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Bianca Herlo (Hg.)

Matters of Communication

Formen und Materialitäten gestalteter Kommunikation

[transcript] Design

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Aus:

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Matters of Communication

Formen und Materialitäten gestalteter Kommunikation

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Das Verhältnis von Gestaltung und Kommunikation wird heute neu befragt. Mit einem gesellschaftlichen Wandel entstehen neue Kommunikationsmedien, -kanäle, -räume und -systeme. Maschinen, Objekte, ja ganze Umgebungen werden zu eigenständigen Akteuren, die mit uns kommunizieren und auf diversen medialen Ebenen in Interaktion treten. Wie sind die Kontexte, Möglichkeitsbedingungen und Wirkungszusammenhänge gestalteter Kommunikation - ob in Bezug auf Raum, Bild, Text, Objekt oder System – heute zu verorten?

»Matters of Communication« fragt danach, wie Kommunikation heute gestaltet wird, und wie Gestaltung heute kommuniziert.

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Introduction

Axel Vogelsang, Bianca Herlo, Sabine Foraita

The wordplay in the title of this book is obvious: “Matter” refers to both, the material basis of something as well as to the content – that which matters. Both the English word “material” and its Latin root “materia” point at design itself as it stands for the “substance from which something is made”. In this sense, material is not just dead matter but substance that carries in itself the potential to become an object, enriched with meaning and functionality, thus referring to the role of design as a means of making sense.¹

And yes, there is also a connection in the title to Bruno Latour’s essay² in which he explicates his view on the crisis of critical theory. The self-critical text holds constructivist theorists such as himself to account for the increasing disbelief in scientific facts and reasoning in combination with the ever-growing popularity of conspiracy theories. When the meaning of everything is just a cultural and social construct, as postulated by critical theory in the 20th century, and when data can only be read in the context of the experimental set-up that produced them, why should anyone trust in scientists or theorists in the first place? Isn’t personal empiric everyday evidence just as reliable? After all, the earth might just be flat as a pancake. In an attempt to re-empower critical thinking, Latour proposes to abandon the debilitating focus on simply critiquing and debunking “matters of facts”³. The critic he says should instead be the one who uncovers and investigates the “matters of concern”, the complex constellations of scientific objects, related associations and theories, or “gatherings” as he calls such constructs. The critic must also offer a forum where these matters can be discussed and taken further. One might argue that in this line of thinking, the critical theorist turns from a dissector into a designer, from someone who takes apart things into “the one who assembles”⁴ as Latour himself states.

The idea of gatherings illustrates the complexity of relationships in which we as cultural beings live and move, far from the modernist credo of the god-like engineer-designer who creates the world to his or her liking. Design is a process in which we are constantly reshaping our environment, while being shaped by it at the same time. Certainly, the surrounding world of objects itself does offer resistance. We humans are not simply independent actors manipulating objects as we go along; we are constituted in the interrelation with the artefacts surrounding us, as Don Ihde⁵ remarks.⁶ And, again, we might summon Latour⁷, who describes objects as actors or better “actants” with a certain agency that communicate with us. This is not a stance that Klaus Krippendorff would fully agree to in his article in this book. He argues that our relationship with the objects that surround us

1 K. Krippendorff: The semantic turn, 2006.

2 B. Latour: Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?, 2004, pp. 225–248.

3 Ibid. p. 245.

4 Ibid. p. 246.

5 D. Ihde: Philosophy of Technology, 1998.

6 Karen Barad goes even further by suggesting

that we shouldn’t talk about things, objects or humans for that matter any longer, but about fluid phenomena that constitute the world in a constant process of »intra-action«: K. Barad: Agentieller Realismus, 2012.

7 B. Latour: On actor-network theory, 1996, pp. 369–381.

is not one based on dialogue. According to him we react to the affordances of objects and the surrounding world rather than involving ourselves in a “genuine conversation” with them. As much as this might have been the case until recently, does this still hold when we look at computers? And even more so, will it hold in the face of the vision of the Internet of Things, where computational power is potentially connected to every object? We shouldn’t forget that meanwhile journalistic mass products, such as descriptions of property sales or weather forecasts and even sport reports, are already being written by robots in almost perfect prose without us humans being aware. If we act on Turing’s⁸ assumption that it is enough to accept that our counterpart is a human in order to think we are conversing with one and, at the same time, if we agree that what happens in the brains of our fellow humans remains a black box to us, we might admit that the boundaries between human and artificial world start to blur. We may have to face that we could be entering an age where we have conversations with objects on a daily basis not knowing whether what we deal with is made of silicon or flesh. While such conversational interfaces might even be reassuring, it is only a symptom of what Bratton⁹ calls “the stack”, an “accidental megastructure” of “planetary-scale computation” that meanwhile permeates everything. It’s impact on the world, seemingly overreaching human control and understanding, is an infrastructure built by humans but is now shaping human society. In that sense we are definitely experiencing a qualitative shift with regards to the degree of responsiveness of the surrounding world.

