

Lisa Charlotte Rost

THREE  
The Magazine Design Project

Lisa Charlotte Rost:  
»The Magazine Design Project«  
Master's Thesis  
MFA Visual Communication /Visual Culture  
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## Content

|   |     |   |                   |
|---|-----|---|-------------------|
| 1 The Why                                   | 8   | Introduction                                | Front of the book |
| 2 What's out there                          | 28  | 2.1 What is a Magazine?                     |                   |
|   | 30  | 2.2 A short view back: Historical Magazines |                   |
|   | 38  | 2.3 Contemporary Magazines                  |                   |
|   | 64  | 2.4 The current Magazine Design Scene       |                   |
|   | 68  | 2.5 Categorisation of Magazines             |                   |
|   | 80  | 2.6 Narratives of a Magazine                |                   |
| 3 Thinking about the What (Aesthetics)      | 92  | 3.1 Minimalism                              | Feature well      |
|   | 98  | 3.2 Tension and Balance                     |                   |
| 4 Thinking about the How (Creative Process) | 106 | 4.1 Get better, faster                      |                   |
|   | 118 | 4.2 Copy and Paste                          |                   |
|   | 124 | 4.3 Bringing my Work out there              |                   |
| 5 What and How I designed                   | 138 | 5.1 dotview #3a                             |                   |
|   | 158 | 1. The Process                              |                   |
|   | 168 | 2. The Feedback                             |                   |
|   | 194 | 5.2 dotview #3b                             |                   |
|   | 202 | 1. The Process                              |                   |
|   | 222 | 2. The Feedback                             |                   |
| 6 What and How I designed – The Analysis    | 230 | 5.3 dotview #3c                             |                   |
|   | 242 | 1. The Process                              |                   |
|   | 260 | 2. The Feedback                             |                   |
| 7 If the Why worked                         | 230 | 6.1 Comparison of the three Magazines       | Back of the book  |
|   | 242 | 6.2 Analyzing the Feedback                  |                   |
|   | 260 | Conclusion                                  |                   |

## 1 The Why

Introduction

Question

Answer

Why?

Who \_\_\_\_\_

I, Lisa Charlotte Rost because  
that's me.

How \_\_\_\_\_

am designing because that's what I can do  
the best and like the most.

What \_\_\_\_\_

three magazines to compare them and to  
get better with each issue.

When \_\_\_\_\_

in 18 weeks because that's the official time  
I have for my Master's thesis.

Where \_\_\_\_\_

at the Bauhaus University Weimar, because that's  
my university

Why \_\_\_\_\_

to learn more about magazine design because I just  
like magazines.

and to see what impact feedback can have on design. because I made the experi-  
ence that feedback is value-  
able and want to know how  
much it can actually help.

Before this Thesis

Fig.2  
First dotview issue

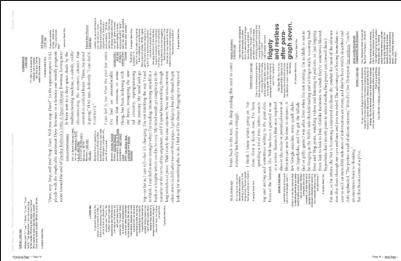


Fig.1  
Second dotview issue

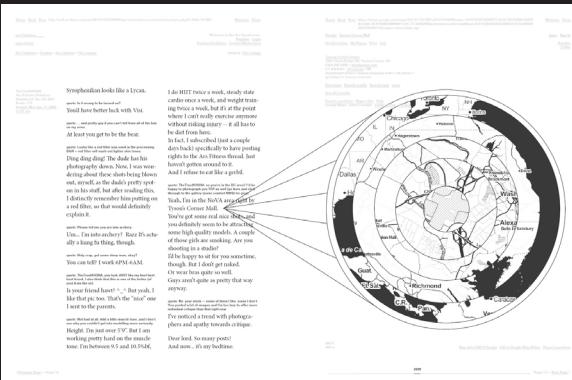


Fig.3  
Magazine about Literature, 3rd Semester



Fig.4  
Internship documentation  
of my time at Bloomberg  
Businessweek

## 1 The Why Introduction

What is this?

