



Open Call

Neuwerk – Zeitschrift für Designwissenschaften
Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 17.4.2023

Publication: Spring 2024

Written and visual contributions are welcome.

Neuwerk #10: Blackout

Blackouts are temporary interruptions of functional supply systems, and refer both to uncontrolled, unexpected and sudden events (in relation to power shortages or memory losses) but also to consciously induced changes, highlighted through established gestures (in space technology and theatre). As moments of disruptions, blackouts challenge existing structures and hold transformative potential.

With this year's edition of Neuwerk we propose a thematic focus on blackouts in order to examine economic, political, social, psychological and narrative processes of late capitalist and postcolonial societies. As events that unsettle established routines, blackouts make conditions of the everyday visible in a specific way and allow a deeper look at those structures. Through this point of view, we want to pay attention to spaces of imagination and action that point beyond euro- and anthropocentric traditions of design and thought, as well as to seek out desirable futures. Three interconnected perspectives on blackouts will form the basis of the publication: the blackout as an actual event, as a mediated symbol, and as a moment of possible social change.

Due to the Russian war against Ukraine and the associated energy crisis, blackouts have become increasingly discussed in media outlets, and have once more entered everyday language. If we take the example of Germany, this coverage accompanies actions that have effects on the material constitution of our surroundings and our relationship to it, speaking among other things of local self-interests. Hygiene classes in schools, prepping activities in households, heightened demands for generators, the opening of an LNG terminal in Wilhelmshaven, protests by Senegalese fishermen against European gas extraction in Saint Louis are just a few of many examples.

In its linguistic composition, the word blackout activates established narratives that spark emotional responses, such as the uncanny, the unknown, the crisis, death, or the "other". In this field of associations, and as it is being taken up by the media, Eurocentric positions and perspectives resonate with fears of changing living conditions. It seems as if the use of the term blackout promotes a one-sided geographical and historical contextualisation and prevents a multi-perspective, planetary analysis, despite the fact that blackouts are neither temporally nor geographically bound. Actual blackouts, as they are a daily reality in many spaces, or historical ones, as for instance the New Yorker blackout of 1977 (notorious for having assisted the rise of Hip-Hop), are hardly considered in current narratives.

In the concreteness of the blackout, the fragility of social fabrics and their interconnectedness with infrastructures, becomes visible – social cohesion and infrastructure are almost equated with one another in contemporary debates. Nevertheless, as one of its negatives, blackouts are inscribed in capitalist societies as an inherent part of their structure. By threat-

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ening the functionality of an entangled system, they initiate corrective and regulatory actions that aim to preserve the given order. At the same time, blackouts can also create a liminal space, in which divergent practices can break through. In this polyvalence, they engender a multitude of questions about power, the nature of modernity and the design of worlds.

The aim of this Neuwerk issue is to take a closer look at these questions, to address them analytically as well as through artistic and creative approaches. Thus, we aim to weave a net of contributions from various disciplines and perspectives.

Formats

- Text formats should keep to a maximum length of 9000 characters. They can take the form of academic articles, interviews, conversations, essays, poetry, short stories, commentaries, testimonials, (post)dramatic texts, script extracts, jokes, sketches, etc.
- Creative contributions can be submitted in the form of photographic series, illustrations, graphics, infographics, generative design, documentation of three-dimensional works or installations in (public) space, documentation of experiments, sketches, storyboards, comics, scores, film stills, choreographies, computer-generated images, etc.

Neuwerk

The Neuwerk – Magazine for Design Studies, is published by the students of Design Studies (MA) and is produced in cooperation with the Department of Communication Design at Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design Halle. The focus is on a critical approach to design with a focus on methods, design history and reflection on material culture. Expanded by contributions from various academic disciplines and the arts, the magazine opens up a broad spectrum of transdisciplinary perspectives on design, against the background of changing social processes and challenges.

Submissions

- Short abstract (max. 2000 characters, without spaces): short description of the topic and format.
- For visual contributions we ask for a few work samples or links.
- Short biography of the author(s) (max. 1000 characters, without spaces).
- Languages: Contributions are accepted in any language. However, abstracts should be submitted with a translation in English, French or German and clearly indicate in which language the final paper will be written.

Deadline: 17.4.2023

Contact: julia.wassner@burg-halle.de; elsa.westreicher@burg-halle.de

Subject: Einreichung Neuwerk #10

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