However critically one might assess these changes, we humans thrive on language and we actually want to converse with our environment and the objects it contains. We have a disposition of anthropomorphizing the world around us. We talk to our pets or fly into a rage at a computer if it seems to resist our instructions, and some people give their car a nickname. Humans understand the world in terms of human language, and simply cannot get used to the fact that objects and animals might not relate to it in the same way. This is exactly why the “Offenbacher Modell”, the theory of product language, developed in the 1980s at the University of Art and Design in Offenbach, uses the terminology of linguistics as a means to understand, define and even to design functionalities and interactions relating to objects.¹⁰ Meanwhile, this conversational one-way model seems to fall short in the face of increasingly responsive environments and objects. And even before objects started to actively respond, the relationship between language and environment has always been reciprocal, as Lakoff and Johnson argue.¹¹ They claim that language itself is built on a metaphorical conceptual understanding of the world. Language is an expression of human experience of the world, or contrariwise the world around us has shaped the ways we think and talk about it. The difference is that we have now reached a point where our conversational relationship with the environment is not a metaphorical one anymore but one in which the objects and the environment literally talk to us, for example when Buchanan¹² describes “information environments” where the interior design provides nurses and physicians with the necessary data regarding patients. Looking at these intricate relationships

8 A. M. Turing: I. – Computing Machinery and Intelligence. 1950, pp. 433–460.

9 B. H. Bratton: The stack: on software and sovereignty, 2015.

10 D. Steffen: Der „Offenbacher Ansatz“ in Theorie

und Praxis, 2000, pp. 34–93.

11 G. Lakoff/M. Johnson: Metaphors we live by, Chicago, 1980.

12 R. Buchanan: Surroundings and Environments in Fourth Order Design, 2019, pp. 4–22.

between thinking and making, between talking and designing, between language and matter, it becomes more important than ever to reflect on how design – both as a process as well in the form of the resulting artefacts – acts as an intermediary between humans and other humans as well as between humans, objects and the environment, particularly as the environment increasingly *is* design. It is simply a question of survival; even though one might rightly ask whether design is part of the problem rather than the solution. Dieter Rams, one of the icons of 20th century design, stated in a recent interview that he would not be keen on being a designer anymore because of its negative role with regards to consumerism and exploitation of the world's resources.¹³ On the other hand, there is no way back. We still need to rely on design if we want to keep the world inhabitable. But this is not achieved by simply designing away the problems we've designed in the first place. Rather, we need to negotiate and find consensus about how to live and how to re-design the world. This task though is immense, as we often seem unable to achieve consensus on the interpretation of critical data in the first place, as we have seen with regards to the Covid-19 virus and even more so when there are political stakes in ignoring or manipulating "matters of fact" as it is the case with global warming, which endangers the foundations of human life on this planet.

Against this backdrop of increasing radicalization, segmentation and polemization of social discourses, the relationship between design and communication seems more volatile today than ever. New communications media, channels, spaces and systems are constantly emerging. And as we've seen, machines, objects, even entire environments become autonomous actors that communicate with us and interact on various media levels. So, we asked ourselves: how can we sound out the contexts, the conditions of how communication is designed today and how design communicates? What are the interdependencies of various stakeholders and actors, and how does impact manifest itself and where? What concepts are needed to grasp the relationship between design and communication from a present-day point of view? Besides these challenges strongly related to matters of communication, other urgent issues will obviously be addressed as well, by default – as communication is the arena in which contemporary challenges emerge and are played out. Therefore, the question of sustainability not only of communication but of our whole ecosystem is always present, as are the issues of power and participation.

