

NEWS

Neuroscientist: my data published without authorization are 'misleading'

The director of a top laboratory in Germany has charged that two of his former research students took data from his laboratory without his permission and published scientifically incorrect interpretations of them against his advice.

Neuroscientist Nikos Logothetis (pictured), of the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics in Tübingen, further claims that the journal involved, *Human Brain Mapping*, acted incorrectly by publishing the paper after he told them the data were inappropriate. He says the journal has denied him the right to a timely reply.

One of the two editors-in-chief of *Human Brain Mapping*, Peter Fox of the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, told *Nature* that the paper was correctly refereed, but declined to add details.

Logothetis is furious about the publication of data, which he believes will mislead the field, and about the fact that the authors of the paper allege that he tried to stop them publishing the data for personal reasons.

The affair began in the spring, when Amir Shmuel, who worked in Logothetis's laboratories from 2002 to 2007 and is now at the Montreal Neurological Institute of McGill University in Canada, asked Logothetis for

permission to use data generated there.

Although he agreed at first, Logothetis withdrew his permission when he realized that the data — from functional magnetic resonance imaging studies on monkey brains — were being used to support a theory about spontaneous brain activity. The data had been collected when monkeys were looking at a grey but flickering LED screen. "The protocol was just inappropriate for analysis of spontaneous brain activity," says Logothetis.

Several months later, he says, he was surprised to receive an e-mail from Shmuel containing a complete paper using the same data, co-authored with another former research student, David Leopold, who worked in the labs between 1992 and 2003, where he collected some of the data himself. Leopold is now at the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda,

Maryland. Shmuel invited Logothetis to join as third author, telling him that the paper had already been accepted for publication and would appear online in a few days. It had been accepted six weeks earlier.

Matters escalated. "I told him that the data were not publishable," says Logothetis, who also wrote to Fox proposing that the paper should not be published. But Leopold then

"The journal used the Max Planck Society to excuse their own mismanagement of the case."



wrote directly to the Max Planck Society (MPS), which runs 80 research institutes in Germany, claiming that Logothetis was trying to prevent him and Shmuel from publishing data for personal reasons.

After consultation with Logothetis, MPS vice-president Herbert Jäckle wrote to the authors giving approval for the use of the data,

Turkish politics blamed for board block

A prominent Turkish geologist is being denied a top spot in the nation's higher-education system because, he says, his political views are out of step with those of the current government.

Celâl Şengör (pictured), a professor at



Istanbul Technical University, says that he has been blocked from joining Turkey's council of higher education (YÖK) and subjected to spurious ethics investigations because he has spoken out against the government.

"There is an atmosphere of terror," he says. "It's unbelievable what's going on."

YÖK is a 21-member council that oversees Turkey's universities. One-third of the council is nominated by the inter-university board — a group of university rectors and other academic representatives. In January, the board advanced Şengör's name for a position on YÖK. The reason for the nomination was straightforward, says Mustafa

Akaydin, who heads the inter-university board. "He's a good guy, a very well-known intellectual in Turkey."

Nominations typically pass through a straightforward approval process, but Şengör says that YÖK's leadership is holding up his candidacy. This spring, he says, the leadership opened an investigation into a previously dismissed ethics charge concerning Şengör's ties to a family business. Then, just last week, Şengör says he was informed of a second investigation into his having allegedly travelled abroad without university approval. Şengör believes that he is being persecuted because he is an outspoken critic of Turkey's current, Islamist-rooted AKP ruling party. "They want to get rid of anybody who is against them," he says.



NUCLEAR KNOCKDOWN
Is North Korea really decommissioning?
www.nature.com/news

AP

but adding that Logothetis's scientific concerns should be taken into account, in accordance with the MPS's code of good scientific practice. Small changes were made to the paper that did not satisfy Logothetis, and it went online as planned on 8 May.

Jäckle says that the journal misrepresented his approval of the use of the data as being permission to publish. "But we only ever gave approval to use the data — the journal used the Max Planck Society to excuse their own mismanagement of the case."

Jäckle also notes that he requested that the MPS should not be listed in the paper as a funder of the project, because neither of the two authors had been directly funded by the society. But the request was ignored.

Logothetis says the paper does not give sufficient information to have allowed referees to understand the source of the data. He adds that *Human Brain Mapping* has not guaranteed him the opportunity to publish a response with his own interpretation of the data. He says the paper could mislead the field, for example, with its claims to see waves of activity in the cortex that Logothetis's analysis does not support.

Fox, who refused to retract the paper, says: "The editors of *Human Brain Mapping* were entirely appropriate — that's all I want to say about it."

Shmuel and Leopard issued a statement to *Nature* in which they say: "We are confident, and rigorous peer review agreed, that the data we collected are appropriate for studying spontaneous activity and the resting state in the brain. We stand by the conclusions we made in our paper."

