

## Technological & Aesthetic (Trans)Formations (12-14 Oct 05)

Ingeborg Reichle

Conference

Technisierung/Ästhetisierung

Technological and Aesthetic (Trans)Formations of Society

Darmstadt

Technical University, October 12 to 14, 2005

For the past nine years, the interdisciplinary graduate college "Technisierung und Gesellschaft" considered the technological (trans)formation of society. As the last cohort of doctoral students concludes its studies, the final conference widens the perspective and brings past researches to bear on the interplay of technological and aesthetic dimensions of formative processes in contemporary societies.

By foregrounding process, the conference goes beyond the iconic turn in science and technology studies. Rather than focus on images, it will explore the work that goes into producing self and society in the image of technology. This work involves constructions of time and space, it negotiates forces of globalization and localization, it construes self and nature as subject and object of technological shaping. This work also produces tensions between and among aesthetic and technological ideals.

Plenary Speakers:

Michael Hagner (Zürich, Switzerland): A Brief History of Picturing Thoughts

Wolfgang Krohn (Bielefeld, Germany): Aesthetics of Technology as Forms of Life

Jeffrey Meikle (Austin, USA): Shifting Signifiers: Design as Mediator of Technology, Art, and Society

Thomas Sieverts (Bonn, Germany): The role of aesthetics in designing on a scale of the city regions

Christa Sommerer (Gifu, Japan): Interface Culture - the Art and Science of Invention

Gernot Böhme (Darmstadt, Germany): Technical Gadgetery. Technology in the Context of Aesthetic Economy

Wednesday, October 12

Arrival

13:45 Address of Welcome

14:00 Plenary Speech J. Meikle

15:00 Coffee break

Panel: Normalization and Cultural Technology Assessment

Wednesday, October 12, 15:30 - 17:00

In recent years a number of attempts have been made to develop an alternative to traditional methods of technology assessment. The panel discusses some of these alternatives that go under such different headings as "cultural, anthropological, and prospective assessment". The participants ask to what an extent it is possible to include an aesthetic dimension into the judgment and shaping of technological futures.

Panel: Design between Technology and Aesthetics

Wednesday, October 12, 15:30 - 17:00

Thursday, October 13, 10:30 - 12:30

Modern society not only invented various technical means of mass production but also created the field of design - the intentional aesthetic rendering of industrial goods. In the beginning of the discipline, the artists of Art Nouveau pleaded for an aesthetic transformation of modern life in order to improve living conditions in a humane way. But in the long run, humanitarian aesthetic values seem to have been replaced by superficial rhetorical means intended merely to persuade customers. This panel will particularly focus on how the conditions of technological civilization shaped the aesthetic values of modern design and on how technological achievements (e. g. machine work, electrification, computer technology etc.) influenced the formal qualities of artificially created objects.

Speakers: Björn Brüsch (Max-Planck-Institut für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Berlin), Peter Timmerman (University of Twente), Reinhard Komar (Institut für Designforschung, Oldenburg), Kai Buchholz, Nike Breyer, Volker Albus (Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe)

Panel: Urban Spaces and Private Quarters

Wednesday, October 12, 15:30 - 17:00

Thursday, October 13, 10:30 - 12:30

In this panel the focus lies on spatial relations and the city both as object of and as the location for scientific scrutiny. Perceptions of symbolic and material artifacts in the city guide the everyday life of a majority of the world's contemporary population. The tacit power of architecture, the subtle influences of the aesthetics of things are constantly reconfigured by the practices of the people moving through and using urban spaces. However, built space is not the only hub of this panel. The staging of events in the city by different actors and the conflicting uses of publically accessible spaces directs our interest to presentations and representations of the city and its diverse inhabitants. This area of inquiry connects discursive with visual and performative aspects of urban life. Finally, we are interested in the multiple ways in which the modeling and visualization of urban space in architectural design influences the development and the decision making processes that eventually solidify into concrete buildings, plazas, and parks. Regarding all three of these hubs we want to encourage presentations that explicitly deal with the ambivalent or dialectic character of aesthetics in the cities. Touristic interests produce sites that are intended to attract people, their time, their money and their attention. These sites become places of a specific cultural and economic significance. At the same time other places are produced and presented as repellent - the "no-go areas" of the modern ghetto, ethnic neighborhoods, and the hidden or gated communities of the rich and powerful. Aesthetics are a central component of the processes of attraction and exclusion that regulate our everyday practices. We are particularly interested in presentations that include photographic, acoustic or audio-visual components. The presentations should be tied to empirical phenomena.

