



# THE GEOCODE OF MEDIA

## A position definition of the *spatial turn*

**Conference of the Research Project "Media Geography" at the FK615 Collaborative Research Center "Media Upheavals", University of Siegen, Germany**

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As demonstrated by Philosophy Atlas (Holenstein 2004) or automotive navigation systems, geocoding enables the process of matching maps to a variety of other data information. Especially because of the freely accessible and (collaboratively) editable Google maps (*mashups*) at the hurricane disaster in the USA, the mapping of geographical data also gained public recognition in the media in 2005.

In particular during periods of crisis, there obviously exists a basic need for creating a stable point of communication via spatial representation (Kuhm 2003). GPS therefore no longer stands for a form of mobile communications technology alone, but more and more for spatial, dynamic surveillance, tracking, and navigation systems.

Mapping as the process of creating maps and the transformation of geographical data opens new perspectives for local search operations on the internet, as well as the physical exploration of space. The interactions of virtual and real space in "Augmented Reality" (Frieling 2004), or the recent trend game "geocaching", serve as an example of this.

These are only a few indications of the growing phenomenon of a new spatial paradigm, which meanwhile has become obvious: from social sciences to historical sciences, *urban studies*, art history to literary, cinematographic, and media science, debates are raging on the conceptualization of space, spatial practices and the so-called "spatiality" of discourses. Even if there is no consensus yet on what to label this reversal – whether "topographical turn" (Weigel 2002), "spatial turn" (Schlögel 2003) or "topological turn" (Günzel 2005) – the first steps in direction of a multidisciplinary *discipline building* process (approximately analog to science) already have been taken (Kessl/Reutlinger/Maurer/Frey 2005).

Just as clearly, however, criticism of this new paradigm is emerging already: decades of "spatial obliviousness" in cultural and social sciences seem to turn into a „spatial obsession" (Geppert/Jensen/Weinhold 2005), abusing space as a category for resubstantiation (Köster 2005). Only recently now, are professional geographers themselves – after having observed for a conspicuously long time the "cross-over" (Miggelbrink 2005) occurring in other disciplines – taking action to defend their particular spatial competence in the discipline against losing its status as a unique characteristic (Lippuner 2005).

It appears that the question no longer needs to be: do we need a new space paradigm? But rather: why does a space paradigm exist? In view of this finding, it seems to be promising, if not even essential, to gather supporters as well as opponents of the *spatial turn* for a joint conference, to debate the advantages and disadvantages of the new space paradigm. Three central issues appear to be particularly promising:

- 1) Is there any *common ground* for systemizing each individual scientific explanation of a "spatial turn"?
- 2) What importances do / should the space concepts have in geography? So far, discussions between cultural and social scientists with professional geographers have been neglected. Why? Will the new space paradigm evolve without the involvement of geographers?
- 3) How does the increased scientific concern with space relate to media relations? Can the new paradigm be seen as the reaction to a dictate, based on media influences, of the „disappearance of space“ in view of the fundamental changes in communications due to digitalization? And, if yes, is this reaction already marked by characteristics of a hypercorrection?

Representatives of all disciplines currently subject to questions of space and spatiality are invited to participate in the discussion of these issues. We are looking for presentations not only oriented towards space theory or the history of paradigm, but that also demonstrate a material example from one's own space science research experience. In addition to that, we are organizing professionals willing to serve as respondents to papers of each individual discipline. The conference itself will have a strong emphasis on debates, with equal time slots reserved for discussions and individual presentation.

Selected Literature:

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Head of Conference: Jprof. Dr. Jörg Döring  
 Conference Coordination: Dr. des. Tristan Thielmann  
 SFB/FK 616 "Media Upheavals", Am Eichenhang 50, D-57068 Siegen  
 Phone: 0049 271-740-4950, Web: [www.spatialturn.de](http://www.spatialturn.de)