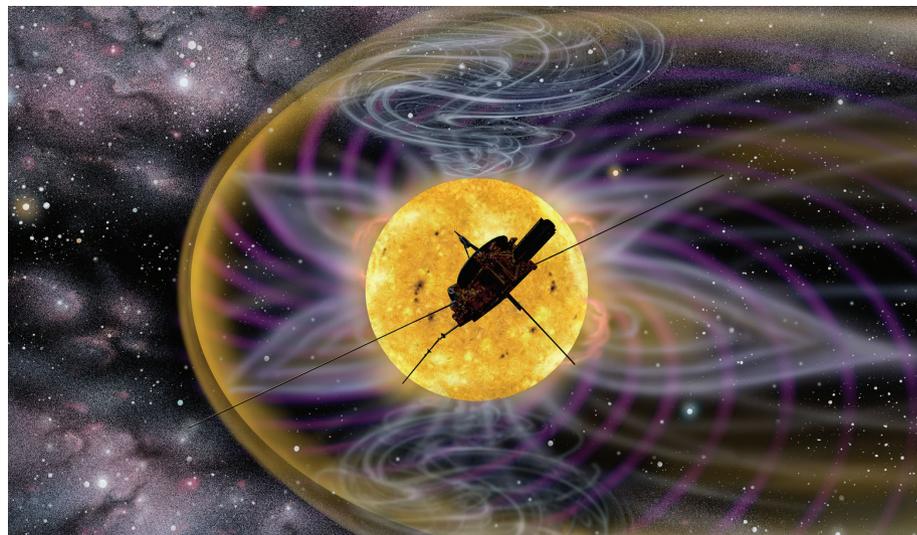
Alison Abbott

Şengör has also spoken out publicly against YÖK's newly appointed president, Yusuf Ziya Özcan, a US-trained sociologist. In the Turkish press he has stated that Özcan is not qualified to be an assistant professor, let alone head of Turkey's higher-education council. "I simply said that this man is incompetent," Şengör says.

Such blunt statements have probably not endeared him to YÖK's leadership, says Şevket Ruacan, former head of Tübitak, Turkey's national science research agency. Nevertheless, Ruacan says that the inter-university board's nomination should be respected. "The president has no option but to appoint Celâl," he says.

Özcan declined *Nature's* request for an interview.

Geoff Brumfiel



D. HARDY/ESA

Closer than ever to the Sun

As the Voyager missions carry the hopes and dreams of Earthlings to the edge of the Solar System (see page 24), work is beginning on a major new mission to explore the superstar at its heart.

But scientists must first say goodbye to its predecessor Ulysses, the longest-serving spacecraft, which has swooped past the Sun's poles three times on its unique orbit out of the elliptic plane of the Solar System. Ulysses has been a joint project between the European Space Agency, which built the spacecraft, and NASA, which provided the launch rocket and a plutonium-238-powered energy source. Its main goal was to map the heliosphere, the Sun's bubble of influence created by a stream of charged particles called the solar wind — which, for instance, 'blows' a comet's ion tail so that it always points away from the Sun. Ulysses passed through several comet-tails and measured the solar wind at periodic lows and highs, revealing that the wind is quite variable in time and space. Ulysses also discovered that the Sun's magnetic field has a strange asymmetry between its north and south poles.

But after nearly 18 years, the mission's odyssey is over. The fuel line could freeze shut in days, according to Ed Massey, NASA project manager at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California. There is no Ithaca for this Ulysses — once the fuel line freezes, engineers won't be able to orient the spacecraft's radio antennas towards Earth. It will continue to loop blindly around the Sun until at least 435 years from now, when a close pass of Jupiter could alter its course.

While Ulysses gasps its last, another NASA mission, Solar Probe Plus, is in initial development at the Applied Physics Laboratory in Laurel, Maryland. Solar Probe Plus would get closer to the Sun than any mission before in order to address two mysteries: why is the corona — the wispy, million-degree part of the Sun's atmosphere that can be seen during eclipses — so much hotter than the 6,000-degree surface of the Sun? And how, in this region, is the solar wind accelerated to supersonic speeds?

Protected by a carbon-foam shield 2.7 metres in diameter, Solar Probe Plus would tiptoe to the edge of the corona, passing at its closest within 6 million kilometres of the Sun's surface — about 10 times closer than Mercury.

For a solar mission, Ulysses never really got all that close. In fact, it was at its closest when it launched from Earth. And so it measured the effect of the Sun on the solar wind, rather than getting to the roots of its cause. "It's like trying to understand hurricanes without incorporating oceans in the model," says Andrew Dantzler, the project manager for Solar Probe Plus.

The US Congress specifically funded \$14 million in 2008 towards mission-technology development, but NASA did not request any money for it in 2009. The agency plans to ramp up mission funding, spending \$220 million by 2013 towards a tentative 2015 launch. But budget outlooks are still well short of the spacecraft's proposed \$900-million overall cost.

Eric Hand