In order to structure the dialogue both for the conference and this book, we took the four orders of design by Buchanan¹⁴ as a starting point, a model quite helpful as it structures design practices along a continuum of increasing complexity and in doing so also refers to the cultural and communicative qualities of design. While Buchanan's orders of design move from signs (1st order) to objects (2nd order) to (inter)actions (3rd order) to contexts, (4th order)¹⁵, our trajectory spans from the signs (chapter 1) to objects (chapter 2) to built environments – as locations where interactions take place – (chapter 3) and finally toward contexts (chapter 4). In that sense, we have taken some freedoms in order to adapt the model according

13 G. Hustwit/D. Rams. In: Helvetica/Objectified/ in Fourth Order Design, 2019, pp. 4–22.

Urbanized: The Complete Interviews, 2015.

15 Ibid. p. 11.

14 R. Buchanan: Surroundings and Environments

to our purposes. Buchanan himself suggests that his four orders do not serve as fixed categories but as a “heuristic device” and a “creative matrix”.¹⁶ Similarly, we also suggest, that our concept is not something hermetic but simply a construct that delivers structure and supports reading.

This structured discourse is preceded by three eminent positions, for which we invited Klaus Krippendorff together with Ramia Mazé and our keynote speaker Dietmar Offenhuber. Mazé and Offenhuber both argue in their guest articles that the current challenges can be addressed through critical design practices. On the basis of two design research projects, Mazé emphasizes integrating criticism within design practices and forms. With regards to current socio-economic and environmental challenges, Mazé informs the discussion on the role critical practices can play for disruption, debate and change. Critical reflection also seems to be an emerging issue in information design, as Offenhuber points out. By discussing traces as material evidence, he argues for autographic visualization as a critical practice that allows designers to break visual conventions, reflect on the problematic separation of data and phenomena, and question assumptions – by presenting data collection and trace-oriented visual strategies as a constructive process. Krippendorff then argues for an ethical design discourse, emphasizing that inquiries into negative consequences of design practice can enrich the design discourse – especially when taking into consideration major cultural and linguistic differences amongst those partaking in the process.

Krippendorff’s ideas very much set the tone for the first chapter of this book “Language and Image”. It relates to the aesthetics of visual signs of human communication, the raw material or matter from which visual communication is made, the way it is shaped and organized in order to inform, convince, manipulate, impress, etc. The design of communication has always moved between the rather denotative qualities of the written word and the greater connotative freedom of the image. Depending on the design concept, visual design serves to support the flow of communication or can, with an expressive gesture, break through familiar visual forms of representation. How are the visual aspects of communication designed, received and interpreted today? What are the factors influencing the design of visual communication and what impact does visual communication have on prevailing social discourses?

Michael Renner, in his contribution, investigates the relationship between visual perception and language. In particular, he asks how the aesthetics of written language and their combination with imagery relate to the meaning that arises from such texts, thereby introducing the hermeneutic method of “practice-led iconic research”, a reflective practice of design aimed at “gaining insights about the impact of images”. Renner applies this method to the work of different designers, all three of whom explore the performative properties of text-image relationships, thus raising awareness for the qualities of written language as a visual material.

On the flipside, the simple juxtaposition of pictures and text can also result in relationships that trigger images in the reader’s mind; “tropes” are stowaways that smuggle meaning in unexpected ways. Daniel Hornuff explores what he

.....
¹⁶ Ibid. p. 12.

calls “Sprachbilder”, in direct translation “language images”, with the help of an advertising campaign for smoothies, by a German soft drink producer. While the company aims at more or less intelligent puns in a metaphorical play with images and words, at the same time it underestimates the ambiguity of language it tries to instrumentalize. And so, Hornuff shows how intended meaning and actual reading can widely differ. This might not be of great consequence for the soft drink company as such, but the gulf becomes a problem when the intended pun can be read as an openly racist statement, for example.

Shared culture is no guarantee of shared understanding, yet things get even more complicated when different cultures, languages, writing systems cross paths. Oliver Ruf and Caroline Knoch argue the case for a multi-lingual or global typography, an approach that aims at a “visual coexistence” of heterogeneous language systems and fonts in the same type family. While this does entail the danger of a streamlining or latinization of the existing diversity of writing systems, the authors stress that designers should be aware and resist such tendencies, and should knowingly engage with sign systems as a defining feature of human culture and communication.

