

# WEARABLE FUTURES

HYBRID CULTURE IN THE DESIGN AND  
DEVELOPMENT OF SOFT TECHNOLOGY



## ABSTRACTS

14 - 16 SEPTEMBER 2005

**University  
of Wales,  
Newport**  
Newport School  
of Art, Media and  
Design

**Prifysgol  
Cymru,  
Casnewydd**  
Ysgol Geif,  
y Cyfrngau a  
Dylunio Casnewydd

# WEARABLE FUTURES

HYBRID CULTURE IN THE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT  
OF SOFT TECHNOLOGY

14 - 16 September 2005, University of Wales, Newport, Wales, UK

This two day International conference will aim to contextualise the future potential of Wearable Technologies in a variety of fields ranging from military application to fine art.

Wearable Futures is an interdisciplinary conference, which aims to bring together practitioners, inventors, and theorists in the field of soft technology and wearables including those concerned with fashion, textiles, sportswear, interaction design, media and live arts, medical textiles, wellness, perception and psychology, IPR, polymer science, nanotechnology, military, and other relevant research strands.

We will be examining how some broad generic questions will be explored in relation to wearable technology including but not restricted to: aesthetics and design, function and durability versus market forces; the desires, needs and realities of wearable technologies; technology and culture; simplicity and sustainability; design for wearability; wearables as theatre and wearables as emotional 'tools'.

[www.wearablefutures.org](http://www.wearablefutures.org)

**The Context of Wearables: Hybrid Urban Mobility Spaces**

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Within the Hybrid Space department of the Academy of Media Arts Cologne designers, architects, urbanists and media-artists work in collaboration with software- and hardware-engineers to develop projects combining analogue and digital, design, architectural, urban and media spaces. The scope of our projects ranges from wearables and 1:1 industrial design applications to urban- and mobility-networks. For years we have been focusing, by integrating wearables, in the research and development of hybrid mobility spaces.

For example, in the seminar on "TRANSIT\_BAGS" (2003-2004) we worked on wearables as tools for a mobile culture. We developed projects for the objects, the spaces and the services within the mobility networks that can invert these "non-places" into (mobile) spaces of "encounter".

"Place" and "non-place" are concepts developed by the ethnologist Marc Augé in his book "Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity." There, Augé describes a society that no longer has any organic relations or cohesion. The spaces of mobility that he analyses, the so-called non-places, are therefore of interest to him primarily in that they are exemplary for a society in which people are strangers to each other. He describes "non-places" that are made for strangers.

Now, as we are not ethnologists, nor are we interested just in descriptions. What interests us is how identity can come into being through encountering others rather than by excluding the possibility of such encounters - and what the networks, the objects, the fetishes, the spaces of encounter could be.

This development work on the scale of the human body is situated within the context of a larger-scale analysis of the urban and the scale of the mobility networks. For years we have been developing projects and researching these hybrid urban mobility spaces. For example, within another seminar (2004-2005) we focused our research on the perception of the hybrid cityscape by integrating traditional techniques used in cartography with contemporary instruments as GPS, remote sensing, ground observation techniques or tracking systems.

As an experiment on hybrid urban mobility spaces we performed in 1999, a boat spent a week voyaging from Cologne to Amsterdam as a floating media laboratory, linking traditional regional networks (the Rhine) with new "glocal" media networks (Internet/local TV) and creating a new translocal hybrid space. We also researched hybrid urban mobility spaces with our study on "The Use of Space in the Information/Communication Age" we conducted within the framework of the think-tank of the Dutch government "Infodrome":

[http://www.infodrome.nl/publicaties/domeinen/07\\_rui\\_vog\\_essay.html](http://www.infodrome.nl/publicaties/domeinen/07_rui_vog_essay.html)