# *IMAGIT*

Seminar at HfG Karlsruhe

Interim Summary

The weekly meetings with students of various departments at HfG Karlsruhe (Media Art, Communications Design, Product Design) have been fruitful sessions of discussion and reflexion on the variety of aspects introduced both by the *IMAGIT* project and individual student ideas around the subjects of the image, the icon, the social realm, the digital realm, data and ethics.

What has been discussed?

Communication in images

As images surround our everyday lives to an unprecedented extend their application as a medium for the transport of valuable information seems undeniable. However, if we think of a sufficient icon or image to express simple necessities ("You need a warm jacket if you want go out today"), a project idea ("I'd like to go to that controversial demonstration and use a 360° Camera") or a thoughts of higher sociological or philosophical complexity ("This surround-photography should provide a higher degree of objectivity in the observation of the relationship between conservatives, extremism and freedom of speech") we might conceive our tools as restricted in the first instance.

The term *nonverbal communication* has been thoroughly discussed in the seminar taking into consideration its qualities to overcome linguistic borders, culture-specific codes and hegemonies as well as the (temporary) withdrawal from control mechanisms.
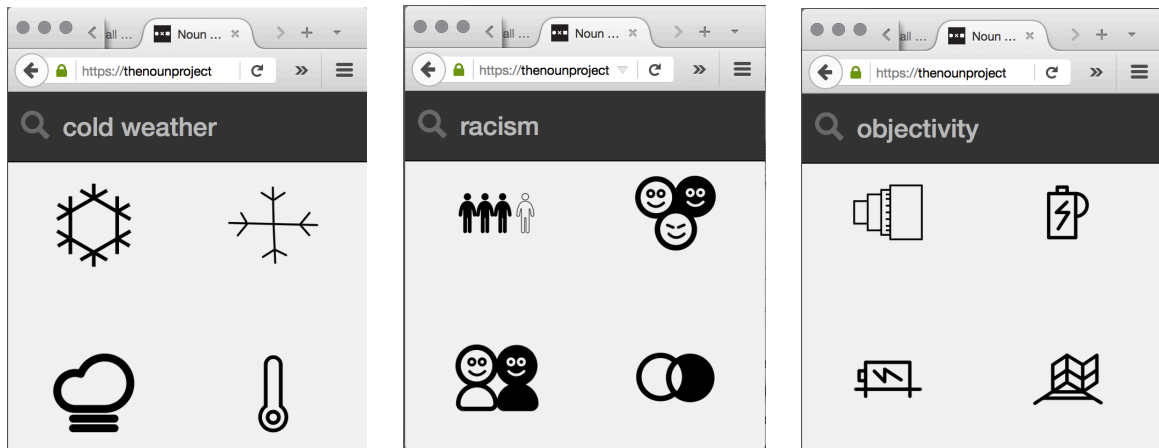
This lead us to an approach where we were investigating on the qualities of the *nonlingual parts* of communication — written text often needs interpretation where a call or a face to face conversation delivers information on intention and emotional evaluation more easily. This might apply even on a higher degree for content exchange and socializing in international projects. In social media the amount of *smileys*, *emoticons* or *stickers* is consequently increasing – however only few can address the intensity emotions and their transition over time. **Timebased and responsive icons** could be an essential feature to an inventive form of visual communication. Introducing the **option of fluidity** to an image liberates it from its ultimacy and as such for example the tracability of a dispute after its conclusion.