The natural sciences involved in the business of accuracy and the measuring and explaining of the universe tend not to be associated with the fuzziness and ambiguities that accompany language and writing. However, they nevertheless are also in the often messy business of interpretation of what is measured. Judith Marlen Dobler, over the course of a year, observed a group of experimental physicists with regards to how they use drawing as a means of interpretation and explanation. Surprisingly, she comes to the conclusion that drawing in this context produces “a performative image of the addressed content as a “dance”” between various actors and thus there seems to be no big difference in the function of drawing when we compare the arts with the natural sciences.

History, based on anything else than exact science is often depicted in a straight timeline, thus, according to Julia Meer, simplifying complex narratives and inter-connections down to a seemingly coherent succession of chronological events. Insofar graphic design plays a major role in how we conceptualize and read history. Meer reminds us that the timeline has its origin in a positivist view of the world, where history equals a one-directional movement towards constant progress. Instead, she points out the need to question the narratives evoked by specific design conventions.

Evidence-based design has increasingly adopted methods for data collection in recent decades, particularly from the social sciences, which it is actually part of. But strangely, the means of analysing these data and information hasn’t gained that much attention in design education – whatever the reason might be. Jan-Henning Raff in his article explains seven different methods for visually analysing graphic design, including means of accessing the impact of images during pre-attentive perception as well as ways of laying open the underlying construction of image compositions or contextualising designs with regards to their socio-cultural meaning.

Buchanan's second order¹⁷ describes "the design of material objects", meaning the construction and appearance of objects but also their impact through affordances, contexts of practice as well as cultural and even political connotations. We decided to name our second chapter "Objects and Interaction", thereby focussing not only on the products of a design process but also on how these turn into cultural objects, become carriers of information or even act as agents that directly communicate with human beings or other objects. Designed objects are a combination of materials, function and aesthetics, as well as an interface in complex technological, economic and social contexts. So, how is communication designed today between objects and people, and amongst people through objects? How do these objects communicate with respect to their role in economic and ecological contexts? What role does materiality or immateriality play in relation to the communicative abilities of objects?

The material significantly influences our view of the design as an actor in networks. This publication offers various perspectives on the material turn in the field of object and interaction. Ludwig Zeller, for example, describes the concept of materialized critique as a form of communication. The question of how the communication of material things differs from linguistic communication leads to the investigation of the affect that can activate and guide human attention. Zeller proposes a communication theory of the material based on Latour's actor-network-theory, which leads to an extension of the Offenbacher Ansatz by the affect function.

Affects and experiences driven by material also determine the following project. Judith Dörrenbächer and Marc Hassenzahl investigate how New Materialism inspires the concept of technical design. One of the main aspects in their research is the responsibility distributed between subject and object. Their experiments on possibility driven design are based on the concept of Karen Barad's intra-action and acts of engagement according to Lucy Suchman as well as Susanne Wiggall's open experiment. Dörrenbächer and Hassenzahl use hearing aids to look at how the design of experiences and activities generate a subjective sense of well-being. They enable unconventional approaches in technology in co-constitution with long-term hearing aid wearers. In a workshop format, they developed "prompts of positive possibilities and open probes" which are able to intra-act in the meaning of Karen Barad.

Direct confrontation with the material also constitutes the basis for the project "Per-Forming Clouds". Clemens Winkler's research focuses on volatile and formless processes. The concept of the transitional object forms the starting point for observation and is supported by the flows of materials inside and their contexts, according to Tim Ingold. In his workshop, Clemens Winkler shows the interdisciplinary intersection of practical assumptions of material dynamics, multisensory experiences and ecological as well as socially perceptible processes. Winkler is convinced that experiences and the understanding of formless material phenomena enable new active material approaches, new levels of action and a contemporary language of form. How do transfer processes of material know-

17 R. Buchanan: Wicked Problems in Design Thinking, 1992.

ledge take place between science, design and the general public? This question should be answered by a project with regard to so-called smart materials, i.e. materials of a technological nature that react independently to changing environmental conditions.

The research project “Smart Materials Satellites” by Lilo Viehweg and Julia Wolf focused, on the one hand, on making material knowledge visible and on research into design methods for open knowledge transfer, on the other. In interactive research laboratories, they created a transdisciplinary approach to intelligent or responsive materials and explored this form of communication. Design (in the sense of knowledge production, cultural processes and knowledge cultures) enables the mediation between people and materials, and transforms the materials into mediators between people and design. Materials are understood as active matter and, from the perspective of new materialism, become visible actors.

