Conference report — SwissGradNet Discovery Conference No. 2

Dissemination as Knowledge Production in Use inspired Research.

11th of October 2019, Lucerne School of Art and Design
by Wiktoria Furrer

The second SwissGradNet Discovery Conference took place on October 11th 2019 at the Lucerne School of Art and Design in Emmenbrücke. The conference follows the last years kick off of the international network of design, film and art universities – the Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences, namely the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland (SUPSI), the Bern University of the Arts (HKB) and the Valais School of Art, édhéa as well as their international partners, Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad (NID) and the HafenCity University Hamburg. After the first Conference in 2018, which was focused on institutional requirements and practices of use-inspired research, this year's event was devoted to different forms, modes and audiences of dissemination. The importance of the topic arises from the specific practices of art, film and design itself, where dissemination is not only the final stage of a PhD project, but is inherently a part of research: iterating, communicating, negotiating as well as creating audiences constitutes the creative process.

The introductions by Martin Wiedmer, Vice Dean Head of Research, Gabriela Christen, Dean of the Lucerne School of Art and Design, HSLU and – via live circuit – Praveen Nahar, new appointed Director of the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad made clear, that SwissGradNet aims at enabling and supporting PhD candidates including the entire creative spectrum in design, film and art as well as promoting the relevance of artistic research for other sciences and society. Federica Martini, Head of the Visual Arts Department and newly appointed SwissGradNet board member representing the Valais School of Art, édhéa. Her panorama of past and current research projects showed how the art and design school deals with multilingualism in the region by opening up the conjunction between language and dissemination in post-migrant societies. Paula Hildebrandt, artist and researcher from Berlin delivered insight on her artistic research project «Welcome City», that deals with unspoken rules for living in a new city and investigates contemporary practices of hospitality. Her film «The guest», that documents the arrival and conviviality with an enourmous inflatable elephant was an «enacted allegory and created an emblematic situation», as Hildebrandt said. The performative act had epistemic value in so far, as the literal «elephant in the room» intervened in habits that constitute neighbourhood and forced reflections on the arrival of a stranger in general.

The first section of the conference was focused on social and aesthetic knowledge, where the research ethics were emphasized by accentuating the responsibility of the researcher towards the community they are working with, what is crucial in filmic representation. Astra Zoldnere seeks to deconstruct the representation of elderly people, Alisi Telengut pursues an artistic investigation of the shamanic and animistic wisdom of nomads in Mongolia. Both filmmakers and PhD candidates from the Filmuniversität Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF want to establish honest communication, that includes foremost people, who are subject of their research. Furthermore, they aim to disseminate through professional formats in research (conferences), the arts (galleries) and the film scene (festivals).

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In her keynote, Barbara Bolt, Professor in Contemporary Arts and Culture, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne took up the cudgels for artistic research. Artistic research should be disseminated as a substantive methodic enlargement across Humanities, social and others sciences and contribute to knowing (that she opposes to the notion of knowledge). Bolt argues for the performative paradigm in artistic research as being an own epistemological approach, that offers a «nonreducible eloquence, an intrinsic interdisciplinarity and inherent interdependency with social relations». Luzia Hürzeler's presentation about her research on the construction of the untouched, wild nature based on the case study of wolves in the zoo con-firmed this thesis. Hürzeler indicated similarities of her artistic and scientifically rigorous approach with methods of social anthropology, the discipline in which the PhD was awarded to her. Following Bolt's vote for the potential of artistic research, Gesa Ziemer, Vice President Research HafenCity Universität Hamburg, invoked in her summary to finally transcend interdis-ciplinary co-operations within the arts and all the more seek dialogue with NGOs, politicians and engineers.

Dissemination is also an institutional practice, that generates knowledge by establishing platforms of exchange between peers, teachers and experts from research and practice with pedagogical benefits for the PhD candidates. Brad Haylock, Associate Professor, School of Design, College of Design and Social Context at RMIT University presented the «Practice Research Symposia», that were conducted for 30 years at the RMIT University and internationally. He describes the format as a «community of critical friends» and James Langdon, PhD Candidate as well underlines it's both permissive and critical environment.

As the conference asked about modes and methods of dissemination «Open Research» was the key topic of the last session. Massimo Menichinelli, Research Fellow at RMIT Europe and Giovanni Profeta, PhD Candidate at Polytechnic of Milan / Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana (SUPSI) showed how necessary cooperation with users is for open research. In the first case in exchange with open design communities, in the second with cultural content aggregators, as for instance the ETH library. In terms of dissemination in reference to big data and open access one conclusion reads: «The more you share, the more you get.»

Dissemination from a practical angle, was presented by Evert Ypma and colleagues, who talked about visual storytelling for science and showed video portraits of scientists and awardees of the Nomis Foundation produced by – amongst others – students of the Bachelor in Camera Arts at the HSLU.

The presented projects, most of them on PhD level, were diverse in topic, methods as well as their understanding of dissemination. They reflected the variety of disciplines involved in the forum of SwissGradNet, ranging from art, film and design and their intersections.

Finally, music was also included as a discipline in the conference, where two performances of the Improvisation Ensemble of the Lucerne School of Music were hosted: Urban Mäder, composer and improvisor, lecturer at the Institute of Music Pedagogy, HSLU and Jan Schlegel, composer and lecturer at the Institute of Jazz and Folk Music, HSLU, in collaboration with ten students, translated the conference theme into a sound, tonal language.