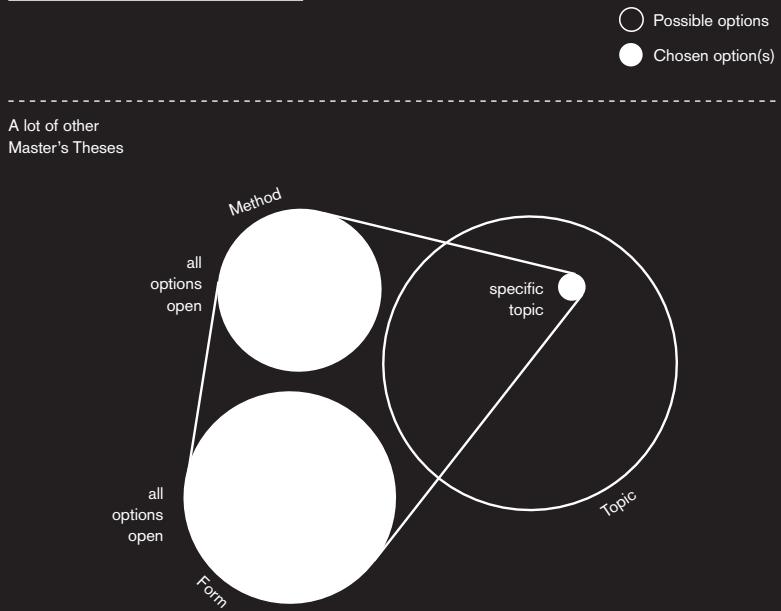
Who am I and  
what is my  
background?

In front of you lies the highly subjective and on models based theoretical part and the even more subjective documentation of my Master's Thesis about magazine design and feedback at the Bauhaus University in Weimar, Germany.

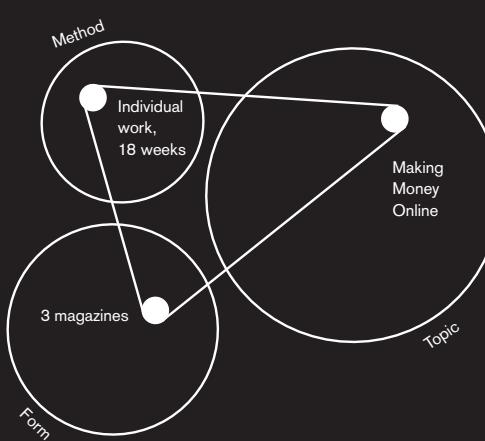
My name is Lisa and I like magazines. My first encounter with actually designing magazines took place during my studies at the Bauhaus University. I had three magazine design courses in the last eleven semesters: One with Mario Lombardo, in which we had to redesign a magazine [→p10, Fig.3](#) and who took us to Berlin to visit the makers of DUMMY, Sarah Illenberger, onlab etc. Another course was with onlab, in which we designed three magazines in three weeks. And the third course was taught by Paul Sych at the York University in Toronto, where I designed the first dotview magazine [→p10, Fig.2](#). In the first course I got to know the old masters of magazine design; Mario Lombardo let us present about people like Willy Fleckhaus [→p34](#) and Alexei Brodowitsch. In the second course, taught by onlab, I learned that generating the content of a magazine is hard work, too. And that deadlines are good. And Paul Sych's course made me aware of the technical basics of magazine design and some of the important terms.

I designed another magazine, the second dotview issue [→p10, Fig.2](#), in another university course during an exchange semester in Oxford – but this was a very independent course without any professors around knowing anything about magazine design. Fortunate enough, I had the chance to bring these learned skills into the professional world with internships at four different publishers: At the book publisher dtv in Munich I designed covers; at the newspaper publisher FAZ I designed a magazine; at the magazine publisher Bloomberg Businessweek I designed a book [→p10, Fig.4](#) and at the Gestalten publisher in Berlin I designed a brochure.

## Method–Topic–Form Possibilities



## My Master's Thesis



## Why this Master's Thesis?

Since the end of my Bachelor's Thesis I've thought about my Master's Thesis. I had high expectations for my last work as a student: I wanted to design a lot and having relatively little research while still finding out something new and crucial for me. The aim was to learn and improve while and through designing. Improving myself steadily is one of the most important aims in my life →[p107: »Get better, faster«](#). I've experienced how much better internships, in which I learned a lot, were in comparison to the ones with maybe nicer colleagues, but less personal signs of improvement. Especially during my internship at Bloomberg Businessweek I noticed how asking people for feedback (five times a day ideally) who can design better than I, was making a more skilled designer out of me.

And so I started thinking about feedback. How helpful is it? How much can it improve what I'm doing? I continued thinking and came to questions like: How different can feedback by great designers be? Is there something like »good« design regarding magazine design, or is the taste of different people really that different?

