Designing For Early Parenthood Together: Exploring Collaborative Technologies for Parents and their Wider Care Ecosystems

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Abstract

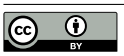
In Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) and Personal Informatics (PI), there is growing interest in the design of technologies to support parents during a period of profound life changes. Yet, these tools are often approached from an individual-use perspective focusing on mothers, despite the inherently collaborative nature of family planning, pregnancy and parenthood. How technologies can support the lived experiences of all involved stakeholders across different stages of early parenthood remains an open question. To this end, the goal of this half-day workshop is to creatively explore how we can design technologies for collaboration within the broader social ecosystem of early parenthood, using speculative co-design activities and collective reflection. By bringing together interdisciplinary HCI and PI researchers interested in early parenthood technologies we aim to surface tensions, identify design challenges, and develop future research and design directions.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **Human computer interaction (HCI)**; **Empirical studies in collaborative and social computing**.

Keywords

Parenthood technologies, collaborative use, fertility tracking, pregnancy tracking, baby tracking, postpartum, care ecosystems, feminist HCI, personal informatics



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1 Background and Motivation

Early parenthood is a profound life transition involving physical, emotional, relational, and logistical changes [2, 29, 34]. Across conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and the first years of parenting, care responsibilities are continuously negotiated across parents and their care ecosystems, including families, healthcare professionals, workplaces, peer communities, and wider social infrastructures. Yet current technologies remain centered on individual users and poorly support the distributed nature of early parenthood [27].

Technologies for reproductive health and parenting primarily focus on individuals' needs, especially for pregnant and postpartum users [3, 5, 6, 14, 16, 25, 28], providing limited support for shared use, coordination, or mutual understanding between stakeholders. This framing risks reinforcing gendered expectations around parenting while overlooking wider care relationships.

Prior work has explored couples' collaboration, collaborative tracking practices, postpartum support ecosystems, and networks of caregivers and healthcare professionals [11, 17, 19, 24, 30, 36]. However, technologies still inadequately support stakeholders' different roles, needs, and responsibilities [23]. Commercial applications frequently neglect extended support networks [1, 26]. Open questions remain around coordination, privacy, responsibility distribution, social norms, and relational dynamics such as trust, inclusion, care, and emotional labor [10, 18].

We argue that designing for early parenthood requires moving beyond individualized notions of technology use toward relational and ecological understandings of care. Drawing on **Feminist HCI**, we view technologies as shaping social relations and care practices rather than acting as neutral tools [4]. This perspective foregrounds lived experiences, plurality, and self-determination while supporting diverse forms of parenting, care, and collaboration. **Ecological perspectives** situate early parenthood within interconnected support ecosystems spanning households, healthcare systems, workplaces, peer communities, and broader sociocultural structures [8]. Technologies therefore shape coordination, expectations, dependencies, and access to support across distributed care networks [33]. Finally, **coproduction** sees collaboration as an opportunity to transform and enrich relationships through reciprocity, recognition, and respect [9].

Together, these perspectives show how current technologies underdesign collaboration, reinforce maternal centrality, and overlook the relational nature of early parenthood. This creates a need for technologies that better support shared understanding, coordination across contexts, responsibility distribution, and diverse care networks. Addressing this gap requires moving beyond the often implicit assumptions that shape current parent technologies and critically examining alternative models of collaborative care. To support this, the workshop employs provotyping, a design approach that uses provocative concepts to surface, challenge, and reflect on established assumptions and design spaces, encouraging participants to explore alternative futures rather than incremental improvements [7]. Through discussion, provotyping, and speculative co-design activities, participants will examine emerging tensions, design challenges, and future directions for relational and ecological technology design.

2 Workshop Agenda: Pre- and Post-Workshop Activities

The workshop is designed as an interactive and collaborative half-day event combining rapid research exchange, collective reflection, and speculative co-design activities (see Table 1). We will establish a dedicated communication channel (e.g. Discord) before the workshop for updates and real-time discussions, which will be upheld after the workshop for continued exchange. A workshop website will provide relevant information, including the call for participation, workshop details and key dates. Invitations will be distributed via academic mailing lists, social media, and personal networks, targeting an interdisciplinary HCI and PI audience. Participants will be selected based on submitted position papers, which will be reviewed by two independent organizers to ensure alignment with the workshop goals. We plan to accept around 20 participants; in case of more sign-ups we will select based on diversity of participants' backgrounds and perspectives. With participants' consent, accepted submissions will be shared prior to the workshop to support richer discussion and engagement.

The workshop is designed for approximately 20 participants and requires a flexible room setup for plenary discussions and small-group collaboration of 4-5 people per group. The organizers will provide materials for the provotyping activity, including paper, sticky notes, markers, craft supplies, and printed templates. A projector and whiteboard/pinboard are required for presentations and collaborative mapping.

The outcomes of the workshop will be consolidated into a comprehensive report published on the workshop website. To broaden the impact, the organizing team will disseminate selected highlights through social media. The organisers will also use the workshop's outcomes to submit a seminar to Dagstuhl[1].

3 Accessibility and Active Engagement

We aim to create an accessible and inclusive workshop environment by encouraging participants to share any accessibility needs in advance, so that appropriate support can be provided. Communication channels and collaborative tools will further support inclusive participation, ongoing exchange, and accessible documentation of contributions.

