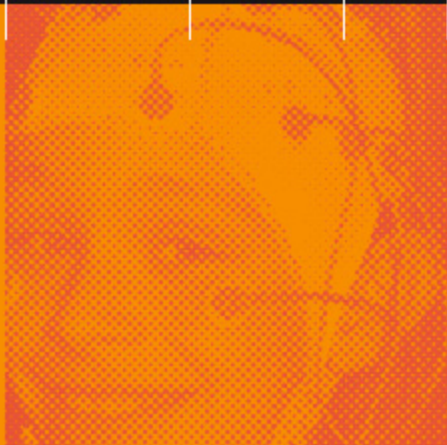


Bärbel Hüsing,  
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Impact Assessment of Neuroimaging



*Bärbel Hüsing, Lutz Jäncke, Brigitte Tag*

## Impact Assessment of Neuroimaging

v/d/f

IOS  
Press

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*Bärbel Hüsing, Lutz Jäncke, Brigitte Tag*

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**Final Report**

**IOS**  
Press

**v/d/f**

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## List of abbreviations

ACG	Anterior cingulated gyrus
AChEI	Acetylcholine esterase inhibitors
AD	Alzheimer's disease
ADC	Apparent diffusion coefficient
ADP	Adenosine diphosphate
APOE	Apolipoprotein E
ATP	Adenosine triphosphate
AVMs	Arteriovenous malformations
BAG	Federal Office of Public Health, <i>Bundesamt für Gesundheit</i>
BOLD	Blood-Oxygen-Level-Dependent
BOLD-fMRI	Blood-Oxygen-Level-Dependent fMRI
BStP	<i>Bundesgesetz über die Bundesstrafrechtspflege</i>
BV	Swiss Federal Constitution, <i>Bundesverfassung</i>
CAT	Computer-Aided Translation
CNS	Central Nervous System
COMT	Catechol-o-methyltransferase
DBM	Deformation-based morphometry
CEN	Comité Européen de Normalisation
CENELEC	Comité Européen de Normalisation Electrotechnique
CSF	Cerebrospinal fluid
CT	Computed tomography
DC-potential	Direct current potential (slow cortical potential)
DLPFC	Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex
DSC-MRI	Dynamic susceptibility-weighted contrast material-enhanced magnetic resonance imaging
DSM-IIR/ DSM-IV	American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
DTI	Diffusion tensor imaging
DTT	Diffusion tensor tractography
DWI	Diffusion-weighted imaging
EEG	Electroencephalography
ELISA	Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay
EPI	Echoplanar imaging
ERD	Event-related desynchronisation
ERP	Event-related potential

ETSI	European Telecommunications Standards Institute
EUV	Extreme ultraviolet
FDA	Food and Drug Administration
FDG PET	F-fluoro-deoxyglucose positron emission tomography
fMEG	Fetal magnetoencephalography
fMRI	Functional magnetic resonance imaging
FTD	Frontotemporal dementia
GABA	Gamma-aminobutyric acid
GCP	Good Clinical Practice
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLI	Gray level index
Gy	Gray
H	Equivalent dosage
HB	Deoxygenated blood
HG	Heschl's gyrus
HMG	Swiss Federal Law on Medicinal Products, <i>Heilmittelgesetz</i>
IA-DAS	Intra-arterial digital subtraction
ICER	Incremental cost-effectiveness ratio
ICNIRP	International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection
IGNS	Image-guided neurosurgery
iv	Intravenous
LAC	Location Area Code
LDLPFC	Left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex
LED	Light Emitting Diode
LES	Left extrastriate cortex
LFP	local field potential
LPAR	Left parietal cortex
LPRC	Left precentral cortex
LTEMP	Left temporal cortex
LORETA	Low resolution electrical tomography
MCI	Mild cognitive impairment
MEG	Magnetoencephalography
MEP	Motor evoked potential
MMN	Mismatch negativity
MR	Magnetic resonance
MRI	Magnetic resonance imaging
MRS	MRI spectroscopy