I also wanted to have the most possible structure while still designing as diverse as possible. During the search for the perfect Master's Thesis I came up with the concept of Method–Topic–Form Possibilites →[p12](#): The size of the black circles stand for the number of possibilites that you can choose from; the white circles refer to the amount of options you then select.

Most graphic design students want to design about a specific topic like light, existentialism or sustainability, and try to find a method and form for this during the process. But since I like my options as limited as possible (I have a similar opinion about borders in creative projects like Thomas and Martin Poschauko in their book »Nea Machina«: You should set borders in the beginning to work better, but you can also be open to »back doors«), I wanted to minimize the white color in this graphic before actually starting my thesis.

However, I still wanted to use the maybe last chance in the next few years to design experimentally and diverse. My goal was not to design three perfect publications, but to try and exaggerate different styles. I truly wanted to enjoy the last semester of my student life and the possibility of experimentation and freedom that comes with it.

I combined all these expectations and questions and came up with the topic for my Master's Thesis:

## What is this Master's Thesis about?

In my Master's Thesis, I designed three third issues of the magazine dotview. The articles in these three magazines are always the same (and about »Making Money Online«), only the magazine style including photos, information graphics, illustrations and the order of articles differs.

The first issue is designed in a very complex style – far more complex and packed as I'm used to design. The second magazine is quite the opposite and very minimalist. The third issue tries to combine the best out of the two worlds. Because the articles are always the same, the length of each magazines ranges between 64 pages (1st version) and 180 pages (2nd version). I designed one magazine in four weeks. After these four weeks, I showed people the digital or printed magazine and asked for feedback [→p16: Schedule](#). I asked for the best aspects, the worst aspects, ideas for improvement and a general rating between 1 and 10. The feedback then influenced me in designing the next versions.

## Why magazines?

To be honest: I like books more than magazines – at least as a tool to gain more knowledge. However, I definitely prefer magazines from an aesthetically point of view – there are more diverse and therefore more exiting.

The reasons why I chose magazines as topic for my Master's Thesis are the following:

- The current magazine scene [→p64](#) is more vivid than ever before. While the mainstream magazines are losing subscribers and buyers, the rise of independent magazine makers is astonishing. Thanks to the actual reason for the big publishers to die – advanced technology and the internet – everybody can edit, design and distribute a magazine nowadays. And that's what surprisingly many people do. The magazine design scene is for sure a scene that's worth being in.
- A similar rising industry is data visualization and information design – and as one will see, I'm highly interested in this topic as well [→p112](#). Magazines allow me to get to know more about publishing design while I can still design data graphics for their pages.
- Magazines are periodicals, so they are not »done« like a book, but can be improved and thought further with every issue – and as already mentioned, improving is a huge part of what I'm eager to do.

