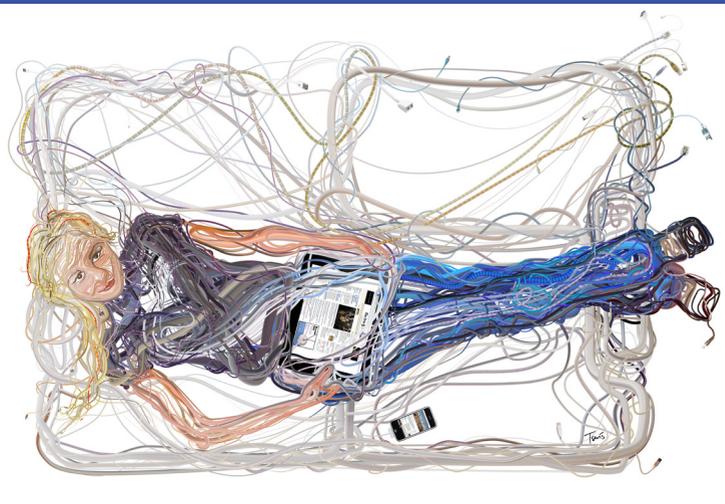# Media in Action
Conference

Illustrator: Charis Tsevis

10-11 June

University of Siegen

Artur-Woll-Haus, Am Eichenhang 50, 57076 Siegen, Germany

Thursday

14:00	**Peter Gendolla, Tristan Thielmann:** Introduction
14:45	**John Durham Peters:** God and Google
15:30	**Sean Cubitt:** Governing Light in the Network
16:30	**Maria & Thomas Haigh:** Open Source Software Practices: Forgotten History of the 1950s and 1960s
17:15	**Volker Grassmuck:** Managing Copyrights: Technological Enforcement vs. Freedom
18:00	Parbleu, anschliessend Buffet

Friday

9:00	**Seth Giddings:** The Microethology of Humans and Nonhumans at Play
9:40	**Ursula Plesner:** Emails, Phones and Search Engines: Actants in Journalism
10:30	**Antoine Hennion:** Listen! Bodies, Mediations and Taste
11.15	**Frédéric Vandenberghe:** Mediation, Representation and the Constitution of Collective Subjectivities
12:00	Lunch
14:00	**Ilpo Koskinen:** Doing Things with Camera Phones - Or Doing the Same Old Things with...?
14.45	**Nick Couldry:** Some Paradoxes of MediaSpace
16:00	**David Turnbull:** Moving, Mapping, Knowing and Storying: Multiple Spatialities, the Possibilities of Emergence in the Digital Age
16:45	**Bruno Latour:** Is there a Successor to the Newspapers to Navigate Controversial Datascapes?

further information: http://www.fk615.uni-siegen.de

please register: media-in-action@uni-siegen.de (no fee)

UNIVERSITÄT SIEGEN

Graduate School
locating media

Kulturwissenschaftliches Forschungskolleg
SFB/FK 615
Medienumbrüche

DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

Media in Action
International Conference of the Research Center Media Upheavals

We are presently engaging with a plethora of global and disorganized cultural contents and „born-digital" data. The new modes and conditions of interaction emerging in this context pose a major challenge to traditional methods of media and cultural analysis: Still busy catching up with „new media", cultural analysis now has to confront the structural change towards „more media". What comes into focus are media practices: the way media act on social and cultural practices, and the way sociocultural practices constitute and negotiate the shape of media to come.
A 'praxeological' approach might map, for instance, the highly differentiated connections between places and cyberspace, and the cultural effects of digital artifacts and their evanescent presence – and it might deliberately choose hybrid modes of representation and narration in order to do so. A 'praxeological' approach will retrace the mediating steps between people, micro-organizations, artifacts and signs and observe how they switch scales and constitute agency.