MS	Multiple sclerosis
NAA	N-acetylaspartate
NC	Control subjects
NINCDS-ADRDA	National Institute of Neurologic, Communicative Disorders and Stroke-AD and Related Disorders Association
NIR	Near infrared
NIRS	Near infrared spectroscopy
OEM	Original equipment manufacturers
PAC	Primary auditory cortex
PACS	Picture archiving and communication systems
Pi	Inorganic Phosphate
PDE	Phosphodiesterases
PET	Positron emission tomography
phospho-tau, P-tau	Tau phosphorylated at various epitopes
PME	Phosphomonoesters
PFC	Prefrontal cortex
PP	Planum parietale
PT	Planum temporale
PU	Parcellation units
p-value	Lowest significance level at which one would still have obtained a significant result for a given data set, a given significance test, and a given test problem
q	Weighting factor
rCBF	Regional cerebral blood flow
rCMRO2	Regional oxygen consumption
RF	Radiofrequency
ROI	Regions of interest
r score	Linear correlation coefficient
rTMS	Repetitive TMS
SAMS	Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences
SAR	Specific absorption rate
Sv	Sievert
SPECT	Single photon emission computed tomography
StGB	Swiss Criminal Code, <i>Strafgesetzbuch</i>
sMRI	Structural magnetic resonance imaging
sTMS	Single-pulse TMS
SZ	Schizophrenic subjects
T-tau	Total-tau

TBI	Traumatic brain injury
TBM	Tensor-based morphometry
TEM	Transmission electron microscope
TMS	Transcranial magnetic stimulation
TPG	Federal law on the transplantation of organs, tissue and cells, <i>Bundesgesetz über die Transplantation von Organen, Geweben und Zellen</i>
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
VBM	Voxel-based morphometry
VMPFC	Ventromedial prefrontal cortex
WBIC	Wolfson Brain Imaging Centre
WHM	White matter hyper intensities
3DAC	3-dimensional anisotropy contrast
5-HTT	5-hydroxytryptamine transporter, serotonin transport protein
z score	Standard scores
z position	Position of a particular z-score on the z-scale
<sup>15</sup> O	Oxygen-15
<sup>11</sup> C	Carbon-11
<sup>13</sup> N	Nitrogen-13
<sup>18</sup> F	Fluorine-18

## Executive Summary

The human brain plays an important role in what makes humans human: sensations, movements, emotions, language, memory, intelligence, creativity, thought and social interaction are accomplished with the help of this extraordinary organ. Due to the outstanding importance of the brain for human life, it is expected that knowledge arising from brain research will have considerable cultural, social, economic and health impacts. It is the aim of this study to contribute to an internationally largely unexploited field by assessing the impacts of neuroimaging from an interdisciplinary technology assessment perspective.

In recent years, powerful neuroimaging methods have been developed which allow the non-invasive analysis of human brain anatomy as well as *function* in living humans, thus opening up unprecedented ways of exploring the human brain. This toolbox comprises the anatomical techniques computed tomography (CT) and structural magnetic resonance imaging (sMRI), and the functional techniques positron emission tomography (PET), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS), and near infrared spectroscopy (NIRS). Electroencephalography (EEG), magnetoencephalography (MEG), and variants of transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) techniques are used as supplementary tools. Moreover, molecular imaging, employing different modalities such as PET, SPECT, MRI/MRS and MR microscopy, is rapidly gaining importance in biomedical and pharmaceutical research. Each of these imaging modalities has its specific strengths and weaknesses. All in all, the different neuroimaging methods in their combination allow brain imaging on different spatial levels from gross anatomy down to genes and molecules.

The scope of actual and potential future applications of neuroimaging is broad: In addition to its invaluable contributions to basic biological and biomedical research, neuroimaging is firmly established and still expanding in clinical diagnostics, monitoring of disease progression, neurosurgery, and pharmaceutical research. Neuroimaging has had, and continues to have, a significant impact on the study of cognition, leading to the new discipline of cognitive neurosciences which altered our understanding of the brain significantly: it is now seen as a complex organ of extraordinary individuality and plasticity, which shows dynamic self-organisation in response to stimu-

li, and which significantly matures and changes during individual development.

