

## NetCultureScience – Call for Papers

Everybody talks about networks, and most of the time the term is applied to very special contexts, occasions, unions and alliances as well as all other sorts of connections, for which the word itself is used in quite different ways, and with corresponding characteristic assignments of meaning and definition. There are many clichés regarding networks, and at the same time enough starting points for a more differentiated view of networks and their (labyrinthical?) systems.

The conference *NetzKulturWissenschaft – NetCultureScience* will neither try to establish the term ›network‹ a priori nor to place the concept inside a fixed frame of time and place. On the contrary, it will attempt to merge and to patch up different approaches and to distil each of their function/ing/s as well as to discuss overlappings and apparent comparabilities. On the one hand, the very specific and unique structures of networks should hereby get even more apparent, on the other hand, it might become evident, that there are comparable functionings, ›legitimacies‹ and authenticities of networks after all. This also means that one always has to ask for the structural, informal and institutional functionalities, aims and consequences, but also to look at the difference of networks in history and today as well as their qualities.

Net/work/s connect, exclude, catch and grab, they can get holes and fill gaps, they are yielding though not (always) permeable, they communicate ways of perception, and at the same time they are themselves subject to transformations and disturbances, enable communication between dissimilarities, asynchronities, disynchronities and incongruencies, select perceptions and widen them, and are ›places‹ of creativity, whose purpose/s of ›placement‹ and residency within these networks always have to be questioned at the same time. This also concerns questions of active and passive components, of ›agents‹ in or of networks, questions about the network's character regarding ›subject‹ or ›collectivity‹ or about the ways of ›instrumentalisation‹ of networks, (consequently) focusing on aspects of power, communication, forms of (cultural) mediations and (not least) of creativity.

Hence the conference will focus on academic and cultural networks as well as networks in terms of social and public policy, all of them being involved in society, politics and ›culture/s‹. This necessarily leads to questions of cultural transfer of ›contents‹ and ideologies, uniting as well dividing social experiences and political requirements.

First networks of historical and present spaces, times and communities as well as recent ›internet-culture‹ (like, i.e., chat-rooms, forums or ›virtual nations‹) will be discussed.

Secondly, questions of ›agents of the net‹ have to be raised, reflecting the conscious or unconscious, voluntary or unwilling participation in networks, ultimately asking, *whether* (at all) – and *if*,

*how* – networks can be controlled or, on the contrary, if they show typical automated systems and an inherent »survival instinct«.

Papers should include both of these steps and can be structured around specific case studies.

In a third step, particular networks from different areas of science, art, politics and society should be put in a broader context, in which the exercising of power, the mechanisms of exclusion as well as the building, the usage and the organisation of communities and the process of canonisation should be analysed.

These approaches will be completed in final debates on the basis of all presented papers within the panels and the results of the discussions during the previous sections.

Out of all these (and many more) different ways of perceptions, convergences and definitions the conference will approach three (major) aspects and associated questions of »network«, network(ing) systems and their creators and users:

#### I. Building Networks

*Who* initiates a network and functionalises it accordingly?

*How* do links and connections within a network »function«, i.e., regarding its communicative (corporate identity) or aesthetic (iconographic) aspects, and which influences does it exercise »inside« as well as »outside« of the network?

Can/Do networks have an »inside« and an »outside«? Is there an »outside« of networks after all?

*Why, when and how* can networks dissolve and disappear or be »recycled«?

#### II. Using Networks

*Who* can use a network, and who stays excluded? And is the »beneficiary« of a network always at the same time an active »player«?

*How* does the flow of information inside a network function? Are their given »directions« or can movements be stimulated arbitrarily within a network?

*What sorts* of instances and agents of mediation can be inserted? Is there a clear difference between emphatic-democratic and pure (economical) functionable, hierarchical networks, and how do so-called »primary« and »secondary« networks relate to one another? Are there discernible rules of selection?

*Where* are (new) »links« placed and (secondary) connections created?

*What sorts* of »hubs« get strengthened, which ones get undone – and what are the consequences of this to the structure of the network itself?

*What* can a network be used for, and does this always correspond to its initial »design« and intentions?

#### III. Deciding Networks

*Who* »governs« a network, and who is ruled by it; who selects, who »sends into exile«?

*How* can networks and the »contents« be canonised? Can networks be rejected, evaded or even get prohibited and destroyed?

*With what (or whom)* are certain networks »compatible«? Are they always able to offer freedom, space/s and interstices?

The creative, functional and social parts of networks will have to be analysed and worked out according to one of these highlights, natures and perspectives. It is foreseeable that numerous connections and overlapping will come forward in these contexts. First of all, the papers should focus on these »grey areas«, and structure in a comprehensible way the approaches (*backing theoretical background and method as well as offering paradigmatic case studies*) in view of the discussions within the panels and during the final debate.

Papers from all fields of social sciences, humanities, art (history) and cultural studies, but also concerning mediation and practical art work are welcome, of which those with a thematic focus on Central-Eastern-Europe (CEE) will be preferred.

Technical support will be provided if requested in time.

Papers may be presented in German or English and should not be longer than 15-20 minutes.

Please send an abstract of your paper proposal (300 words) at: [redaktion@kakanien.ac.at](mailto:redaktion@kakanien.ac.at).

Deadline for submission is July 1, 2003.

Organisers: *Austrian Science and Research Liaison Office Budapest  
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