The sometimes confusing and complex situations created by new 'media in action' should not, however, obscure the fact that 'old' media practices by no means disappear: they migrate to and transform into digital practices, informing them in unexpected ways. The historical dimensions of media practices call for an extended theoretical and methodological scope. New media practices are sparked off by culturally entrenched media practices clashing with the potentials of new media – and result in heterogeneous purposes, suspended cultural protocols, and uncertain effects. Microblogging on Twitter, for instance, fuses private messaging and public visibility, and restructures private and public spheres to an as yet unknown extent. Some of these issues have already been explored in the context of Siegen University's research on two recent media upheavals – the distinct cultural impact of analog media on culture around 1900, and of digital media around 2000. Now, the future potential of a historically informed, socio-technical, and practice-oriented approach for the study of contemporary media cultures will have to be mapped.

ABSTRACTS

John Durham Peters (Department of Communication Studies, University of Iowa)
God and Google

New media give new intellectual life to old media. Google, the most prominent of many new media, gives new energy to old speculations about the book or library that contains everything. The company explicitly invites musement on the theology of omniscience found in the media religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. What does it mean that writing, long sidelined by the audiovisual deviation of the twentieth-century, is once more at the heart of the temple, palace, and market, albeit in a transformed mode?   What does it mean that logistics rather than sight or sound, mapping and indexing rather than narratives and messages, are at the heart of digital media?

Sean Cubitt (School of Culture & Communication, University of Melbourne)
Governing Light in the Network

In network societies, the commanding heights are no longer the means of production but the means of distribution. Today the distribution of moving image media is dependent on control over codecs, formats, colour gamuts, portals and protocols. Products of global diplomacy between nations, corporations, civil society, engineers and scientists, these infrastructural elements are not only perpetually emergent outcomes of perpetually unfinished political and economic processes but also aesthetic constraints and opportunities. This paper addresses the democratic and aesthetic challenges posed by network distribution, questioning both biopolitical and immaterial labour approaches to network distribution, and examining some exemplary alternative practices.

Thomas Haigh (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee)
Open Source Software Practices: Forgotten History of the 1950s and 1960s

We think of open source as a recent phenomenon, created by freedom loving individuals rather than businesses. But SHARE, the user group for IBM's early scientific computers had many of the formal and informal characteristics of today's open source software projects. My paper focuses on its involvement in the development of standard programs for mathematical tasks. Creating these routines was laborious but brought little proprietary advantage, so firms realized they would benefit by pooling their efforts. By the mid-1950s was performing a range of activities including regular conferences, an extensive software library, the production of standards and reference manuals of all kinds, and a number of joint software development projects. However, SHARE also demonstrated some weaknesses of this approach. Tacit mathematical knowledge was embedded in software and rendered invisible. Programs varied greatly in quality, and many possessed subtle mathematical flaws. During the 1960s a SHARE committee attempted to adapt academic peer review to create a new model for the publication and evaluation of mathematical software.

Volker Grassmuck
Managing Copyrights: Technological Enforcement vs. Freedom

"It's unfortunate but people are dishonest," said Xerox PARC researcher Mark Stefik, and invented Digital Rights Management. "If you tread people as idiots, they will start behaving as idiots," said Dutch cityplanner Hans Mondermann, and invented the concept of "Shared Space." "If you tread people as commoners, they will share and cooperate," said software programmer Richard Stallman, and invented "Copyleft." The talk explores how the underlying assumptions about human nature affect the design of systems of interactions between people, artifacts and signs and the cooperation and resistance they trigger. In copyright, the relative weight of the four constraints that regulate as identified by Lawrence Lessig -- the law, social norms, the market

and architecture -- are changing. A new social contract between authors and audiences beyond that of the culture industries of the 20th century is emerging.