Speakers: Helen Liggett, Lars Frers (Post-Graduate College "Technology and Society", TU-Darmstadt), Daniel Normark and Oskar Juhlin (The Interactive Institute / Mobility Studio, Stockholm and Göteborg University, Sweden), Jerome Krase (Brooklyn College), Lars Meier (Post-Graduate College "Technology and Society", TU-Darmstadt) Ute Lehrer (Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, Canada), Lukasz Stanek (Technical University Delft)

Panel: Normalizing by Images - Imaging Normalization

Wednesday, October 12, 17:30 - 20:00

The question what is normal and who is abnormal is quite usual in our everyday life. Normality is of fundamental importance for the functioning of society. This is also true for the production and maintenance of facts and objects in science. Individuals are permanently asked to compare and eventually to adjust their perception and action to existing

sets of norm. This unreflected and mostly unconscious process implies in same time self-normalization and normalizing of the corresponding environment. Images are of the utmost importance in producing, maintaining and of course remembering normality. Images and diagrams channel our eyes and they have an apparently unlimited legitimation capacity in doing so. Insofar normality becomes evident by images. In this panel the issue is at discussing theories of image and confronting them with case studies on the normal and abnormal in society, economy and science.

Speakers: Katja Stoetzer (Post-Graduate College "Technology and Society", TU-Darmstadt), Claudia Wassmann (NIH/NIBIB)

Panel: Lifeworlds - Natural or Artificial?

Wednesday, October 12, 17:30 - 20:00

The increasing mechanization of human life leads to a heightened sensitivity to technology. Not only the design of artefacts, but also the processes by which they are produced and used become consequently more important. Central concerns here are the effects of technology on the natural and on the lifeworld. The connection of both trends is the basis for the growing significance of aesthetic and ecological aspects in design processes. How do terms such as "biocompatibility" and "sustainability" shape the design of products and in which way do aesthetic qualities influence their consumption?

Speakers: Nicole C. Karafyllis (Goethe University), Gregor Schiemann (Philosophisches Seminar Bergische Universität Wuppertal)

18:30-19:00

Urban spaces and Private Quarters: Mathew/Ninan

20:00

Plenary Speech: Michael Hagner (ETH Zürich), Reception in the "Haus für Industriekultur" (HIK)

Thursday, October 13

09:00 Plenary Speech Th. Sieverts

10:00 Coffee break

Panel: Metaphors in Science and Technology

Thursday, October 13, 10:30 - 17:00

Metaphors are ubiquitous not only in everyday but also in scientific and

technological language. Research on metaphor in discourse can describe shifts in scientific theories or technological models with the help of diachronic and synchronic comparisons. Since cognitive metaphor theories propose a close connection between linguistic metaphorical expressions and mental concepts, the study of the use of metaphor can also provide an insight into the structures of our thinking in general. From this perspective, metaphors figure as a means to grasp abstract concepts which are not perceptible to our senses. Metaphors are therefore not merely a linguistic, but a conceptual phenomenon. If so, the research on metaphor can be a useful tool to describe conceptual structures and the structure of our scientific and technological thinking. These general considerations can be made fruitful for the investigation of how to use and how to deal with metaphors in science and technology. Here, philosophers and sociologists of science and technology as well as linguists and cognitive scientists might approach a wide range of questions. Which metaphors are used in scientific and technological contexts? How can one describe and explain the connection between linguistic and conceptual phenomena? Are metaphors really unavoidable and universal principles of thinking and speaking? Which role do they play for scientific models? Can we choose freely which metaphors we use for scientific and technological research? What does that mean for our conceptual system? What does it mean for our conception of science? Can we prove the truthfulness of scientific arguments, or can we only analyse the metaphors? Are metaphors borders, or are they useful tools for scientific thinking, or are they neither of these? Which role do metaphors play for scientific creativity and innovation? Do aesthetics play a role in this, and if so: which one? The planned interdisciplinary panel will probe into these questions from both a theoretical and an empirical view. Cross-connections to other panels of the conference can (and will) be established, for instance to those on 'pictures' and 'visualising strategies' in science and technology.