Moreover, there is a growing interest to extend the application of brain imaging into new fields, ranging from screening and prediction of cognitive abilities and performance, of personality traits or aberrant behaviour to lie-detection and “mind-reading”. To illustrate these trends, neuroimaging as a tool to improve educational practice and learning, to support forensic psychology, and its use in market research were analysed as examples in this report. They showed that brain imaging is often – and mistakenly – presented and perceived as direct, intrinsically objective and accurate “hard science”. The expensive high-tech instrumentation and the representation of results as aesthetic visual maps of the brain in action may have contributed to this notion, leading to a misconception of the power, sensitivity and limits of brain imaging both on the supply and demand side of such information. This may lead to unjustified expectations, undue concerns, but also bears the risk of a premature broad use of not sufficiently substantiated findings, accompanied by an over-reliance on or misapplication of neuroimaging information.

However, the report clearly shows that the concerns of “mind-reading” and far-reaching inference on one’s personality by neuroimaging alone are clearly not supported by the present state of the art in cognitive neurosciences. In general, brain imaging methods used in the realm of cognitive psychology have not yet advanced to a stage in which their diagnostic specificity and sensitivity goes beyond established psychological and psychiatric diagnostic tests. Presently, the state of the art in cognitive neurosciences does not support the application of neuroimaging beyond well-controlled research studies. It also does not support to make far-reaching assessments about cognitive abilities, personality, future behaviour, or ability to lead a fulfilled life.

In order to exploit the potentials of neuroimaging further and to provide effective safeguards against misuse and over-reliance on the methods, it is recommended

- to closely monitor the developments in neuroimaging, as well as neurosciences in general, and take actions, if appropriate,

- to actively stimulate and engage in public debates about the goals, potentials, research endeavours, limits, frame conditions and possible impacts of brain imaging,
- to substitute the presently fragmentary and inconsistent Swiss regulation of research on human beings by a consistent, modern Federal law on research on human beings,
- to further improve the conditions for interdisciplinary neurocognitive research and for the transfer of research findings into routine clinical practice,
- to strive for high levels of quality control and professional standards in neurocognitive and biomedical neuroimaging research as well as in clinical use,
- to specifically address the issues of informed consent, incidental findings and data protection, and to
- support further research into possible health risks associated with certain forms of MRI and to adapt safety regulations accordingly.

## Résumé

Le cerveau contribue largement à l'essence même de l'homme : la perception des sens, les mouvements, les sentiments, la langue, la mémoire, l'intelligence, la créativité, la pensée et l'interaction sociale sont des performances qui ne peuvent être fournies qu'à l'aide du cerveau. Du fait de l'importance prépondérante du cerveau pour la vie humaine, il faut s'attendre à ce que les découvertes liées à la recherche cérébrale aient de grandes conséquences culturelles, sociales, économiques et sanitaires. L'objectif de cette étude est de réaliser dans la perspective interdisciplinaire de l'évaluation des choix technologiques, une analyse des conséquences de la neuro-imagerie, c'est à dire de l'application de cette technique à la recherche sur le cerveau, et ainsi de contribuer à un domaine largement inexploré sur le plan international.

Au cours des dernières années, des techniques d'imagerie ont été développées qui permettent l'emploi de méthodes d'examen non-invasives des structures et fonctions cérébrales, et qui de fait ouvrent de nouvelles possibilités d'étude du cerveau humain. Les méthodes anatomiques telles que la tomographie computerisée (CT) et l'imagerie structurale par résonance magnétique (IRMs) ainsi que les méthodes fonctionnelles comme la tomographie à émission de positron (TEP), l'imagerie fonctionnelle par résonance magnétique (IRMf), la spectroscopie par résonance magnétique (SRM), et la spectroscopie proche infrarouge (NIRS) font partie de ces procédés. Les méthodes comme l'électroencéphalographie (EEG), la magnéto-encéphalographie (MEG) ainsi que des variantes de stimulation magnétique transcrânienne (SMT) sont utilisées de façon complémentaire. En outre, l'imagerie moléculaire a rapidement gagné de l'importance dans la recherche biomédicale et pharmaceutique grâce à différents outils tels que la TEP, le SPECT, l'IRM/SRM et la microscopie par résonance magnétique. Chacune de ces techniques d'imagerie a ses points forts et ses faiblesses spécifiques. Grâce à leur combinaison, la recherche sur le cerveau à différentes échelles, de l'anatomie entière jusqu'aux gènes et aux molécules, est devenue possible.