## What is dotview?

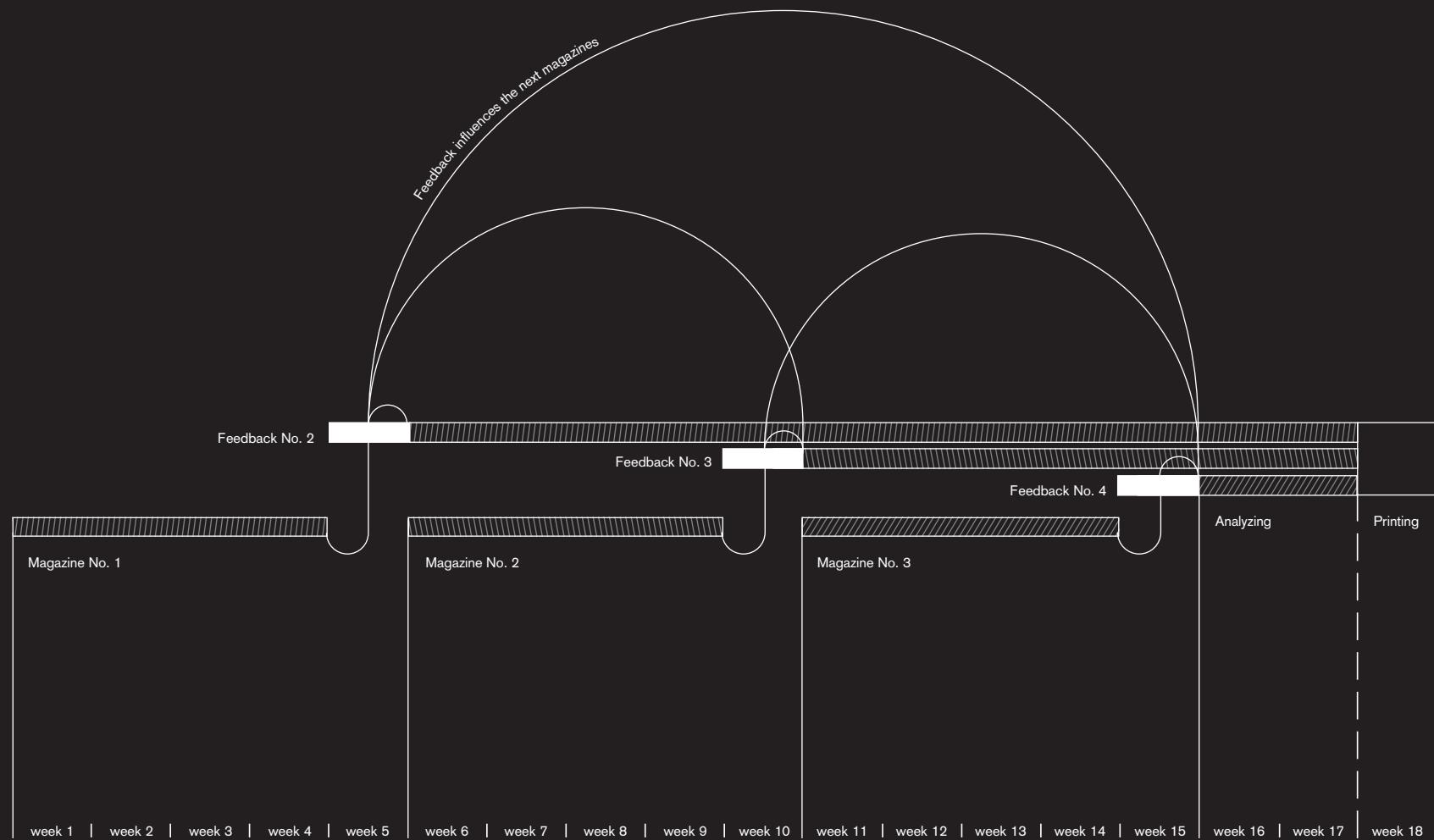
- With a magazine, you build a story: With every new page, you can surprise your reader and motivate him to continue reading. That's not possible with something like a poster, where you only have once chance to convince the viewer from your design work.
- The working mode of designing magazines fits me very well. I like having close deadlines and only short times to produce design work – and with (especially weekly) magazine, it's not possible to work differently from that.

Dotview is a monothematic magazine that brings the web into print. It is my personal input to discussions about the current publishing shift from printed media to online articles. All the content for dotview comes from the web: It features articles from big publishing websites like Guardian, Time, The New York Times etc., but also opinions from Online Communities like Reddit, Tumblr, Twitter or small forums. The name »dotview« refers to the abbreviation »dotcom« at the end of an URL, but also to the different views that my chosen sources (the »dots«) have.

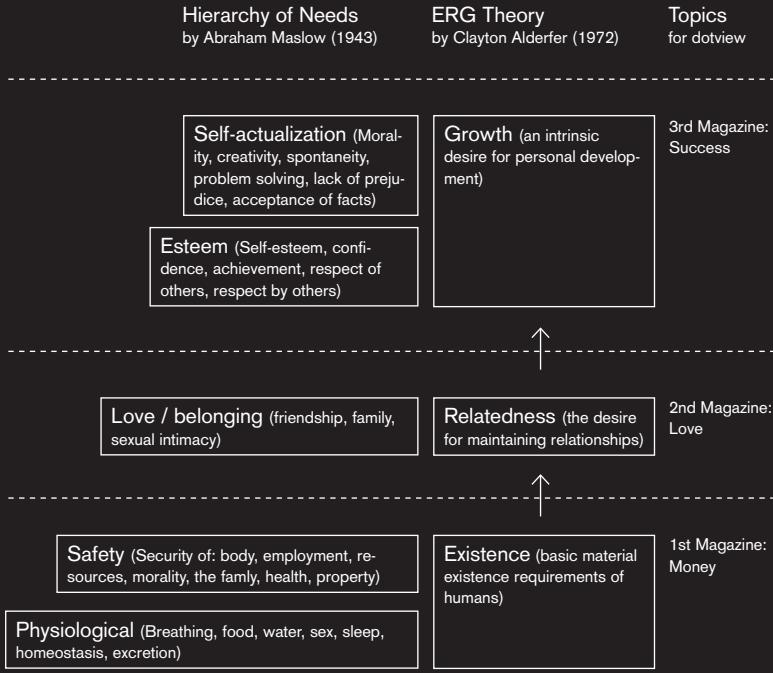
All issues feature a widely discussed topic on the world wide web. The first issue was designed 2011 in Toronto and features Nicholas Carr's article »Is Google Making Us Stupid?«, accompanied by articles and illustrations that enriches this question and explains Carr as a person. After the NSA revelations I designed the second issue about Edward Snowden in autumn 2013 in Oxford. Divided into three parts, it explores Snowden's youth, the leak and the reactions to the leak. The third issue(s), designed in my Master's Thesis, show possibilities to make money online.