Seth Giddings (Department of Culture, Media and Drama, University of the West of England, Bristol)
The Microethology of Humans and Nonhumans at Play

Videogame play is one of the most powerful examples of the intimacies and intensities of human-technological relationships in digital culture. Drawing on small-scale case studies of videogame play, this presentation will explore some theoretical and methodological issues that arise from paying attention to the circuits of human and technological behaviour in everyday digital culture. The case studies develop a microethological approach. Taking its cue from actor-network theory in particular, it takes as its objects of research neither the human nor nonhuman players. Rather it studies *behaviours* in the event of gameplay, and the collusion of the various bodies (human and nonhuman, virtual and actual, material and semiotic) that constitute it. The case studies will include: The ethology of automata (*Advance Wars* series, Nintendo GameBoy Advance / DS); Everyday life in virtual gravity (a set of events around and including the playing of *Lego Racers 2* PC); The configuration of the player (an event of *Wii Bowling* play, Nintendo Wii). The presentation will suggest methodological tactics both for analysing videogame culture in particular, and for conceptualising everyday new media technoculture more generally.

Ursula Plesner (Copenhagen Business School)
Emails, Phones and Search Engines: Actants in Journalism

Around the turn of the millennium, media scholars were greatly concerned with new information and communication technologies (ICTs) such as e-mail, search engines, etc., and with their possible impact on journalism. In a study published in 2000, 'new reporting tools commonly known as computer-assisted reporting' seemed promising, and to such a degree that it was proposed that internet access become available at every workstation in a newsroom. In this phase of problematization, there were normative discussions about quality issues ensuing form the introduction of new ICTs. Today, it seems that ICTs have become normalized, inconspicuous elements in the sociotechnical networks assembled in media production processes. This talk will discuss how we might deal analytically with ICTs as actants. They are elements that sometimes make a difference in the production of media texts, but, at the same time, they are contingent – they are not always parts of networks, and they do not always perform the same actions. I will give examples of how various ICTs emerged as actants alongside other elements in a study of the mass mediation of social scientific knowledge.

Antoine Hennion (MINES ParisTech, Centre de sociologie de l'innovation)
Listen! Bodies, Mediations and Taste

This contribution provides an account of the love for music as an activity, a meaningful accomplishment, with its tricks and bricolages, its gestures and objects, its places and medias. Taste is a performance, a problematic modality of attachment to the world. Playing, listening, recording, making others listen…, all those activities amount to more than the actualization of a taste *already there*. They are redefined during the action, with a result that is partly uncertain. In such a pragmatist conception, amateurs' attachments and practices are understood as a collective technique, whose analysis shows the way we sensitize ourselves, to things, to ourselves, to situations and to moments, while simultaneously, reflexively controlling how those feelings might be shared and discussed with others.

Frédéric Vandenberghe (University Research Institute of Rio de Janeiro)
Mediation, Representation and the Constitution of Collectives Subjectivities

In accord with the main tenets of mediation studies, as developed by Régis Debray, I will analyze the symbolic and material practices that transform a bunch of individuals into a collective subjectivity that can act with consciousness and will. My main argument will be that the constitution of a collective that can act 'as one man' can be analyzed as a complex triphasic process of (1) symbolic representation of unity and difference, (2) techno-social mediation and coordination of action and (3) political representation through spokepersonship. Analyzing the practices of symbolic and political representation from the middle of the process of mediation will allow us to historicize the practices of representation and to analyze the transformation of the constitution of collectives as one follows the media upheavals that accompany the transition from one mediasphere to another.

