

**Heidi Philipsen, Lise Agerbæk, & Bo Kampmann Walther (Eds.):
Designing New Media: Learning, Communication and Innovation
Aarhus: Academica. 2010.**

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In their seminal work from 1996, Roger Silverstone and Leslie Haddon state that technological innovation is not merely a matter of production but also of social processes that involve producers and users in complex, interweaving activities of making decisions, sharing expectations, and negotiating with institutions (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996). Written at a time when personal use of information and communication technology was understood in light of domestication processes and when technology use was still seen from the perspective of consumption, Silverstone and Haddon pointed even then to processes of design as crucial for capturing the symbiotic relationship between technical, aesthetic, and socio-cultural innovation.

They also argued for the importance of studying the role of the user in innovation. In their argument, the user articulates technologies both by constructing meaning and by enabling the technologies— a double articulation that comes into play when new media is designed and developed. Too few media studies within the humanities have approached this double articulation of media and the symbiotic relationship between technical, aesthetic, and socio-cultural conditions. However, the humanities researchers active in the field of design research highlight the valuable insights into culture, continuity, and values that the humanities can contribute to the design domain, both in practice-based research and in theoretically based design approaches (for example, see Andersen, 2003; Liestøl, 2003; Morrison, 2010; Løvlie, 2010; Morrison et al., 2010; Stuedahl & Smørddal, 2010).

The book *Designing New Media: Learning, Communication and Innovation* has taken the step of applying perspectives from the humanities to empirical studies of various design processes and principles. By asking how processes of designing new media are related to and influenced by cultural and social change, the book's articles illustrate the fundamentally cultural basis of design and how this insight is crucial to understanding media's role in learning processes. The contributions approach various cultural contexts of media design, such as visual design, creativity, critical and reflective design, museum learning design, designing for cross-media immediacy, the role of face strategies in corporate blog design, and the challenges of digital empowerment initiatives in designing for participation.

Lise Agerbæk introduces the concept of visual topography to highlight how designing for interactivity – as opposed to designing multimedia – is refocusing visual design on the situated, contextual, and space-based aspects of interactive interfaces, the framing resulting from the browser, and the cultural context of website production. Agerbæk uses empirical examples to illustrate the scaffolding that visual design produces for mediated dialogues in producing a semiotic landscape for interactive production and use.

Heidi Philipsen analyses creativity by focusing on the preconditions framing the making of new and influential communicational forms. Her empirical studies on the emergence of the 'New Wave' innovations in Danish film and the so-called Video Clip Cup facilitated by the International Film Festival in Odense analytically define the significant elements of creativity as firmly defined by constraints and limitations.

Lars Bo Løfgreen discusses critical design as a hybrid field that potentially re-connects art and design. This re-connection, he argues, could help bring to the foreground critical questions regarding the functionalities of, for instance, conventional interaction design. The empirical examples used are the 2005 D-Day exhibition, Evidence Dolls, at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, which radically questions intimacy and genetic technology as well as the student project Peer Pressure, in which new versions of well-known technological artifacts point to how technology becomes inherent to our conceptions of public and private, you and me, etc. Løfgreen points to how critical design may produce artful interactions with any type of media, thereby provoking awareness and reflections not provided by conventional design.

Cynthia M. Grund and Jesper Pilegaard take up some of the issues considered in designing museum learning that uses virtual representations and simulations. The Percitopia development project aimed to produce a virtual counterpart to Whitehall, the Rhode Island home of the Irish philosopher George Berkeley. By contrasting learning experiences in classroom teaching versus that in museum visits, the authors emphasize the rich, narrative character of museum learning. Using the concepts of environmental storytelling and gap filling, the article discusses the necessity for scientific accuracy and authenticity when it comes to creating an immersive experience sufficient for learning. The virtual reconstruction may, they argue, create sites for learning experiences, collaboration between visitors, and self-guidance at sites that are compact and small scale. The article highlights the potential of VR designs for inviting museum visitors into activities not possible in real museums.

Heidi Philipsen discusses how conceptions of remediation and immediacy are crucial to understanding the design of cross-media communications. By describing empirical examples from three Danish media concepts (a television serial production with a website, the Mille video diary with a website, and the webisodes or mobile films of Pinly & Flau), this article illustrates how creative cross-media designs offer the potential for immediate experiencing and identification, which calls for a more complex perspective on the relationship between hypermediacy and immediacy than that stated by Bolter and Grusin (2000).

Anette Grønning questions how traditional face-to-face representations take new forms in CMC-based communication such as in blogs. Based on empirical studies of integration of a corporate blog at Post Danmark, the article discusses how presentations and interpersonal constructions of self and face take new forms in continuous conversation and connected relationships in online settings. A set of facework strategies (such as disregard, moderation, withdrawal, etc.) are used to analyze all blog entries from ten months of Post Danmark's blog service, involving blogs and comments from customers, managers, and present/former employees. The article shows how the character of continuous conversation online poses important questions regarding the role of interpersonal relations and the value of participation in interactive service design.

Norbert Wildermuth questions the design of ICT4D (Information and Communication Technologies for Development) initiatives with a critical concern for how the implicated notions of empowerment display a weak understanding of the heterogeneity and complexity of the communities in question. In his analysis of digital inclusion initiatives in Recife, Brazil, he describes how discursive and counter-discursive issues regarding crime among groups of young people may influence appropriation and use of ICT. These humanities-oriented and anthropological perspectives on culture and identity are rarely involved in the design of digital empowerment strategies.

Each chapter of the anthology poses a host of questions suitable for discussion and further reflection. The publication is targeted at those in higher level educations as well as anyone with an interest in media design and learning processes. As such, the focus on empirical analysis and description does a perfect job of describing the role of design in communication mediated by ICT. Also, from the point of view of communication design research, the book's case studies offer valuable insights and clear examples of the role that humanities perspectives play in design. These insights and discussions are relevant to general discussions of the role of culture in design. Although a discussion of the implications of design and designing was not within the scope this book, I hope that this group of media researchers continues exploring humanities perspectives and theories, linking these with ongoing discussions in fields such as communication design, interaction design, service design and digital humanities.

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