The design of the first issue is highly conceptual. The size of the magazine is the same as an iPad; the layout for the »old media« – the online articles from big publishers – is based on Tschicholds maths for the type area. The comments, however, have no grid at all; they are disrupting (and extending) the articles. For the second issue, the grid from the first issue is used more freely – and for the third issue, I developed a new size and grid. It only remains the contrast between sans-serif and serif typeface, which exists since the first issue to show the difference between »old media« and comments.

## The Idea (visualized) with Schedule



## Maslow vs. Alderfer



## Why Making Money Online?

The third issue – designed in my Master's Thesis in three different versions – is about Making Money Online. It's not the most obvious topic, so I want to explain how I came up with the idea for it.

In the beginning there was a mind map →[p20](#). What are possible topics for a magazine about the Internet? What IS the Internet, really? Back then I still had the plan to not only produce issue number 3, but also issue number 4 and 5. To have three issues and the assumption that there won't be another issue afterwards let me think of a »series« of three topics; topics that can be treated differently but belong to each other. For that I went back to the mind map and found ideas like »money«, »war«, »religion« or »love« there: Very profound human ideas. And because I've always been a huge fan of the questions concerning the meaning of life, I did some research in this direction. From there Wikipedia brought me straight to motivation models. First I thought of taking the needs pyramid of Maslow as different topics for my magazines – but there are five steps, and I had three magazines planned. So I went on and found the ERG Theory of a guy named Alderfer →[p18](#).

Alderfer actually thought of the same pyramid Maslow created, but with only three steps. His idea: First humans have to cover existential needs, then social ones, and finally they can take care about their growth. I thought about using one specific aspect of these three needs and making a magazine about it (and the Web): First about »Money and the Web«, then »Love and the Web« and finally »Success and the Web«. But in the end, I had to decide: Is it more important for me to try the same style in different issues (to create something truly magazine-like, so to say); or to try different styles with the same content (so that the styles are better comparable)? I choose the latter option – and I choose »Making Money on the Web«, because Money plays such an important part in satisfying our most instinctive existential desire. But as noticeable on the Mind-Map, I actually brought quite a lot of initial ideas into the final magazine.