Le domaine actuel d'application et les potentialités futures de la neuro-imagerie vont au delà de leurs précieuses contributions à la recherche fondamentale biologique et biomédicale. La neuro-imagerie gagne de plus en

plus d'importance dans des domaines tels que le diagnostic clinique, la surveillance de la progression d'une pathologie, la neurochirurgie, ainsi que dans la recherche pharmaceutique. La neuro-imagerie revêt une importance particulière pour le développement des sciences cognitives. Dans ce domaine elle a contribué au développement d'une nouvelle discipline scientifique, la neuroscience cognitive, laquelle a modifié et étendu notre compréhension du cerveau. Aujourd'hui, le cerveau est perçu comme un organe complexe faisant preuve d'une individualité et d'une plasticité extraordinaires. Le cerveau se modifie dynamiquement et se réorganise en fonction des stimuli extérieurs, il mûrit au cours du développement de l'individu et se modifie fortement lors de ce processus.

Étendre la neuro-imagerie à de nouveaux domaines d'application éveille un intérêt croissant. Ces domaines vont de la prévision des capacités et performances cognitives ou d'un comportement divergent à l'analyse de la personnalité, la détection de mensonge voire la lecture des pensées. Pour illustrer ces tendances, le rapport examine à titre d'exemple l'emploi de la neuro-imagerie comme outil d'aide à l'apprentissage scolaire, à la psychologie judiciaire ainsi que pour des études de marché. D'où le constat que la neuro-imagerie est fréquemment représentée et perçue fausement – comme une science exacte, objective et précise et donc «dure». Les appareils coûteux de haute technologie ainsi que la représentation des résultats expérimentaux en forme d'images de cerveau agréables à l'oeil pourraient contribuer à ce point de vue et conduisent au final à des perceptions fausses et trompeuses concernant la valeur, la sensibilité et les limitations de la neuro-imagerie, et ce tant au niveau des diffuseurs que des récepteurs des informations en question. De fait, des attentes non justifiées, mais également des craintes non fondées peuvent surgir, de même qu'une surestimation des possibilités offertes par la neuro-imagerie.

Ce rapport montre par exemple clairement que la crainte de pouvoir lire dans les pensées et de tirer des conclusions quant à la personnalité d'un individu à l'aide de la seule neuro-imagerie ne sont pas fondées. D'une façon générale, les méthodes de neuro-imagerie utilisées dans le cadre de la psychologie cognitive n'ont pas suffisamment progressé pour pouvoir supplanter, en termes de spécificité et de sensibilité, les tests reconnus utilisés dans le cadre de diagnostics psychologiques et psychiatriques. À l'heure actuelle, les méthodes de la neuro-imagerie devraient être employées exclusivement dans le cadre de projets de recherche contrôlés. Leur applica-

tion pour faire des prévisions étendues sur les capacités cognitives, la personnalité, un comportement futur, ou l'épanouissement personnel ne sont pas prouvées dans l'état actuel des connaissances.

