

DESIGN THE HOTELS OF TOMORROW



Photo: gee-ly Zürich and Fraunhofer IAO

The FutureHotel showcase in Duisburg's inHaus centre presents a hotel room that offers insight into the future of the hotel trade as a "modular system" for future solutions in the industry. The design is by LAVA.

The hotels of tomorrow

The "FutureHotel" research project at the Fraunhofer Institute IAO

Tourism continues to set records worldwide. Today, about 1.1 billion people already travel internationally; by the year 2050 this figure will more than quadruple. The hotel trade is in the process of being reinvented. This process is supported by the joint research project "FutureHotel".

Since 2008 the FutureHotel innovation network, under the supervision of the Fraunhofer IAO together with representatives of the hotel trade and partners from industry and commerce, has been researching new approaches for the hotel industry. The central task is to demonstrate future challenges and opportunities for hotel operators on the basis of trends. FutureHotel is a think tank for identifying potentials for optimizing hotels, thinking ahead to find concrete solutions and implementation of those solutions by the project participants. Villeroy & Boch is an important research partner in this project who wants to actively contribute to shaping the future.



Photo: gee-ly Zürich and Fraunhofer IAO

The bath as a private wellness oasis in the FutureHotel showcase in Duisburg's inHaus centre. Design: LAVA.

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Communication and interaction

The project is currently in the fourth research phase, which is scheduled for 2014–2016. The teams under the supervision of Vanessa Borkmann have already identified diverse fields of innovation as being future-relevant:

- changes in planning, production and construction processes (virtual architecture, digital production, parametric design, 3D printing),
- robots and automation systems,
- intelligent room and building systems,
- display and lighting systems,
- innovative materials, sustainability and energy efficiency,
- communication, interaction, infotainment and entertainment,
- services, process optimisation, human-machine interaction,
- feedback systems and monitoring.

Especially younger, mobile guests are open for the use of new media prior to and during a hotel stay. One of the most interesting functions is the automated check-in and check-out process via a tablet computer or smartphone, which allows the selection of an individual hotel room at the time of booking. After booking the guest receives an access code for the hotel room of his choice – right on his smartphone. Advance payment eliminates the inconvenience of paying at the hotel. Upon arrival, guests can go straight to their rooms without stopping at the reception desk. The registration form is also processed digitally. A special app is used to open the door to the room. Prior authentication via the app allows travellers to open the door without a smartphone by using the backup version with a key card. Check-out upon departure is also fully automatic. The access authorisation for the room is automatically cancelled and the guest can leave the hotel without standing in line at the reception desk.

The elimination of standardised processes upon arrival and departure leaves more room for individual service, which is supported by interactive systems such as a minibar robot. Instead, the hotel employees bring extra pillows, obtain theatre tickets or fulfil other individual wishes. Feedback and monitoring systems ensure recording and optimisation of consumer data to round out the services and create customer loyalty that lasts well beyond the hotel stay.

Model worlds tested in practice

The FutureHotel showcase in Duisburg's inHaus centre is vision become reality: a hotel room in the year 2020. The design is by Alexander Rieck and his team of LAVA architects. It serves the FutureHotel as a testing field and demonstration platform for the presentation of pioneering issues, such as lighting technology, the control and usability of technologies, as well as wellness and health, but also for the evaluation of innovative concepts, solutions and products.



Photo: Hotel Schani, Wien, by Kurt Hoerbst

A partner in the FutureHotel project, the innovative Hotel Schani in Vienna opened in April 2015.



Photo: Hotel Schani, Wien, by Kurt Hoerbst

The bar is the central rendezvous for the guests of the young and mobile generation.

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Photo: Hotel Schani, Wien, by Kurt Hoerbst

A place of encounter – the informal atmosphere in the lobby enhances the performance of the co-workers.



Photo: Hotel Schani, Wien, by Kurt Hoerbst

Smart Street room: the open structure of the room offers plenty of space, with cushions for relaxing in front of the large windows.



Photo: Hotel Schani, Wien, by Kurt Hoerbst

Pilot project: Co-working spaces in the Hotel Schani

Another important platform for the evaluation of innovative processes is the Hotel Schani in Vienna. In planning the hotel, insights from the FutureHotel research project were put into practice, allowing research and optimisation within the context of a hotel operation.

The owners of the Hotel Schani joined the FutureHotel project as research partners in 2012. The hotel, which is the first model of the project to be implemented, opened at the end of April 2015. Many new conceptual ideas that were contributed through cooperation in the planning process make the hotel unique. One such element is an innovative co-working space, which offers hotel guests and people from the city a networked environment where they can work. The goal is to turn the lobby into a new kind of experience space and to integrate the successful concept of networking in the hotel trade. The integration of a co-working space as a place of encounter for guests and creative locals or office nomads working in the lobby, at breakfast or also during events is intended to enhance the travel experience. Mobile check-in and check-out, use of a smartphone as a virtual room key and the multi-functional lobby make it one of the most innovative hotels in the German-speaking world today.

Open room concepts

Despite the modern design, based on a draft by hotel architect Gabriel Kacerovsky of archisphere, the Hotel Schani conveys an informal atmosphere with elements that are associated with typical Viennese charm. As the results of a FutureHotel guest survey show, guests would like more space and freedom in a hotel room. The rooms in the Hotel Schani were therefore designed with an open room structure. An XL rain shower, spacious surfaces, optimised room lighting, USB connections for the power supply of mobile electronic devices and smart TV are standard features. In planning the bath, the team of architects decided to use the design-oriented sanitary ceramic fixtures from Villeroy & Boch. The DirectFlush toilets in the rooms are from the Architectura collection. The Architectura system concept, with a comprehensive and systematic portfolio that is specially adapted to the requirements of non-residential construction, offers innovative solutions of high quality.

Guest profiles are the basis

A decisive finding of the studies conducted thus far by the Fraunhofer Institute IAO is that the guest wants a personalised hotel experience. It will therefore become increasingly important to know more about him, where he spends his time and what his needs are in a particular situation. Communication with the guest, and also among the employees, offers enormous potential in this respect. Hoteliers and their employees must become more familiar with technological devices and systems and invest in a future-oriented infrastructure. The design of the hotel then no longer refers only to the physical room and the employee service, but also increasingly to digital processes and interaction.