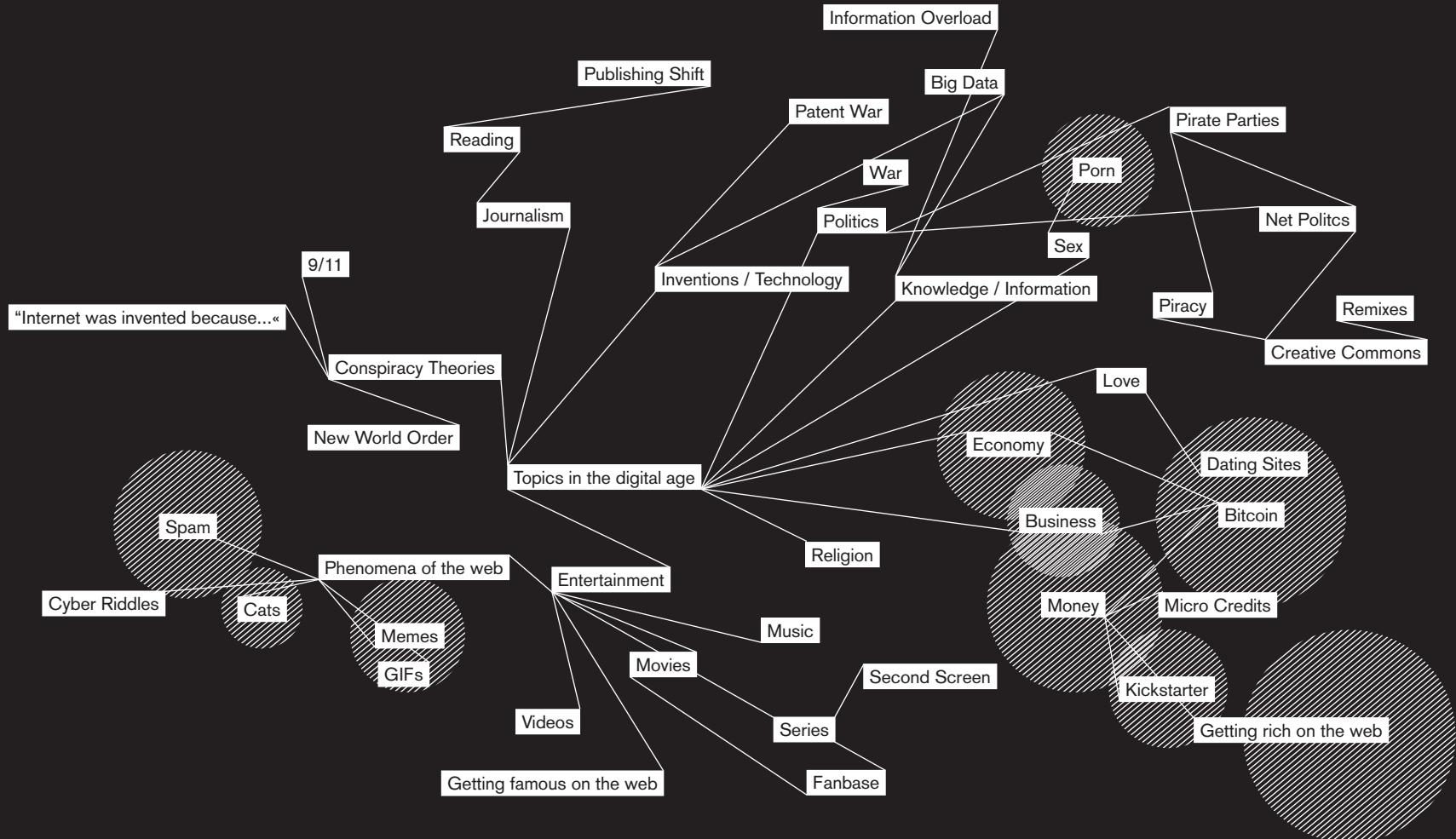
## What different styles?

My internship at Bloomberg Businessweek really changed the way I designed. Before, I designed pretty much in the middle of an axis between minimalism and complexity – afterwards, I widened up my spectrum, but also moved it more

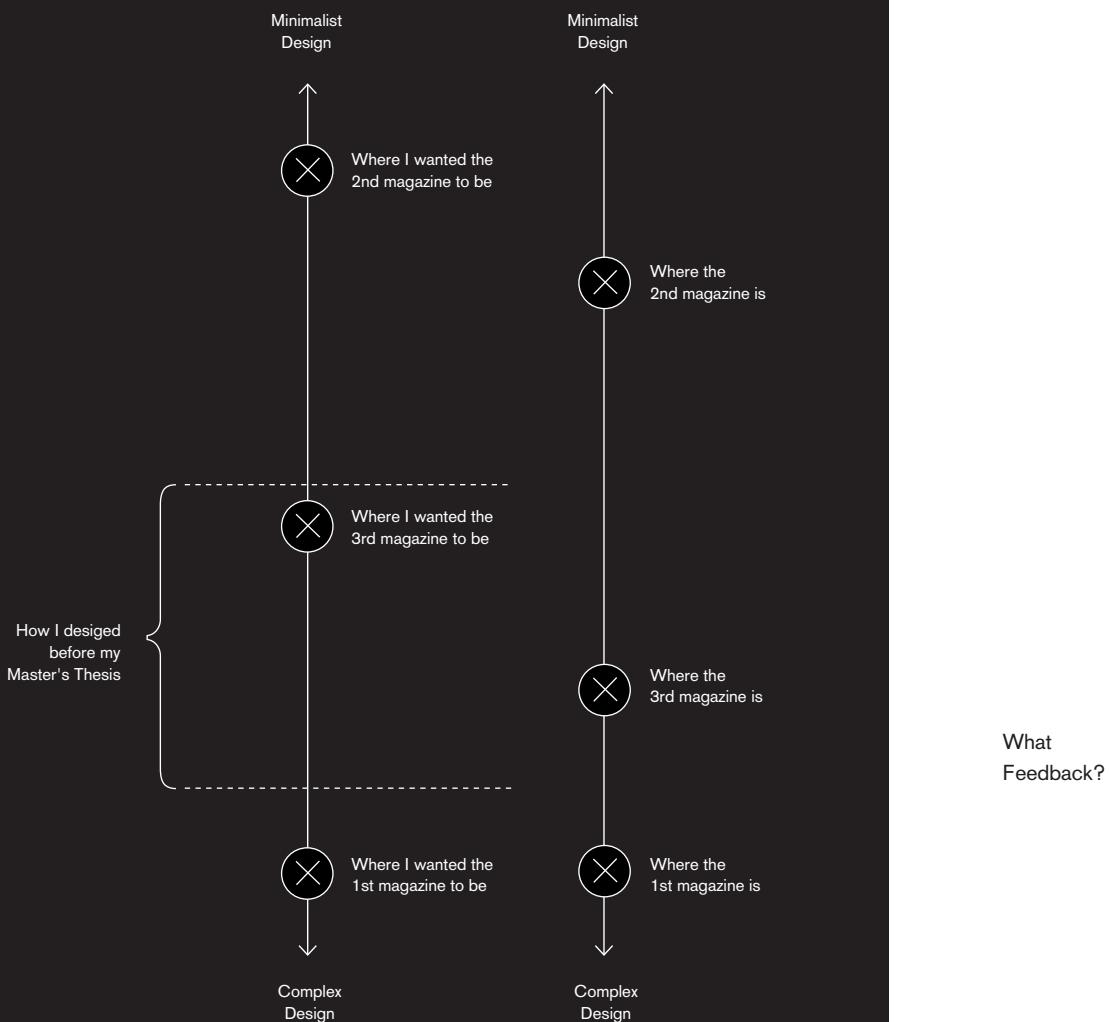
Sources:  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s\\_Hierarchy\\_of\\_Needs.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maslow%27s_Hierarchy_of_Needs.svg)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ERG\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ERG_theory)