Les recommandations suivantes concernent tant l'exploitation des potentialités de la neuro-imagerie que la protection contre tout abus et le risque de surestimation des possibilités offertes :

- observer attentivement les développements dans les domaines de la neuro-imagerie et des neurosciences dans leur ensemble pour prendre les mesures nécessaires le cas échéant,
- initier des dialogues publics portant sur les buts, les potentiels, les résultats, les limitations, les conditions générales ainsi que les conséquences possibles de la neuro-imagerie,
- légiférer au niveau fédéral pour mettre fin aux contradictions actuelles portant sur la recherche sur des sujets humains et répondre aux exigences internationales,
- améliorer les conditions dans lesquelles se déroulent les recherches en sciences neurologiques cognitives ainsi que le transfert des résultats vers les milieux cliniques,
- aspirer à des normes de qualité élevées en termes d'assurance-qualité, de standards professionnels dans les domaines des neurosciences cognitives, de la recherche biomédicale et des pratiques médicales,
- prêter attention aux problèmes résultants de techniques d'échantillonnage aléatoire et de la protection de l'anonymat et des données individuelles en rapport avec la neuro-imagerie
- continuer à soutenir l'étude des risques sanitaires potentiellement liés aux applications de l'imagerie par résonance magnétique et adapter les consignes de sécurité en conséquence.

## Zusammenfassung

Das Gehirn trägt wesentlich zu dem bei, was den Menschen als Menschen ausmacht: Sinneswahrnehmungen, Bewegungen, Gefühle, Sprache, Gedächtnis, Intelligenz, Kreativität, Denken und soziale Interaktion sind Leistungen, die nur mit Hilfe des Gehirns erbracht werden können. Wegen der herausragenden Bedeutung des Gehirns für das menschliche Leben ist zu erwarten, dass Erkenntnisse, die aus der Erforschung des Gehirns erwachsen, große kulturelle, gesellschaftliche, wirtschaftliche und gesundheitliche Auswirkungen haben werden. Es ist das Ziel dieser Studie, eine Analyse der Folgen des Neuroimaging, d. h. der Anwendung bildgebender Verfahren auf die Untersuchung des Gehirns, aus der interdisziplinären Perspektive der Technologiefolgen-Abschätzung durchzuführen und damit einen Beitrag zu einem international weitgehend unerforschten Gebiet zu leisten.

In den letzten Jahren wurden leistungsfähige bildgebende Verfahren entwickelt, die die nicht-invasive Untersuchung der Gehirnstrukturen und -funktionen am lebenden Menschen ermöglichen. Damit eröffnen sie neuartige Möglichkeiten zur Erforschung des menschlichen Gehirns. Zu diesen Verfahren gehören die anatomischen Methoden Computertomografie (CT) und strukturelle Magnetresonanztomografie (sMRI) sowie die funktionellen Methoden Positronenemissionstomografie (PET), funktionelles Magnetresonanztomografie (fMRI), Magnetresonanzspektroskopie (MRS) und Nahinfrarot-Spektroskopie (NIRS). Elektroenzephalografie (EEG), Magnetenzephalografie (MEG) sowie Varianten der Transkraniellen Magnetstimulation (TMS) werden ergänzend eingesetzt. Zudem hat das Molekulare Imaging unter Verwendung verschiedener Modalitäten wie PET, SPECT, MRI/MRS und Magnetresonanztomografie sowohl in der biomedizinischen als auch der pharmazeutischen Forschung rasch an Bedeutung gewonnen. Jedes der genannten bildgebenden Verfahren hat seine spezifischen Stärken und Schwächen. Ihre Kombination ermöglicht jedoch die Untersuchung des Gehirns auf verschiedenen räumlichen Ebenen, von der Gesamtanatomie bis hin zu Genen und Molekülen.

Der aktuelle und mögliche künftige Anwendungsbereich des Neuroimaging ist groß: Es leistet nicht nur wertvolle Beiträge in der biologischen Grundlagenforschung und der biomedizinischen Forschung. Ihm kommt auch große und noch wachsende Bedeutung in der klinischen Diagnostik, bei der

Überwachung von Krankheitsverläufen und Heilungsprozessen, in der Neurochirurgie sowie in der pharmazeutischen Forschung zu. Von besonderer Bedeutung war und ist das Neuroimaging aber für die Untersuchung kognitiver Leistungen. Hier hat es zur Herausbildung der neuen Wissenschaftsdisziplin der kognitiven Neurowissenschaften geführt, die unser Verständnis des Gehirns deutlich erweitert und verändert haben: Das Gehirn wird heutzutage als ein komplexes Organ aufgefasst, das eine außergewöhnliche Individualität und Plastizität aufweist, sich in Abhängigkeit von äußeren Reizen dynamisch verändert und neu organisiert, und das während der Individualentwicklung heranreift und sich dabei stark verändert.