What's (the) New

The digitalization is widely conceived as one of the major media shifts of human history such as language, written text and book printing – a promising circumstance for developing and reflecting on new ideas, whereas a lot you can think of is already there and maybe even old. Hence it became a crucial part of the seminar to gather information both on recent developments in the use of new technical possibilities and devices and digital spaces such as social media, scientific platforms, and distribution channels and the new form behaviour from the single individual to political institutions within. Also the history of the image and the icon approximates the same origin as the invention of language.
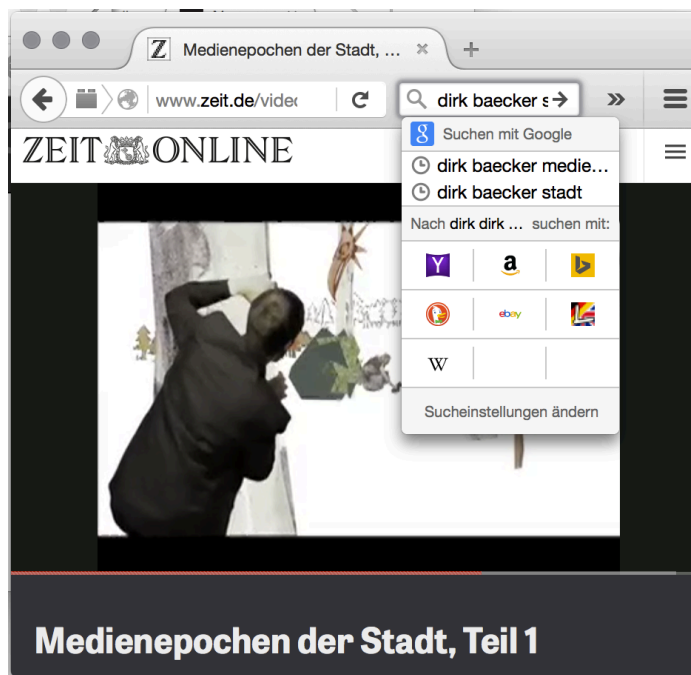
Communication, Liberty and Ethics

The issue of freedom of speech is currently one of the hottest topics – anyone involved with the conception of an openly accessible communicative tool is requested to reflect on the negative outcome of the infrastructure s/he provides. Those who raise their voices right now in the name of the people often represent minorities. At the same online activity can be strongly connected to the neurotic feeling of being watched and controlled already – installing an ethical control committee can be helpful to prevent hate speech, yet increase

general uncertainty. The strength of the image/icon could here lie in its ambiguity – it may easily be constructed to express a variety of meanings (a full academic branch is engaged with image interpretation). An application or system where the image is the main tool for communication could even invite to a rhetorically or poetically engaged expression through the mediums multidimensional and ambivalent nature. This probably can and must be addressed in the very basic construction of the application, in order to work out.

Games and Art in a New Language

Here the question on the artistic value of the application comes into play with two starting perspectives: Would I like to use it as an artist? What is artistic about the application?

The first question opens another one: which existing **fields of art** could use it or could it even develop one of its own. One proposed idea is of course circling around a most ancient form of art – the **narration**. A dynamic network of interdependent events, emotional strings, consequential interactions, climaxes and denouements are just some of the characteristic features that could be taken into account – one feature that should be **circumcised** is the one of **closure**. The important question is how is the narrative informed.

Since we are interested in the capabilities of the digital global **data-streams** such as weather change or stock exchange figures influence our lives subliminal and could be amplified ("What's happening in the world right now?"). If data is a suitable nutrient and we come back to the user of the possible application (the soil). We can assume our **avatars** by Google or/and Facebook as already quite elaborate, yet we don't know what they really look like. We are traced and have limited control – the plan could be to make it the other way around.

If the user is invited to give the data s/he decides to give just like in a conversation and gets a **feedback** through a relative, triggered act, scenery, behaviour relationship to other users a **timebased** and **datadriven** version of the Surrealists *Cadavre Exquis* could be the result.

Concerning the feedback it could also be useful to offer continuity via accounts – a dairy effect could emerge. This should not be mandatory as the threshold should be set very low.

The second question about the **artistic quality of the application in itself** could be addressed in concepts around the way in which data is being gathered (questionnaire – yes/no, percentage answers), how they are transformed and how they interact on the **graphical user interface**. It could also be made possible for the user to act directly within the image/icon scenery. Another focus could lie on the relationship to the users geography.