The aim of the International Exploratory Workshop "Home Computer Subcultures and Society Before the Internet Age" is to bring together current research on computer subcultures at the dawn of home computing, to analyse their role in the computerisation of (post-) industrial societies, and to look at how these often marginalised user groups interacted with the state and the public. We understand computer subcultures as groups of computer users who engaged in "tinkering" with their machines and made their activity into a distinct feature of their identity, thus forming "scenes" such as hackers, crackers, demosceners, or gamers. These subcultures did not develop inside a vacuum, but evolved within a complex interplay between users, politics, lawmaking, markets, and mass media. The workshop brings together international scholars with the aim of going beyond just mapping and describing early home computer subcultures in different parts of the world. Instead, we want to embed computer subcultures within wider societal contexts, and in doing so, to analyse them as part of political, cultural, social and economic change in the 1980s and early 1990s.
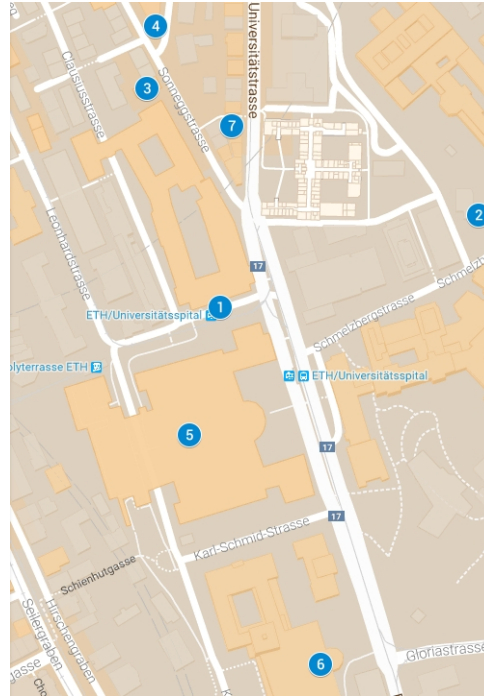
Organizers

• Gleb J. Albert (University of Zurich)
• Julia Erdogan (Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam)
• Markku Reunanen (Aalto University, Helsinki)

1: Tram stop "ETH/Universitätsspital"
2: Collegium Helveticum (conference venue), Schmelzbergstrasse 25
3: Hotel Sunnehus
4: Jimmy's Pizzeria
5: ETH-Dozentenfoyer
6: UZH building, KOL-F-118 (screening venue)
7: Hot Pasta, Universitätstrasse 15

Universität
Zürich UZH

ZENTRUM FÜR ZEITHISTORISCHE
FORSCHUNG POTSDAM
Institut der Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

FNSNF
SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

International Exploratory Workshop

Home Computer Subcultures and Society Before the Internet Age

24-25 March 2017

Workshop Program

9:30 – Registration

10:00: Thomas Hengartner (Director, Collegium Helveticum): *Welcome address*

10:15: Gleb J. Albert, Julia Erdogan, Markku Reunanen: *Introduction*

10:30: Jürgen Danyel, Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam: *Subcultures of the Digital Age. Mythbuilding, Selfunderstanding and Social Impact* (Keynote)

11:15-11:45 – Coffee Break

The State of Research (11:45 – 13:15)
• Nick Montfort, Massachusetts Institute of Technology: *Bringing the Home into the Computer*
• Markku Reunanen, Aalto University: *Demo and Cracker Studies: Who, What, Where and How?*
• Canan Hastik, Technical University of Darmstadt: *DEMOAGE. Towards Multidisciplinary Collaborative Digital Humanities Research*

13:15-14:45 – Lunch (at ETH Dozentenfoyer, Rämistrasse 101, Floor "J")

Subcultures Beyond the Cold-War Divide (14:45 – 15:45)
• Gleb J. Albert, University of Zurich/Zentrum Geschichte des Wissens: *Freaks, Pirates and New Markets. The Cracking Scene and Software Piracy in Developing Economies (Late 1980s to Early 1990s)*
• Julia Erdogan, Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam: *Divided Cultures? Hackers in East and West Germany*

15:45-16:15 Coffee Break

Dial-Up Cultures: Online Sociability Before the Internet (16:15-18:15)
• Kevin Driscoll, University of Virginia: *Who's Online? A Demography of Bulletin Board Systems in North America*
• Matthias Röhr, Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg: *Between DBP and BBS. The West German BBS Scene, the Bundespost and the Struggle about Modems*
• Petri Saarikoski, University of Turku: *Early History of BBS Culture in Finland, 1982-2000*
• Beatrice Tobler, Swiss Open-Air Museum Ballenberg: *Mailbox Worlds. Looking Back at the Swiss Mailbox Scene of the 1990s*

Film Screening "The 8-Bit Philosophy 2 – The Good and the Bad Guys" (2017, first showing) and Q&A with director Konstantin Stürz (19:00-20:30)
University of Zurich, Rämistrasse 71, Lecture theatre KOL-F-118 (Floor "F")

20:30: Conference Dinner at Jimmy's Pizzeria, Culmannstrasse 1

Peripheries? Computer Subcultures Beyond the "West" (10:00-11:00)
• Theodore Lekkas & Aristotle Tympas [remote participant], National and Kapodistrian University of Athens: *The Utopian Eighties of the Home Computer: Subcultural Communities Redefining Computing Technology. The Greek Experience*
• Jaroslav Švelch, Charles University in Prague: *Making Games Ordinary. Studying Hobby Computer Cultures and "Hyperlocal" Games in 1980s-1990s Czechoslovakia*

11:00-11:15: Short Break

Subcultures, Technical Innovation and Computer Industries (11:15-12:45)
• Daniela Zetti, ETH Zurich: *"A Sizeable, Technical Project'" 1978-80. Niklaus Wirth's Lilith Workstation as a Tool for Software Engineering*
• Patryk Wasiak, University of Wrocław: *The Polish Amiga Scene: Computer Brand Community in Transitional Economy*
• Ulf Sandqvist, Umeå University: *The Swedish Game Industry 1990-2010. The Individuals and the Social Structure*

12:45-14:00: Lunch at Hot Pasta, Universitätstrasse 15

Final Discussion *(14:00-15:00)*
• Monika Dommann, University of Zurich: *Introductory Comment*