Darüber hinaus gibt es ein wachsendes Interesse, das Neuroimaging auf neue Anwendungsfelder auszudehnen. Sie reichen vom Screening und der Vorhersage kognitiver Fähigkeiten und Leistungen oder von abweichendem Verhalten über die Analyse der Persönlichkeit bis hin zu Lügendetektion und Gedankenlesen. Zur Illustration dieser Trends wurden im vorliegenden Bericht der Einsatz von Neuroimaging als Werkzeug zur Verbesserung der schulischen Wissensvermittlung und des Lernens, zur Unterstützung der forensischen Psychologie sowie im Rahmen der Marktforschung exemplarisch untersucht. Dabei zeigte sich, dass Neuroimaging häufig – und zwar fälschlicherweise – als direkte, objektive und genaue, “harte Wissenschaft” dargestellt und wahrgenommen wird. Die teuren Hightech-Geräte sowie die Darstellung der experimentellen Ergebnisse in Form ästhetisch ansprechender Gehirnbilder dürften zu dieser Auffassung beitragen und führen insgesamt zu falschen und irreführenden Annahmen über die Aussagekraft, Empfindlichkeit und Grenzen des Neuroimaging – und zwar sowohl auf der Seite der Anbieter als auch der Rezipienten solcher Informationen. Hierdurch kann es zu nicht gerechtfertigten Erwartungen, aber auch unbegründeten Befürchtungen kommen, sowie zu einer Überschätzung und unzulässigen Anwendung der Informationen, die mit Neuroimaging erhoben werden können.

In diesem Bericht wird jedoch auch klar gezeigt, dass die Befürchtungen, allein durch Neuroimaging könne man z. B. Gedanken lesen und weitreichende Rückschlüsse auf die Persönlichkeit eines Menschen ziehen, beim gegenwärtigen Stand der Forschung unbegründet sind. Generell sind Methoden des Neuroimaging, die im Rahmen der kognitiven Psychologie eingesetzt werden, nicht so weit fortgeschritten, dass sie in Bezug auf ihre Spezifität und Sensitivität über etablierte, in der psychologischen und psy-

chiatrischen Diagnostik eingesetzte Testverfahren hinausgingen. Zum gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt sollten Methoden des Neuroimaging ausschließlich im Rahmen von kontrollierten Studien und Forschungsvorhaben eingesetzt werden. Ihr Einsatz für weitreichende Aussagen über kognitive Fähigkeiten, Persönlichkeit, künftiges Verhalten, oder Lebenschancen ist durch den gegenwärtigen Stand der Forschung *nicht* gedeckt.

Um die Potenziale des Neuroimaging weiter auszuschöpfen, aber auch Sicherungen gegen Missbrauch und Überschätzung der Methoden bereitzustellen, werden folgende Empfehlungen ausgesprochen:

- die Entwicklungen auf dem Gebiet des Neuroimaging, aber auch der Neurowissenschaften insgesamt, aufmerksam zu verfolgen und gegebenenfalls aktiv zu werden,
- gesellschaftliche Dialoge über Ziele, Potenziale, Forschungsergebnisse, Grenzen, Rahmenbedingungen und mögliche Folgen des Neuroimaging zu initiieren und sich aktiv darin einzubringen,
- die Forschung am Menschen, die gegenwärtig in der Schweiz lückenhaft und widersprüchlich geregelt ist, in einem Bundesgesetz einheitlich und internationalen Anforderungen entsprechend zu regeln,
- die Bedingungen, unter denen interdisziplinäre Forschung auf dem Gebiet der kognitiven Neurowissenschaften sowie der Transfer von biomedizinischen Forschungsergebnissen in die klinische Routine erfolgt, weiter zu verbessern,
- hohe Qualitätsstandards sowohl in Bezug auf die Qualitätssicherung als auch in Standards der Berufsstände anzustreben, sowohl in den kognitiven Neurowissenschaften, der biomedizinischen Forschung als auch in der ärztlichen Praxis,
- sich speziell der Probleme der informierten Zustimmung, der Zufallsbefunde sowie des Datenschutzes anzunehmen, die durch das Neuroimaging aufgeworfen werden, und
- die Erforschung möglicher Gesundheitsrisiken, die mit bestimmten MRI-Anwendungen verbunden sein könnten, weiter zu unterstützen und die Sicherheitsbestimmungen entsprechend anzupassen.



