

ZeMKI-Forschungskolloquium

ZeMKI Research Seminar

Linzer Str. 4, Room 60.070, 28359 Bremen, DE

11.11.2026, 16.15 – 17.45 (CET)

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History of Software User Interfaces as Digital Media Infrastructure

Abstract:

My lecture presents key points in the historical evolution of software user interfaces (UIs) and their role in the relationships between users, designers, machines, and economic and social systems. I argue that UIs serve as critical visual technologies that mediate interactions between users and computers. I outline the history of UIs, from early home computers such as the Apple II to the dominance of standardized graphical UIs introduced in the Windows 95 operating system. My research focuses on how the development of UIs has been embedded in the construction of immersive media environments for work, daily life, and entertainment. I perceive this process as a history of vernacular digital media infrastructure that underpins human communication with digital devices. Such communication is a pivotal element in the processes of datafication and mediatization in contemporary societies.

Bio:

Patryk Wasiak is an Associate Professor at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. At ZeMKI, he will be working on a project on the history of software user interfaces as digital media infrastructure, together with the Media and Religion, and Media Change and Long-Term Transformation Processes Labs. Wasiak's research focuses on the cultural history of computing, media and home technologies, with particular attention to state-socialist Eastern Europe and the Cold War. He currently leads several funded projects on amateur programming cultures, the Polish demoscene and the politics of software interfaces, supported by the National Science Centre of Poland and the Gerda Henkel Foundation. Wasiak has published a monograph on technological innovation in late state-socialist Poland as well as articles in journals such as IEEE Annals of the History of Computing and History and Technology. He has held fellowships from institutions including the Volkswagen Foundation and the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study. He is active in international research networks such as Society for the History of Technology and the History of Games community.