

UCSB Geography Colloquium

2/23/12; 3:30 – 4:45; 1930 Buchanan

Space to Reason

Presented by

Dr. Markus Knauff

Abstract:

The majority of cognitive scientists believe that visual mental images are generally functional in cognition and thus should have positive effects on human reasoning. Visualization is considered to be a good thing by most scholars. In my talk, I instead argue that this is not always true. In fact, visual images can detract people from the relevant information and thus impede their reasoning. Based on this claim, I propose a spatial theory of human reasoning that solely relies on spatial representations and processes. My core idea is to draw clearly a contrast between visual images and spatial representations in reasoning and to show that only spatial representations are critical for reasoning. Although the approach does not rely on visual images, it explains why we often have the feeling that we think with our “mind’s eye”.

Bio:

Markus Knauff is a Professor of Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Science at the University of Giessen. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Freiburg and worked as a postdoctoral researcher at Princeton University and at the Max-Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics. He is Past-President of the German Cognitive Science Society and has just been elected to the Governing Board of the Cognitive Science Society.