in society, economy and science. Innovations at KIT bridge the gap between knowledge and application for the benefit of society, economic prosperity and the preservation of our natural resources.**

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