

Call for Papers ICOHTEC SYMPOSIUM 2011

Consumer Choice and Technology

The International Committee for the History of Technology's
38th Symposium in Glasgow, Scotland, 2 – 7 August 2011

Deadline for proposals is 31 January 2011

The 38th ICOHTEC Symposium will be held in Glasgow on 2-7 August 2011. The main theme of the meeting will be *Consumer Choice and Technology*. The aim is to examine the interaction of technology and consumer behaviour in a historical perspective, with a primary focus on factors steering consumption and how consumers by their choices have influenced technological development. The transition from agrarian society to consumer society is one of the epochmaking phases in human history that can be studied from various aspects and contexts.

For a long time history of technology has been dominated by the view that the sphere of production and the design process (ruled by engineers and technical experts) was largely separate from the sphere of consumption and the use of technology (ruled by businessmen and consumers). As a result, the connections and dialogues between producers and consumers were for decades neglected as a field of research in the history of technology. While tackling this issue, the symposium will study, in which manner market mechanisms, technical diffusion, safety standards, consumer counseling, consumer polls, the informal grape vine and other feedback mechanisms managed to bridge the information gap between manufacturers and their clients in the past. It will investigate failed as well as successful feedback from consumers to producers. As research in the history of technology has recently increasingly focused on this issue, ICOHTEC will examine in its the 38th symposium the linkage between consumption as a communication system of consumer's choice and design, technology and production.

ICOHTEC welcomes individual paper and poster proposals as well as the submissions of compact and coherent sessions to this pathbreaking symposium.

The symposium programme will include scientific and plenary sessions, poster presentations, business meetings and general assemblies of the organising societies, excursions, social events such as receptions and a formal banquet, and pre- and post-conference trips. The premises of the University of Glasgow will serve as venues for this meeting.

The programme committee suggests the following subthemes for the consideration of session organizers and contributors.

CONSUMERS' IMPACT ON TECHNOLOGY

- Tailor-made products: The role of artisans and contractors at the crossing point of consumers and their needs
- The emergence of interchangeable parts – the loss of technology's soul?
Impersonality and personality in mass production
- Easy-use technology and consumer friendly design
- Consumers interacting with technology: The development of interface design
- The significance of fashion in technological development
- Appropriated technology and modification of products by consumers
- Push or pull? Consumers' choice or producers' power: Who drives the mass market of technology?

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CONSUMPTION AND MEANING IN TECHNOLOGY

- The social and cultural construction of consumers: The role of gender, youth, social classes etc.
- Technology, consumption and the body
- Emotions and machines: Adored and hated technologies

MARKETING CONSUMPTION – POPULARIZING TECHNOLOGY

- Marketing: a tool to bridge the gap between producers and consumers?
- Inducements to buy: The role of economic incentives, emotional appeals and rational benefits for consumer choice
- The unknown consumer: How companies get information on consumer demands
- The role of brands in producing confidence in new technologies
- Popularizing technology to consumers as a precondition of consumption

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF CONSUMPTION

- From high-tech to domestic use and back
- Shaping technology - shaping consumption behaviour
- How are products and practices adapted for local conditions?
- Towards a global account of technology transfer and consumption

REGULATING CONSUMPTION AND TECHNOLOGY

- Regulating technology: Consumer protection, warranties, safety standards
- Consumer counseling
- Training the consumer: The history of manuals and guidebooks

EVERYDAY LIFE AND LIFESTYLES

- Mass consumption and the technological revolution of everyday life
- The consumption of technology as modern lifestyle
- Luxury vs. mass consumption: Two different paths of technology?

CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

- Epochs in the history of consumption: From agrarian to consumer society to post consumption
- Capitalism vs. Communism: Rivaling consumption patterns during the Cold War
- Western technology and consumption as a model for developing countries?

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSUMPTION OR CONSUMPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT?

- The ecological choice: The development and consumption of sustainable technology
- Consumers and environment: The downside of consumption
- Contested pasts: The heritage of the consumption society

NETWORKS OF CONSUMPTION AND TECHNOLOGY

- Sales and distribution in consumer society: From market squares, supermarkets and mail-order trade to e-commerce
- Networks of mass consumption: Electricity, water supply, transportation and communication
- The city as a consumption network

OUTCASTS AND NOSTALGIA

- Technological outcasts: Products and solutions rejected by consumers
- Technological comeback: Retro-products and retro-design

Proposal Guidelines

The symposium covers all periods and all areas of the globe. In keeping with a cherished tradition of the field, the meeting is open to scholars from all disciplines and backgrounds.

We especially encourage graduate students to participate in the symposium and submit their proposals. Because we aim at quick and equal processing of submissions, paper or poster proposals must be submitted in English. Nevertheless, besides English also French, German, Russian and Spanish are acceptable for paper and poster presentations at the symposium, but the organizers will not provide simultaneous translation during the conference.

We urge contributors to consider organizing a full session of three or more papers. Individual paper submissions will also be considered. It is possible to propose papers unrelated to the general theme as well. They can be presented in "SPECIAL TOPICS" sessions.

INDIVIDUAL PAPER proposals must include: (1) a 400-word (maximum) abstract; and (2) a one-page CV. Abstracts should include the author's name and email address, a short descriptive title, a concise statement of the thesis, a brief discussion of the sources, and a summary of the major conclusions. If you are submitting a paper proposal dealing with a particular subtheme, please indicate this in your proposal.

In preparing your paper, remember that presentations are not full-length articles. You will have no more than 20 minutes to speak, which is roughly equivalent to 8 double-spaced typed pages. For more suggestions about preparing your conference presentation, please consult the guidelines at the conference website.

Contributors are encouraged to submit full-length versions of their papers after the conference for consideration by ICOHTEC's journal *ICON*.

SESSION proposals must include (1) an abstract of the session (400 words maximum), listing the proposed papers and a session chairperson; (2) abstracts for each paper (400 words maximum); (3) a one-page CV for each contributor and chairperson. Sessions should consist of at least three up to ten speakers and may include several sections of three or four speakers each, which might extend over more than one day. The programme committee reserve the right to relocate papers to different themes and add papers to sessions. We also encourage proposing roundtables and other "untraditional" session formats.

POSTER proposals must include (1) a 400-word (maximum) abstract; and (2) a one-page CV. Abstracts should include the author's name and email address, a short descriptive title, a concise statement of the thesis, a brief discussion of the sources, and a summary of the major conclusions. Please, indicate one of the specified subthemes for your poster.

Proposal submissions

The final deadline for all submissions is Monday **31 January** 2011.

Please, check updated instructions on submissions at our website: <http://www.icohtec.org/>

Meanwhile, you may submit papers, posters and session proposals via email to lars.bluma@rub.de. If email is unavailable, proposals may be sent by fax to Lars Bluma at: +49 (0)234 - 3214205. Otherwise they may be sent via regular mail or courier, postmarked not later than 21 January 2011. The mail address is:

Lars Bluma / ICOHTEC 2011
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All questions about the programme proposals should be submitted to the chair of the programme committee, Lars Bluma, lars.bluma@rub.de, tel. +49 (0)234 - 3228827. Vers. 15/12.10.2010