Speakers: Jörn Hurltienne (ZMMS, TU Berlin), Sven Hänke (Department of German Language and Linguistics, Humboldt University Berlin), Rosario Caballero (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Spain), Dina Dalouka and Aristotle Tympas (University of Athens), Silvia Berger, Juliana Goschler (Post-Graduate College "Technology and Society" TU Darmstadt), Magdalena Zawislawska (Institute of Polish Language, Faculty of Polish Philology, University of Warsaw), Marzenna Mioduszevska, Daniel Casasanto (Stanford University)

Panel: The Aesthetic Dimensions of Warfare

Thursday, October 13, 10:30 - 12:30

Friday, October 14, 10:30

This panel deals with the aesthetic qualities of military technology. Weapons are culturally constructed and endowed with symbolical meaning in the setting of exhibitions, public parades, in art, literature and the media. In this respect military technology contributes to the formation of modern myths. Weapons suggest superiority, power, but also death and apocalypse. While political propaganda emphasizes the modern myth of a clean war guaranteeing peace and prosperity or relying on the intimidating effects of atomic weapons, the peace movement mistrusts those qualities, and instead focuses on the devastating effects and ultimate dangers of new weapons. Warfare and weapon industries invoke aesthetic qualities to advertise their products, likewise, the military decides on the basis of certain style and appearance of weapon technology. Soldiers are fascinated by modern technology and develop an emotional relation to machines. Furthermore, technology is by itself a condition of possibility and medium of the aesthetic experience of war. Technology distances the soldier from the battlefield, endowing it under certain circumstances with a touch of the beautiful and sublime.

We wish to ask in which context the aesthetic qualities of modern warfare matter, how weapons are illustrated and culturally constructed. What does the aesthetic dimension mean for people acting in the context of war? Can aesthetics disclose and unveil the nature of modern warfare or does it rather hide its moral dimensions?

Speakers: Stefanie Michels (University of Cologne), Christian Kehrt (TU Darmstadt), Silke Fengler and Stefan Krebs (RWTH Aachen), Stefanie van de Kerkhof (FernUniversität in Hagen), Cordula Dittmer (Universität Marburg), Raphael Sassower (University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, CO, USA)

Panel: Technologies of Visualization

Thursday, October 13, 14:00 - 15:30

The disenchantment of nature and the process of rationalization produced an austere and highly symbolic order of representation. Visual images with photographic qualities had a clearly defined place in this symbolic order, they served to document and authenticate facts. Visualization technology has since overturned this order and replaced the symbolic by the pictorial. Measurements are translated into images, computer simulations look like games that look like cinematic representations, visualization practitioners think of themselves as artists and scientists at once, visions of technical control have become amalgamated with a reenchantment of the world, rationality surrenders to the magic of technology. - This caricature of the history of visualization technology deserves scrutiny, and it also suggests questions that will be explored in our panel. For example, how are visualizations in science

and technology produced? How do aesthetic and "scientific" considerations interact in this process?

Three papers (by Martina Heßler, Alfred Nordmann, and Johannes Lenhard) approach the topic from the side of aesthetics - they consider what happens when scientists start acting, more or less explicitly, as if they were artists. Philosophers and sociologists of science used to be considered subversive when they pointed to the constructedness of scientific knowledge and even the objects and experiences of science. Is contemporary technoscience embracing their point of view as it openly sets out to create new worlds?

Another set of three papers (by Angela Krewani and/or Petra Missomelius, Christine Hanke, Inge Hinterwaldner) approaches the topic from the side of the technical process - they consider how visualization techniques shape not only what we see, but the very act of seeing, and even the practitioner who does the seeing. In particular, it considers the delicate interplay of "aesthetic judgement" and "deskilled, mechanical, standardized perception" in the history of scientific visualization.

Speakers: Martina Heßler (Aachen), Alfred Nordmann (Philosophy, Technische Universität Darmstadt), Johannes Lenhard (Universität Bielefeld and TU Darmstadt), Angela Krewani and Petra Missomelius (Media Studies, University of Marburg), Inge Hinterwaldner (State Academy of Art and Design (HfG) Karlsruhe)

Panel: Art, Technosciences, and Social Criticism

Thursday, October 13, 16:00 - 17:00

Friday, October 14, 14:00 - 17:00

Modern forms of normative criticism of society and capitalism are often inspired by aesthetic phenomena. Instances of this range from the romantic idea of the "Gesamtkunstwerk" or the vanguard demand for an amalgamation of life and art to Joseph Beuys's understanding of society as a social sculpture. Art here exemplarily articulates a longing for a more creative life, for unblemished bodies and undeformed souls, and an undiminished realisation of individual potentials and wishes. Current studies of western societies analyse a structural change in public and private life today. In their view, the momentary form of capitalism has incorporated outlined points of criticism and made them into initial points of capitalistic self-conception.