# 1 Introduction

The human brain plays an important role in what makes humans human: sensations, movements, emotions, language, memory, intelligence, creativity, thought and social interaction are accomplished with the help of this extraordinary organ. Brain research aims at elucidating how the brain works, what its capabilities are and how its functions can be understood on all levels, ranging from genes and molecules to human behaviour. Due to the outstanding importance of the brain for human life, it is expected that knowledge arising from brain research will have considerable cultural, social, economic and health impacts.

Brain research makes use of a diverse methodological toolbox, among them psychological tests, pharmacological interventions, neurosurgery, and molecular biology. In recent years, powerful imaging methods such as positron emission spectroscopy (PET), functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electroencephalography (EEG) and magnetoencephalography (MEG) as well as molecular imaging and others, have significantly expanded this toolbox: they open up the possibility to non-invasively analyse human brain functions *in vivo*, and thus contribute to understanding human brain functions on a much more detailed level than before.

The applications that could emanate from this knowledge are manifold: e. g. in healthcare for the diagnosis and therapy of neurological diseases, in pharmaceutical research for the development of new drugs, in psychology and pedagogy, for the development of innovative products. Thus, both the individual as well as society could benefit from brain research. On the other hand, neuroimaging bears the potential to reveal sensitive information about the individual's health, personality, leanings and preferences, or cognitive and emotional abilities. It is especially this latter aspect which raises many health, ethical, legal and social issues which bear – with respect to their scope, potential pervasiveness and disruptiveness – resemblances to the health, ethical, legal and social issues inherent to molecular genetics and genetic engineering.

However, while these issues have been rather high on the agenda in the field of molecular genetics since its early days, the exploration of ethical

and social issues raised by the progress in neurosciences on a broader scope has begun only recently (see e. g. Moreno 2003; Farah, Wolpe 2004, p. 35-36, EGE 2005). To our knowledge, only few technology assessment studies have been carried out internationally on developments in the neurosciences (e. g. International Bioethics Committee (IBC) 1995; Nuffield Council on Bioethics 1998; Steering Committee on Bioethics (CDBI) 2000; Nuffield Council on Bioethics 2002; Pieters et al. 2002; Raeymaekers et al. 2004<sup>1</sup>). They often focus on psychopharmaceuticals and mental disorders or molecular genetics whereas the impacts of neuroimaging have not yet been assessed from an interdisciplinary technology assessment perspective.

Against this background, it is the aim of this study to contribute to an internationally largely unexploited field by assessing the impacts of neuroimaging from an interdisciplinary technology assessment perspective. The following guiding questions will be addressed:

- What are the aims of the application of neuroimaging methods? Which solutions to social aims and challenges are expected?
- What are the present and future uses and applications? What is the respective state of the art? What are the future perspectives?
- What kind of information can be obtained with these methods, what is their validity?
- What are possible risks and unintended impacts of the application of neuroimaging?
- Which drivers and restraints significantly influence the future development? What is their likely impact on possible intended and unintended future developments?
- Which are the options for shaping future developments?
- What are the implications for the planned Federal Law on Research on Human Beings that is presently under preparation in Switzerland?
- Which recommendations can be derived for Switzerland in order to exploit the potentials of neuroimaging, to limit risks and to avoid unintended impacts?

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<sup>1</sup> Related are the citizens' panels "Meeting of Minds – European Citizens' Deliberation on Brain Science" in nine European countries 2005, see <http://www.meetingmindseurope.org>