

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told him that the data were not publishable," says Logothetis, who also wrote to Fox proposing that the paper should not be published.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