## Thinking about possible Topics for the Master's Thesis

 Topics that made it  
into the final magazine



## Plan vs. Reality



to the pole of complex design. And I thought that this rises interesting questions: Can I change my taste? And can this change in taste changes my design (because, for example, I don't think »Well, that's too much, I should remove some elements again«, but I think »Yeah, I need MORE!«)? Why DO I even design like I do and not more complex or minimalist? And maybe the most important question: Which style works best for magazine design? To find the answers to these questions I set the goal of widen my taste-and-design horizon even more. As a consequence I wanted to design the first issue more complex than I'm used to (or like to); the second is far more minimalist than I'm used to and the third issue right in the middle of both; combining the best of both worlds. This didn't work quite as I wanted it to be, because of my drive for different layout compositions. This idea that I wasn't willing to lose made my first magazine a center of gravity, which brought the 2nd and 3rd magazine closer to it [→ p22](#). Very important for the feedback analysis, too: The difference between the 1st and 3rd magazine is far smaller than the difference between the 2nd and 3rd magazine.

It is very important for me to notice that my main intention was not to produce something that I find most aesthetically. Often I chose options that I would consider less beautiful – because »considering something as beautiful« is how you could define taste, and that's what I wanted to broaden. So in the end, I don't see these three magazines as MY designs – but as design objects that happened to be designed by me and are actually lab products that want to be judged.

Later in this thesis, the feedback I got on the magazines will play an huge part. Here I want to explain how, where and when I got it.

Of course I asked my friends and supervisors for feedback even during the process, but I came to them and to a lot more people with standardized questions at the end of designing each magazine: in week five of each cycle.

Where did I find the people? Of course I used my blog, but also social networks like Twitter and Facebook to motivate potential questionees; especially in the non-design area. In addition, I asked designers I know. But the most people I found while looking through design portfolios, liking work and writing them emails. In the end I got 106 different opinions; 35%

## The Magazine Design Project Surveys

Thank you for coming by! Your feedback will help me to design better magazines; a goal in my Master's Thesis at the Bauhaus University Weimar, Germany. This survey should only take about 5 minutes of your time. Your answers will be completely anonymous. There are no wrong answers. Your opinion is very helpful for me, even if you think you have no clue about design.

### 1. What are the three best aspects of this magazine?

Think for example of typeface, cover, readability, information graphics, images, structure or specific pages.

### 2. What are the three worst aspects of this magazine?

Think for example of typeface, cover, readability, information graphics, images, structure or specific pages.

### 3. Do you have other comments? How would you improve this magazine?

### 4. How much would you want to read this magazine?

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10  
Not at all                                        It's A-W-E-S-O-M-E!!!