Nick Couldry (Goldsmiths, University of London)
Some Paradoxes of MediaSpace

Media from the beginning have a paradoxical relationship to space, since (as objects) they both move through space along particular trajectories and (as texts) they represent the very same space they move through. I have previously developed the concept of 'mediaspace' (Couldry and McCarthy 2004) to capture this paradoxical relationship. That concept brings together two spatial processes: layering and focussing. Media *layer* their representations over the space they represent (compare Debord 1983), while media's circulations are *focussed* around particular nodes (or in the language of Callon and Latour 1981 'obligatory passing-points'). The result in the pre-digital age is what I have called the 'myth of the mediated centre' (Couldry 2003), whereby the actual diversity of space and of contributors to media is collapsed (in the stories media tell) into a simple representation of a single nation, a people, a world, focussed around a 'centre' to which media provide a privileged access. That myth is reinforced by the way the reception of media itself has been focussed in regular practices of attention directed at dominant media institutions such as the BBC. Many institutions including modern governments have relied upon that myth.
In the digital age into which we are moving, the layering and focussing aspects of mediaspace become more complicated. The distribution pattern of both media producers and media reception is decentred to varying degrees. Is the result to undermine, even terminate, the myth of the mediated centre? Paradoxically not, since the consequences of changed distribution patterns of media production/reception depend always on the interactive practices at play in the media field: between the enlarged set of media producers and the diversified set of options for media reception. Those practices are shaped by many forces beyond sheer technological possibility. They are shaped, as before, by the needs of institutions, including state-related institutions, and the uneven distribution of resources between actors. It is possible therefore that, in spite of its foundations being shaking, the myth of the mediated centre will remain in place but subject to new pressures which key actors will try to absorb and incorporate, in order to sustain their institutional authority. In that sense mediaspace is becoming more, not less, paradoxical, confounding comforting predictions of simple drastic and immediate change (Shirky 2008, Leadbeater 2007).

References:
Callon, M. and Latour, B. (1981): 'Unscrewing the Big Leviathan', in: K. Knorr-Cetina and A. Cicourel (eds), *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Couldry, N. (2003): *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach.* London: Routledge.
Couldry, N. and McCarthy, A. (2004): 'Introduction', in: N. Couldry and A. McCarthy (eds), *Mediaspace* . London: Routledge.
Debord, G. (1983): *Society of the Spectacle.* Detroit: Black and Red.
Leadbeater, C. (2007): *We-Think. Mass Innovation, Not Mass Production*. London: Profile Books.
Shirky, C. (2008): *Here Comes Everybody*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Ilpo Koskinen (School of Art and Design, Aalto University Helsinki)
Doing Things with Camera Phones - Or Doing the Same Old Things with...?

This presentation looks at two early studies of camera phones, Mobile Image and Mobile Multimedia, both building on classic ethnomethodology. When one tracks social organization in use from these studies, one overwhelmingly sees something familiar, forms of action of what Garfinkel once called immortal ordinary society. This presentation extrapolates from these two studies into what can be called - tongue-in-cheek - Mobile Multimedia 2.0, i.e. the integration of camera phones and Web technologies, posing the question of whether the change of distribution channel from one-to-one to one-to-whomever brings along radically new organizations of social action.

David Turnbull (Australian Centre for Science, Innovation and Society, University of Melbourne)
Moving, Mapping, Knowing and Storying: Spaces and Trails

It seems as if there is a problem with maps– the seduction of maps– the urge to talk of understanding in terms of mapping– is perpetually undermined by ceaseless debates about what maps are and the work they do in the world. This is to overlook the changing dynamics and spatialities of co-production between the ways in which knowledge is moved and assembled and the technologies and practices that enable them. The problems turn around the twin poles of spatiality and movement captured in the expanding whirlpool of writing aiming to 'rethink' maps, to find critical/radical/counter cartographies, and to articulate the possibilities of interactivity, complexity and emergence in the 'augmented' spaces and realities of web2.0 and the 'geocoded' world.
The paper focuses on the key loci of debate: What is the relationship between maps, knowledge and moving? For example wayfinding – why is it that maps were never used for this, their supposed primary function, until modern times? And the corollary, does the mapping/mapmaking distinction hold, i.e. did early man use/need/make maps, if not how did they move? Do maps represent/depend on space, are they performative productions of space or both? Is space absolute or relational, is space the problem? Can maps have multiple spatialities, or can there be maps that do away with space altogether? Are we moving into new forms of dominating spatialities, eg web 2.0 and genetic space? What is cartographic rationality? What are the possibilities for critique?
The paper opens up these problems through briefly looking at some disputed examples of maps, including; the Abauntz incised stone map, dated at 14kya recently claimed to be the world's oldest, the Catalhoyuk town plan, genetic maps of human migration 'Out of Africa', and emergent network maps. The paper then follows the path of multiplicity, treating space as both the product of and the condition for movement, and string and stories as examples of the differing, enabling connective technologies that provide dynamic tension and new ways of knowing and moving in the world, linking knowledge spaces and storied trails.