4 Call for Participation

Current parenthood technologies are centered on individual users, especially mothers, despite the inherently collaborative nature of family planning, pregnancy, and parenthood. How technologies can support the experiences of all involved stakeholders across different stages of early parenthood remains an open question. With this half-day workshop, we aim to bring together interdisciplinary HCI researchers and designers working on or interested in early parenthood technologies to 1) creatively explore how we can design technologies for collaboration within the broader social ecosystem of early parenthood; 2) discuss existing challenges and future directions and 3) establish a network for further collaborations. We ask participants to submit a position paper (min. 300 words, ACM template) that includes a researcher bio, their research topic or interest (which stage of parenthood and which stakeholders are in focus) and reflections on challenges and open questions related to researching or designing technologies for early parenthood (such as recruitment, ethics, emotional labor, researcher wellbeing, relational dynamics, or institutional constraints).

5 Organizers

Here, we provide an overview of the workshop organisers' research backgrounds, prior experiences with workshop organisation (if applicable), and their role(s) for this workshop.

Alice Benedetti is a PhD researcher at the OFFIS Institute for Information Technology in Oldenburg, Germany. Her research focuses on the experiences of families after childbirth, with a focus on mental health challenges and how technologies can support collaboration during this time [11]. She will co-facilitate the workshop.

Lina Eklund is an associate professor in Human-Computer Interaction at Uppsala University, Sweden. Eklund's research focuses on technology in the intimate and private sphere of life. Eklund has studied the impact of reproductive health apps on experiences of pregnancy, healthcare professionals' work, and data governance, and will serve as a co-facilitator for the workshop.

[1] Schloss Dagstuhl is a venue in Germany where Computer Science researchers, including Human-Computer Interaction researchers, come together to discuss the state of research in dedicated seminars, such as research challenges faced, the state-of-the-art, shifting dynamics in the field, and how to progress research further. The event is organised by the Leibniz Center for Informatics. See the Dagstuhl website.

Table 1: An overview of the workshop schedule. Times are tentative and may be subject to change depending on the NordiCHI 2026 programme.

Time	Activity	Description
2:00 pm	Welcome	The organizers introduce themselves, the workshop goals, and the day's agenda.
2:15 pm	Introduction Madness	Participants each give a short (approximately 60-second) presentation introducing their position paper and research interests. The aim is to quickly surface diverse perspectives and research frictions across disciplines and contexts.
3:00 pm	Madness Consolidation	During the Introduction Madness, organizers document and cluster recurring themes and tensions on a shared challenge-mapping board, which participants then use to form small groups for group activities.
3:15 pm	*Coffee break*	Informal networking and discussion over coffee.
3:45 pm	Group Activity "Provotypes"	Using simple craft materials, groups create speculative and provocative artifacts, interfaces, scenarios, services, or storyboards that are "worst-case" or "evil" technology concepts for early parenthood. These "provotypes" are meant to intentionally exaggerate problematic assumptions, unequal power relations, unintended consequences or breakdowns in collaborative care.
4:45 pm	Pitching & Plenary Reflection	Each group presents their provotype in a short 3-min pitch, followed by a plenary discussion reflecting on implications for designing collaborative technologies in early parenthood. Organizers connect those to feminist HCI, ecological perspectives, and coproduction of care to identify future research and design opportunities.
5:30 pm	Closing	Organizers summarize key insights and outcomes, and discuss opportunities for future collaboration and community-building activities beyond the workshop.

Sophie Grimme is a PhD researcher at the OFFIS Institute for Information Technology in Oldenburg, Germany. Her research investigates how women's health technologies shape tracking [12] and support practices [11] and how they can be designed to support data agency in sensitive health contexts, including FemTech privacy transparency [13]. She will serve as communications and submissions chair for the workshop.

Tora Jarsve is a PhD researcher at the Department of Informatics, University of Oslo. Her research focuses on understanding the creepy experiences technology might evoke [15]. Her recent research interests focus on the lived experience of 'intimate' technologies. She contributes insights into how experiences with technology—such as pregnancy-tracking technologies—might be harmful, and she will serve as workshop co-facilitator.

Ya-Fang Lin is a postdoctoral researcher at The University of Tokyo working at the intersection of CSCW and UbiComp. Her research explores how technology can support interpersonal relationships, collaboration, and wellbeing. She contributes to this workshop through the lens of coproduction [9, 17–19] of mother-father dyads, and will serve as submissions and communications chair for the workshop.

Meagan B. Loerakker is a PhD researcher in the research unit of Human-Computer Interaction at TU Wien. Her research investigates how PI technologies can move beyond standardised health goals and assumptions about the 'default' body (cf. [22]), focusing on metric design that reflects individual user preferences [20] and more effectively supports wellbeing [21]. She has co-organised an HRI workshop [32], and will serve as co-facilitator and communications chair for the workshop.

Lena Rechberger is a PhD researcher in Human-Computer Interaction at Uppsala University, Sweden. She studies fatherhood and digital technologies used in early parenthood. She contributes to this workshop through a critical feminist perspective on gender relations in parenthood technologies, and with a focus on fatherhood. She will serve as submissions chair and co-facilitator for the workshop.

Xiaofei Sun received an MSc in Information Security at Stockholm University, Sweden. Her research focuses on privacy and digital intimacy, with a particular interest in marginalized communities affected by technological harms. Her research investigates how intimate data is collected, communicated, and governed in connected systems. She will serve as communications chair for the workshop.

Nadine Wagener is a group leader at the OFFIS Institute for Information Technology in Oldenburg, Germany. Her research focuses on personal pervasive technologies for everyday wellbeing, including providing models for the design of Virtual Reality [35], and family informatics [31]. She contributes to the workshop with a focus on designing technologies for wellbeing of the whole care ecosystem. She has been involved in a series of workshops on technologies for wellbeing at CHI and organised several winter and summer schools, and will serve as co-facilitator for the workshop.

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