Speculative design based on the question “How do we want to live in the future?” describes Verena Ziegler’s research topic. In a workshop format, she brings together people from different cultures to explore future living scenarios in a globalized world. The workshop contains stages where, for example, ornaments and signs and science fiction film scenes offer inspiration. Experimental stages that invite people to draw and print complete the workshop setting. The workshop series focuses on an additive manufacturing process (symbiosis of 3D-melt printing with textiles) which has already been tested in the fields of mobile construction and fashion. This process was used for the Pop-up workshop series in an analogous version to experiment directly with objects in a new material to build future environments.

From objects we move to space: “Space and Scenography” is the name of the third chapter. From non-places to highly utilitarian buildings to narrative spaces of experience, from physical buildings to augmented hybrid worlds to virtual reality – space is more complex than ever and provokes many interesting questions in the design context. How do contemporary spaces function as communication interfaces? How are they designed to empower actors to express themselves or to connect, how in order to restrict others? How are these spaces argued, narrated and communicated through their design? But also, against the backdrop of various economic and social issues, what role does simulation play as a specific form of spatial design?

We were lucky that Andreas Müller, our host at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe, was willing to take this on as a personal challenge with regards to the architectural space of the DGTF conference. He addressed space as a communication format, on the one hand, and communication as a spatial process, on the other. Together with students of exhibition design, he created four specific spatial situations in the “atriums” of the university building at Karlsruhe, which was once Europe’s largest ammunition factory, each situation supporting a specific communication format. In his text he describes this setup and his motivations.

Architecture does speak through its form, its function and the atmosphere it creates. However, Tricia Austin points out that the narratives emanating from architecture often rely on a mix of implicit and explicit forms of communication.

They might support or otherwise question specific social, economic or political concepts related to buildings, as she demonstrates through various case studies. Accordingly, Austin aims at the important step of defining the intersection between spatial design and communication design in order to develop a theory of space as a medium of communication that might encourage theorists and practitioners to become more aware of the voice and language of architectural space.

The white cube is the starting point for Mona Mahall's exploration of the politics of space. In her investigation into George Bataille's position on space, she refers back to her own curatorial and artistic practice. She defines space by referring to Bataille as something that actually resists the order architecture tries to impose onto it, which raises the question of how the idiosyncrasies, contradictions and provocations of space as they are present in contemporary cities, for example, can be exhibited in an architectural setting that still insists on its neutrality.

Virtual reality as a means of simulation adds a new dimension to how we will understand architecture and space. An investigative study by Yannick Marszalek and Dominik Volz is based on the well-founded assumption that co-working in virtual spaces will soon become a reality for many. Their work explores what effects the aesthetics of these environments might have on both "effectiveness and well-being in IVEs" (immersive virtual environments).

Matteo Moretti and Alvis Matozzi are similarly interested in the effects of embodied experience, but, in their case study, they take the opposite direction. They use analogue abstractions in the form of a spatial installation in order to visualize complex economic, social and political relationships and realities. With "Participatory Data Physicalization", the audience not only delivers the data regarding a specific topic like, for example, cancer prevention, they also inscribe these data into a physical spatial representation, which simultaneously becomes a didactic device directed at the audience.

In her text, Judith Holly describes the beginning of her ethnographic research on Pashkevil, a typographic medium that dominates the public space of the district of Mea Shearim, one of the oldest Jewish Orthodox neighborhoods in Jerusalem. Pashkevilim are the most important medium for residents to receive and convey information. The text-only posters discuss all kinds of matters from religious routines to everyday life. In her field trip, Holly explores who the actors of this text-based interchange are and how a graphic medium can function in public space.

The fourth track "Society and System" relates to the societal, political and economic infrastructure that surrounds us and how communication is designed into these networks. Complex systems, such as computers, companies or societies, are based on the constant exchange of materials, energies, symbols and are therefore communicative systems per se. Communication itself is actually the matter on which these networks are built, to a large extent at least. How do such systems get designed? How does design deal with different stakeholders in these systems? What does good communication within a network or system mean, and how are friction and conflict used as productive forces? Last but not least, even more substantial questions arise for the design community in these rather abstract contexts, such as what the role of the designer actually is or rather who

actually the designer is, because when communication itself is the building block of a network, every act of communication is an act of design.

