

posted by Paolo Ciuccarelli
Monday, May 26th, 2008

Macroscopes

Reviewing the book “*Shaping Things*“, written by Bruce Sterling, John Thackara states: “Our dilemma is not that we receive too much information. We don’t receive anywhere near the quantity of data it takes to overload our neurons; our minds are capable of processing and analyzing many gigabits of data per second—a lot more data than any of today’s supercomputers can process and act on in real time. We feel flooded because we’re getting information unfiltered, unsorted, and unframed. We lack ways to select what’s important. The design task is to make information digestible, not to keep it out. I call them **macroscopes**. *Tools, and aesthetic notions, that help us understand – and act mindfully in – the big picture.*”

We can easily associate the definition of Macroscopes to the Diagrams we design in our Density Lab: the general purpose is exactly the same. It has to be said that it’s such a wide and general concept that it can fit a lot of different tools and activities.

Better, we recognize ourself in the description of the **Places & Spaces: Mapping Science** exhibition found in a [blog](#) of a user-experience designer, that recalls Thackara: “It’s a concise, enjoyable and clear exhibit showing concrete examples of what John Thackara might call ‘macroscopes’: *artworks, mappings and visualisations of complex interconnected systems (in this case science and intellectual property) that help ‘ordinary folk’ examine the choices they make and those being made for them.*”

Looking forward to the next edition!

Tags: Complexity, macroscopes, maps

Comments

1. Density Design | Macroscopes and Visualization (again): a circular path Says:

[...] Three years ago (almost), I discovered an interesting comment about the Places and Spaces: Mapping Science exhibition (2006 edition), curated by Katy Börner (Indiana University, Director of the InfoVis Lab), and I found particularly interesting the quotation of John Thackara (author of *In the Bubble: Designing for a complex world*. 2005. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press), talking about Macroscopes. In fact that metaphor is, in my opinion quite compelling if you want to talk about the quest for the ‘big picture’ (that actually is often our aim at DensityDesign). [...]

April 14th, 2011 at 3:00 pm

2. francesca Says:

unfortunately links are broken 😞

i found this video of that year

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXABcOABG4E>

and the other collections

http://scimaps.org/exhibit_info

October 19th, 2015 at 7:42 pm

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