Information for our guests

Conference venue:

University of Siegen
Artur-Woll-Haus
Am Eichenhang 50
57076 Siegen

How to get there:

The conference venue Artur Woll-Haus, Am Eichenhang 50, is close to the campus ‚Hölderlinstrasse' and ‚Paul Bonatz-Strasse' on Haarder Berg.

By car:

Siegen is reached by motorway A45 Dortmund-Frankfurt/M. Take the exit „Siegen/Netphen" and follow the directions to Netphen/Universität (on motorway B 62). Take the exit 'Universität', which takes you directly to ‚Am Eichenhang'. Pass the traffic lights, follow the street and turn left immediately after the pedestrian crossing. Parking space is available in front of and (more conveniently) behind the building.

From train/bus station Siegen-Weidenau to Artur Woll-Haus

The conference venue can be reached in 10 min. on foot from Siegen-Weidenau train and bus station. (Warning: it's an uphill hike). Coming out of the train station and facing the bus terminal, turn right and walk straight past a demolished building until you reach an underpass and railway crossing on the right side. Cross the tracks and walk straight ahead (past the Gartenhaus restaurant and some shops). This street is called Auf den Hütten. Take the first left turn into Formerstrasse, cross the tracks again and pass under the flyover. Turn right into Am Eichenhang (this is the uphill part). The Artur Woll-Haus is the first building on the left.

Airports, train connections, buses

The airports closest to Siegen are Frankfurt/Main and Cologne/Bonn. Both airports are ca. 2 – 2 1/2 hours away from Siegen by train.
From Frankfurt Airport, take a local train to Frankfurt Main station (Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof) and then change for a train to Siegen Hauptbahnhof. (You may have to
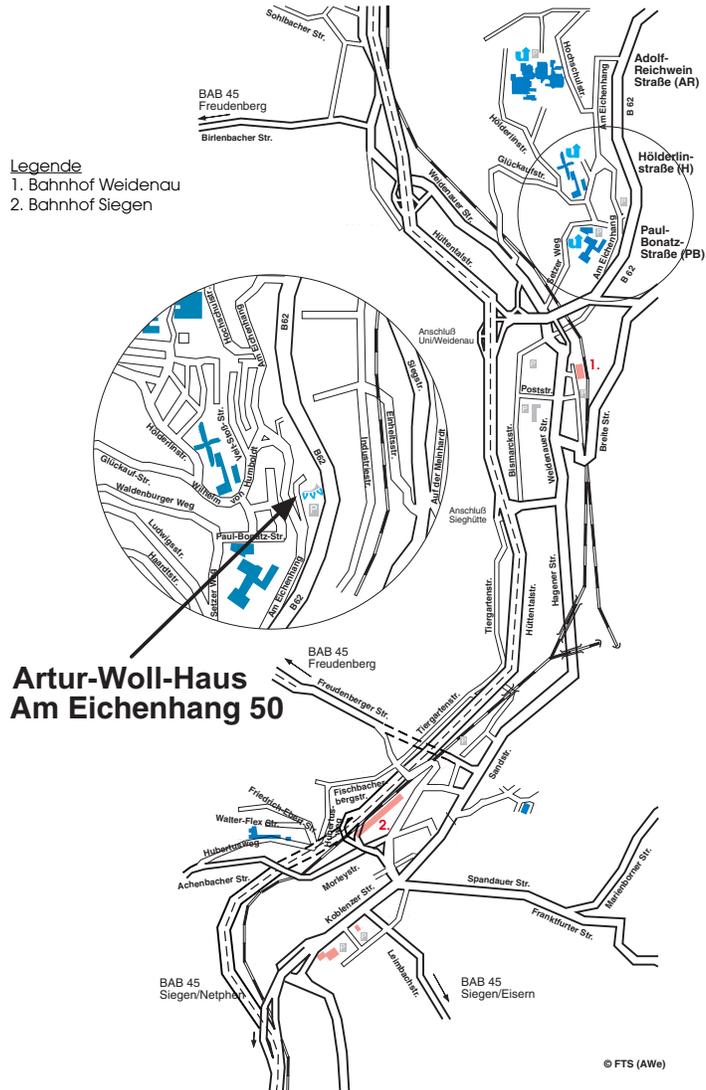
change at Giessen.) The earliest train runs at 4.32 and the last one runs at 21.02. A one-way-ticket is 35.00 Euros.