Especially in the context of civic engagement and social design, Bianca Herlo questions design's agency within collaborative practices at the intersection of academia, policy and civil society. On the basis of a two-year practice-based research project – a collaboration with policy makers, civic initiatives and practice partners from urban development, Herlo looked at contexts and conditions for design to enable transdisciplinary research as well as civic engagement and digital participation in local communities. She points out how the use of disciplinary agencies render visible some paradoxes in line with the digital transformation and the complex entanglements that play along with systemic changes.

Also driven by ideas of systemic changes, especially with regards to everyday living systems, Valentina Karga has for years been experimenting with alternative lived experiences through artistic means. Along with her interventions of practical self-sufficiency in the urban realm, in her text she reflects on the possibilities of having an impact on our living systems by changing our perspective through experimentation with self-sufficiency. Questioning our perceptions of reality and the real, she emphasizes the potential of small-scale simulations and alternative, experimental approaches to established systems like food, waste or money. For her, *art as simulation* empowers us and provides us with lived experiences of alternative systems.

In her essay, Helga Schmid looks at the time systems that impact us in modern societies, and how *designing time* might be an answer to the contemporary time crises that characterize our everyday life. She proposes an alternative approach to temporal rhythms – by rethinking the concept of *uchronia*, utopia in history, originally conceived as an alternative timeline – that can play a role for our politics of time. Her experiments are especially meant to foster a discussion on the present-day perception of time. By unlearning time, Schmid argues, we can learn to rethink our relation to time as clock-based time but as designable time.

How is design done practically? Valentin Janda poses this question from an ethnographic perspective, by observing an e-textile design research group. Janda's field research addresses the inner logics of the research group. His investigation reveals two main modes of operation characteristic to the design work he observed as a sociologist: the creation and the maintaining of uncertainty – an inward-looking design process – and the connecting lines, oriented towards other social contexts and systems. Hereby, the translation of the design work by the designers themselves has proved to be particularly interesting, as, according to Janda, the very specifics of subversive deconstruction and creation of uncertainties are not communicated to the outside world appropriately.

In her essay, Sabine Junginger addresses the living system of the public sector and its constant pressure to change and maintain as an important topic for design – not only as a field of engagement but as a starting point for meta-level design conversations. On the basis of the concept of “agile governance” as a “call for adaptive governance”, she argues for a stronger involvement by designers and design researchers in reflecting upon their potential for systemic change. She

also calls for the *development of a design-internal inquiry into agile governance* and for engagement with other relevant disciplines through a design lens.

Design and design research sit at the intersection of many professions, disciplines, topics and issues. Its own discipline is still in the making and it might never become fully disciplined. It is not surprising then that this book brings together many authors from different backgrounds, with different voices and different approaches. It includes theorists and practitioners as much as practitioner-cum-theorists. There might be some theorists-cum-practitioners as well even though we are not aware of them, which might in itself be a topic for a different conference, a different book after all. The writers are designers, architects and artists; some of whom move freely between those professions, others are cultural theorists, sociologists, art historians and so on. And last but not least some of the authors are professors, some lecturers, others are students. This variety of perspectives and skills and experience levels is definitely one of the strengths of the design community, because design that wants to make a difference needs to be inclusive and cannot act in a hierarchical top-down manner. It needs to involve all stakeholders and it needs an evidence-based reflective practice for which language and communication are essential. As a consequence, we should be looking at designed images, objects, spaces and systems not as works of design but as tools in an ongoing conversation.

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Konferenzformate

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Der Begriff „Konferenzformate“ beschreibt organisatorische Formen der Kommunikation, mit denen, im begrenzten Rahmen einer Konferenz, Wissen ausgetauscht wird. Sie unterscheiden sich in der Moderation und der Partizipation der Teilnehmer*innen und damit auch in ihrem räumlichen Setting. Die Positionen von Sprechenden und Zuhörenden setzen diese als miteinander Kommunizierende in spezifische Beziehungen und definieren so das Format der Kommunikation. Von einer Bühne herab wird anders geredet als in einem Stuhlkreis oder an einem Tisch. Mit einem Gegenüber spricht man anders als in einer Gruppe, sitzend kommuniziert man anders als stehend oder beim Spaziergang. In der Architekturgeschichte gibt es zahlreiche Raumtypen, die für ganz bestimmte Kommunikationsformen entwickelt und optimiert sind. Theater, Museum, Kirche, oder Gerichtssaal sind für je spezifische Positionen von miteinander sprechenden Subjekten und Objekten entworfen.