Given this analytic frame of social reality, the contemporary links between art, technique, science, and society must be redefined.

1) Leading a life, designing life-styles, and the whole conception of the "Lebenswelt" has throughout the last decades become more and more dominated by values of primarily technology-based aesthetic dimensions. This is reflected in the intimate relations between literary modernism,

science, and social values as well as in the current need to redefine the social and aesthetic dimensions of laboratory made realities.

2) In contemporary art the phenomena of Transgenic Art and Transhuman Art very clearly demonstrates the blending of artistic production, scientific research and social sensitivity. The technological upgraded bodies of the transhuman artists and the genetically modified transgenic objects cast a new light on the relation of art, technosciences, and society.

3) How should social criticism respond to the fact that the glance of beauty in the promises of high-technology is more and more conceived of as reality itself (like in the promises of freedom, individuality and independence)? What happens to those aspects of daily life which are socially determined as ugly or otherwise deficient (such as illness, disability, depression, or death)?

Speakers: Thomas H. Borgard (University of Bern/Switzerland), Heather Fielding (Brown University, Providence, RI, USA), Ingeborg Reichle (Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and Humboldt-University, Berlin), Jörn Ahrens (Kulturwissenschaftliches Seminar, Humboldt Universität Berlin), Verena Kuni (Institut für Medienwissenschaften, Universität Basel), Melanie Grundmann (Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät der Europa-Universität Viadrina, Frankfurt Oder), Marc Ziegler (Post-Graduate College "Technology and Society" TU Darmstadt)

17:30-18:30

Plenary Speech Christa Sommerer (Gifu, Japan)

21:00 Theatre "Every Computer is Red"

20:30 Admission

Friday, October 14

09:00 Plenary Speech W. Krohn

10:00 Coffee break

Panel: Aesthetic Anticipation

Friday, October 14, 10:30 - 12:00

Technology of the future? This can be understood in two different ways: how technology could be in the future, and how future is anticipated through technology. Of course, future is not present. This does however not exclude the question about the certainty with which the future is presented as expectation. Moreover, various technologies play an important role. For example, dream interpretation (oneirocriticism), the liver soothsaying (haruspicium) and astrology are ancient techniques for



visualizing the future, while statistics and computer-based simulation represent modern methods. Moreover and alongside the technicity of anticipation, the aesthetic shaping of technological prospects is currently becoming evident. Diagrams serve as an indicator for continuities, and the breaking of social and technological developments. Myths, narratives and images invoke the potentialities of technological future. Aesthetic anticipation appears to be fundamental for the communication of the new.

Which aesthetic expectations of future are to be found in former and current prospects of technological developments? How is future colonised and conquered respectively by aesthetic techniques? What aesthetic techniques make it possible to visualize future?

Speakers: Nik Brown (Science & Technology Studies Unit, Department of Sociology, University of York/GB), Andreas Lösch (Institut für Soziologie, Technische Universität Darmstadt), Andrea zur Nieden (Post-Graduate College "Technology and Society", TU-Darmstadt), Hans H. Diebner (Institute of Basic Research Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe)

Panel: Technology as a Medium in the Arts

Friday, October 14, 14:00 - 15:30

Technology has become contemporary art enlarged to an object. But not just that: it is also a means and medium through which it develops its object. This is no less true for the technical sound in music as it is for the theatre as a three-dimensional apparatus or the models on which art shapes perception.

Christian Janecke, Christoph Rodatz, Detlev Zimmermann (Private FernFachhochschule Darmstadt)

17:00 Coffee break

17:30-18:30

Plenary Speech G. Böhme

20:00 Departure

Link:

<http://www.ifs.tu-darmstadt.de/fileadmin/gradkoll/Konferenzen/abschluss/Programm.pdf>

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Fee: Fee includes coffee, drinks, snacks, and a printed booklet including all abstracts

Non-Students: Euro 30,00

Students: Euro 15,00

Conference location:

Residential Castle (Schloss)

Marktplatz 15

D-64283 Darmstadt /Germany

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