



## **Locative Media Summer Conference at the Collaborative Research Center "Media Upheavals"**

**September 3-5, 2007**  
**University of Siegen, Germany**  
**Submission deadline: May 15, 2007**

*"Everything is related to everything else, but closer things are more closely related"*  
(Waldo Tobler's First Law of Geography, 1970)

Nowadays everything in the media world gets tracked, tagged and mapped. Cell phones become location-aware, computer games move outside, the web is tagged with geospatial information, and geobrowsers like Google Earth are thought of as an entirely new genre of media. Spatial representations have been inflected by electronic technologies (radar, sonar, GPS, WLAN, Bluetooth, RFID etc.) traditionally used in mapping, navigation, wayfinding, or location and proximity sensing. We are seeing the rise of a new generation that is "location-aware". This generation is becoming familiar with the fact that wherever we are on the planet corresponds with a latitude/longitude coordinate.

The term "Locative Media", initially coined in 2003 by Karlis Kalnins and the 2006 topic of a special issue of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac, seems to be appropriate for digital media applying to real places, communication media bound to a location and thus triggering real social interactions. Locative Media works on locations and yet many of its applications are still location-independent in a technical sense. As in the case of digital media, where the medium itself is not digital but the content is digital, in Locative Media the medium itself might not be location-oriented, whereas the content is location-oriented. Can Locative Media like digital media thus be understood as an upheaval in the media evolution? This is one question we want to discuss at the Locative Media Summer Conference in Germany.

Locative Media can now be categorized under one of two types of mapping, either annotative (virtually tagging the world) or phenomenological (tracing the action of the subject in the world). Where annotative projects seek to demystify (see all the Google Earth Hacks), tracing-based projects typically seek to use high technology methods to stimulate dying everyday practices such as walking or occupying public space. The Japanese mobile phone culture, in particular, embraces location-dependent information and context-awareness. It is thus projected that in the near future Locative Media will emerge as the third great wave of modern digital technology.

The combination of mobile devices with positioning technologies is opening up a manifold of different ways in which geographical space can be encountered and drawn. It thereby presents a frame through which a wide range of spatial practices that have emerged since Walter Benjamin's urban flaneur may be looked at anew. Or are Locative Media only a new site for old discussions about the relationship of consciousness to place and other people? In the early days of sea travel, it was only the navigator who held such awareness of his exact position on Earth. What would it mean for us to have as accurate an awareness of space as we have of time? In the same way that clocks and watches tell us the exact second, portable GPS devices help us pinpoint our exact location on Earth.

As we dig a bit deeper into how particular Locative Media projects negotiate local and global spaces, we see the increasing "technologisation" and commodification of urban and public spaces. Are Locative Media the avant-garde of the "society of control"? If this kind of media practice resides in pure code (tracklogs), what is the difference between Locative Media and software development? Or is the recent rise of Locative Media just a response to the disappearance of net art?

In reaching beyond art, many of us are becoming familiar with GPS units, such as navigation systems. GPS technologies now appear in mobile, location-aware computing games such as "Mogi" or "Tiger Telematics Gizmondo," which utilize GPS to enable players to see each other's locations. Most of the location-based games nowadays seem to emphasize collecting, trading and meeting over combat. Does this indicate a social trend in mobile entertainment? Do Locative Media generate more accessible than aggressive play plots? Can we say that the numerous distributed geotagging projects (Flickr, Geocaching etc.) unleashed have given rise to a new genre of collaborative "geocommunities"? Could these geolocated spatio-temporal web portals become a dynamic visualization matrix for all scales, from nano to astro, and incorporate interoperability standards for the biological sciences, the geosciences, history, economics, and other social sciences? And finally, are Locative Media a kind of manifestation of what Bruno Latour means by the "Internet of Things"? By geotagging objects instead of people, and having these objects tell us their stories, do we create what Jean-Jacques Rousseau called for, an awareness of the genealogy of an object as it is embedded in the matrix of its production?

This summer conference will attempt to give an overview of actual research on this topic, especially focusing on how Locative Media tackle social and political contexts of production by focusing on social networking, access and participatory media content including story-telling and spatial annotation. Participants from all relevant disciplines are invited, especially researchers in social science, IT design, urban, media and cultural studies. Project demonstrations are warmly encouraged, but the main objective is to move beyond presentation and to build conceptual and theoretical links and exchanges between disciplines. This kind of conference is meant a forum for the presentation of papers, further discussion, collective reading work and as a preliminary step for the publication of an edited volume in 2008.

#### **Invited and confirmed speakers:**

Prof. Dr. Lev Manovich, University of California, San Diego (USA), <http://www.manovich.net/>

Prof. Dr. Stephen Graham, University of Durham (GB), Department of Geography, <http://www.geography.dur.ac.uk/information/staff/personal/graham/index.html>

Dr. Miya Yoshida, Malmö Art Academy, Lund University (S), <http://invisible-landscapes.net/>

Dr. Adrian Mackenzie, Lancaster University (GB), <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/staff/mackenza/>

#### **How to participate:**

Submissions should include 1) Title, 2) 500-word abstract 3) Selected bibliography and 4) 200-word CV for the presenter.

These should be sent to [thielmann@fk615.uni-siegen.de](mailto:thielmann@fk615.uni-siegen.de) as pdf or doc attachments by May 15, 2007. Notification of acceptance will be provided two weeks later so as to allow adequate to make travel arrangements. Full papers for publication are due on December 31, 2007.

For further information contact Tristan Thielmann: [thielmann@fk615.uni-siegen.de](mailto:thielmann@fk615.uni-siegen.de). The summer conference is organised by the research group "Media Topographies" of the Collaborative Research Center "Media Upheavals", University Siegen, Am Eichenhang 50, 57076 Siegen, Germany.