The hotels we've listed are best reached from Siegen Hauptbahnhof.. If you are planning to go directly to the conference venue, go to Siegen-Weidenau.

From Köln-Bonn airport, there is no direct train either (change at Troisdorf). The earliest train to Siegen leaves at 8.16, the last one at 23.04, a one-way-ticket is 19,20 Euros.

There is a regular bus connection (Line L 111) from Siegen Hauptbahnhof via Weidenau Bahnhof to the conference venue (bus station: Am Eichenhang).

Accomodation

The following hotels are within reach of the conference venue.

Mid Range to Expensive

Best Western Park Hotel******
Koblenzer Straße 135
57072 Siegen (city center)
Phone +49 (0271) 33810
Fax +49 (0271) 3381450
E-Mail: info@parkhotel-siegen.bestwestern.de
Rates: Single room from 78,00 Euro, Double room from 93,00 Euro

Ramada Treff Hotel Siegen******
Kampenstraße 83
57072 Siegen (city center)
Phone +49 (0271) 50110
Fax +49 (0271) 5011150
E-Mail: siegen@ramada.de
Rates: Single room from 70,00 Euro, Double room from 83,00 Euro

Hotel Garni Bürger*****
mit Gästehaus
Marienborner Straße 134
57074 Siegen (city center)
Phone +49 (0271) 62551
Fax +49 (0271) 63555
E-Mail: hotel-buerger@t-online.de
Rates: Single room from 61,00 Euro, Double room from 82,00 Euro

Cheap rooms

Hotel Garni Jakob
Tiergartenstraße 61
57072 Siegen (city center)
Phone +49 (0271) 232720
Fax +49 (0271) 2327211
Rates: Single room from 44,00 Euro, Double room from 73,00 Euro

Gaststätte Incognito
Gregor Kettner
Hundgasse 125
57072 Siegen
Phone +49 (0271) 20198
Fax +49 (0271) 20198
Rates: Single room from 26,00 Euro, Double room from 50,00 Euro

Restaurants

Conference dinner:
Gasthaus Peun (Siegen's oldest pub)
Oststrasse 15
57074 Siegen

We can also recommend:
Restaurant Bar
Löhrstrasse 51
57072 Siegen
(Italian-style food, close to the old part of town)

Schwarzbrenner
Untere Metzgerstrasse 29
57072 Siegen
(located in a timbered house in the old part of town)

Da Vincenza
Koblenzer Strasse 29
57072 Siegen
(Italian food)

9Bar
Markt 27
57072 Siegen
(café and bar, salads, pasta, vegetarian food)

Zum alten Weinkeller
Hainstraße 1
57072 Siegen
(good selection of wines, Alsatian flammekueche, oven potatos, cheese plates)