Der Raum der Hochschule für Gestaltung ist nicht für kommunikative Prozesse entworfen worden. Das Gebäude der ehemals größten Munitionsfabrik Europas, in dem die HfG zusammen mit dem ZKM seit 1997 untergebracht ist, wurde nach Grundsätzen der industriellen Produktion für Materialflüsse und Arbeitsabläufe entworfen. Seine offene Struktur aus „Lichthöfen“ und „Lichtbrücken“ diente der Disziplinierung und der Arbeitssicherheit in einer hochgefährlichen Produktion. Erst die neue Nutzung als Hochschule ermöglichte es, die offene Gebäudestruktur auch als Kommunikationsinfrastruktur zu begreifen und beispielsweise die Lichtbrücken als Bühnen und die Wände als Ausstellungsflächen zu bespielen. Für die dgf-Jahrestagung haben Studierende der Fachgruppe Ausstellungsdesign und Szenografie vier spezifische Raumsituationen geschaffen, die auf verschiedene Kommunikationsformate und Raumelemente Bezug nehmen. Eine Tribüne, ein Forum, ein Tisch und eine Insel wurden ohne räumliche Abtrennung im großen, offenen Erdgeschoss der HfG platziert. Sie unterscheiden sich in ihrer Größe und Form sowie in ihrem Bezug zum Gesamtraum. Diese Raumsituationen unterstützen je ein spezifisches Kommunikationsformat. Indem sie die Positionen von Sprecher und Publikum definieren, legen sie die Art und Weise nahe, wie etwas gesagt wird, wie Information transportiert wird, und wie miteinander diskutiert wird.

Als Bauelemente standen verschiedene Systeme von Bühnenpodesten mitsamt Zubehör zur Verfügung. Zusätzliche Podeste wurden von einer vorangegangenen Veranstaltung übernommen, und die mobilen Ausstellungswände der HfG wurden als Raumteiler und Hintergründe eingesetzt. Eine ganz eigene Gestaltungsebene bildeten diverse Polster, Textilien und Schaumstoffe aus dem Fundus des Südwestrundfunks, die als Ergänzung und Kontrast zur ästhetischen Sprache der Veranstaltungstechnik minimale Bequemlichkeit schufen.

Die Tribüne mit vorangestellten Stuhlreihen wurde für die Einführungen und die großen Vorträge vor dem gesamten Publikum benutzt. Dies ist ein klassisches frontales Setting für Vorträge mit großem Publikum. Die Stuhlreihen boten etwa 200 Sitzplätze, die Tribüne weitere 60 in erhöhter Position mit Blick auf Sprecher*in und Publikum. Für kleinere Gruppen wurde die Tribüne ohne

die Bestuhlung benutzt und mit einem Rednerpult und zwei mobilen Präsentationsmonitoren ausgestattet. Im Forum war das Publikum in einem Halbkreis platziert, in dessen Mittelpunkt die Sprecher*innen an einem kleinen Tisch direkt vor der Projektionsleinwand saßen. Zwei weitere Situationen boten Raum für Workshops: Ein langer L-förmiger Tisch und eine Insel aus verschiedenen hohen Podesten, die sich zu einer Landschaft ohne Richtung und Zentrum zusammensetzen. Die Räume wurden nicht nur durch die sichtbare Architektur aus Bühnenpodesten und Wänden definiert, sondern wesentlich auch durch präzise kontrollierte Akustik. Dazu gehörte nicht nur ein feines Austarieren von Lautstärken, Abständen und Schallrichtungen, sondern auch das Mitdenken von Steuermöglichkeiten für die Techniker während der Veranstaltung. So war es möglich, dass alle vier Raumsituationen gleichzeitig bespielt werden konnten. Der Raumentwurf für die dgf Jahrestagung im offenen Hallenbau der HfG bot einerseits die Möglichkeit, Raum als Kommunikationsformat zu verstehen und auszuprobieren. Andererseits stellte er Kommunikation als einen prinzipiell räumlichen Vorgang dar. Mit dieser Doppelfunktion als Kommunikations-Infrastruktur und als lesbare Form war der Raumentwurf selbst ein Beitrag zu „Matters of Communication“.

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