### 5. What magazine does my magazine remind you of?

### 6. What describes your profession / interest best?

Magazine Design    Book Design    Information Design    Graphic Design  
Product Design    Other Design Discipline    Communication/Media/Social  
Natural Sciences    Law/Economics/Business    IT/Logic

of them from non-design fields – which I guess is a good ratio. While thinking of the questions <sup>→ p24</sup>, my highest priority was that the survey is so short that people want to answer it – especially because I had a lot of questions with free text fields, which are usually annoying for the questionees. Also, they had to flick through the magazine that I uploaded to issuu.com, which usually opened in a new browser tab.

After designing all three issues, I asked people for even shorter feedback: I just wanted three numbers from them; one rating for each magazine. Meaning, my questionees had to give me only the answer to the fourth question and the sixth question – although I gave them the possibility to write down adjectives they thought of when seeing the issues of my magazine. To give them a monetary incentive, I promised them a chance to win a 50 Euro Amazon gift card – which was surprisingly uninteresting for my questionees; a lot of them gave me anonymous answers.

As one will see, the first magazine was best for analysing because of its poster-like structure. My questionees could tell me exactly what pages they liked and disliked – because they were so few and they all looked differently. This kind of question wasn't possible in the later issues.

In general, I made very good experiences with asking people on the web instead of showing them the magazine in person. On the web, my questionees could think about their answers quietly; in personal talks I felt like I've always generated a kind of pressure just with me being there. Also, asking people I don't know has the huge advantage that they don't have to feel bad when they're honest. I tried to downplay my work in personal talks so that people felt like they're not »hurting« me.

## 2 What's out there

- 2.1 What is a Magazine?
- 2.2 A short view back:
  - Historical Magazines
- 2.2 Contemporary Magazines
- 2.4 The current Magazine Design Scene
- 2.3 Categorisation of Magazines
- 2.5 Narratives of a Magazine

»A periodical publication containing articles and illustrations, often on a particular subject or aimed at a particular readership.«

A periodical publication...

...with illustrations

A brand

2 What's out there

## 2.1 What is a Magazine?

First and foremost, a magazine is a publication; meaning: Something is made known. Magazines are often sold to the public (to a »particular readership«), and the incentive to buy it is the new knowledge or new entertainment that comes with this publication.

That it's periodical is the crucial difference to books: There are magazines that are published only once a year (Wikipedia even lists the IKEA catalogue as magazine) – but they are still magazines, as long as there is a second or third issue.

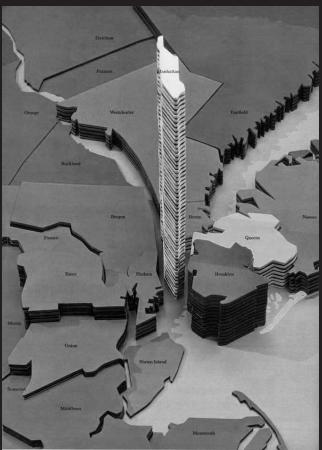
Interesting enough, the Oxford Dictionary sees illustrations equal with articles. There are enough periodical publications without any kind of illustration (e.g. The Idler Magazine), but there are considered as strange. Important as differentiating characteristic between newspapers and magazines especially at the beginning of the 20th century, illustrations are today still the most obvious difference between a »normal« book and a mainstream magazine.

As a result of the publishing shift, newspapers and magazines are looking for new ways to make themselves interesting for people who can have the knowledge and entertainment sold by the magazine for free on the internet. In the last years, magazines became brands who communicate with their target group through different channels. An own website and an active life on social networks are the least they can do, but magazines like Monocle <sup>→ p54</sup> are going as far as having different radio channel, cafés and shops in the metropolises of this world. The goal is the closest and most emotional connection possible with the reader: Like every brand, newspapers and magazines are not necessary (anymore), but try to be important in the lives of their target group nevertheless – just because of their image. Of course, a consistent design language through all channels is important to achieve this goal. »Magazine Design« is becoming »Magazine Identity Design«.

## 2.2 A short view back: Historical Magazines

On the following pages I want to take a very short ride back into the history of magazines to introduce three – in my opinion – great magazines; two of which don't exist anymore. Of course there are more, much more. A lot of U.S.-american magazines like Life, The New Yorker, Playboy, Esquire, National Geographic and the Interview Magazine by Woody Allen created new perspectives of what, why and how a magazine should be.

Presented magazines:      p32 Fortune  
                                  p34 Capital  
                                  p36 Twen

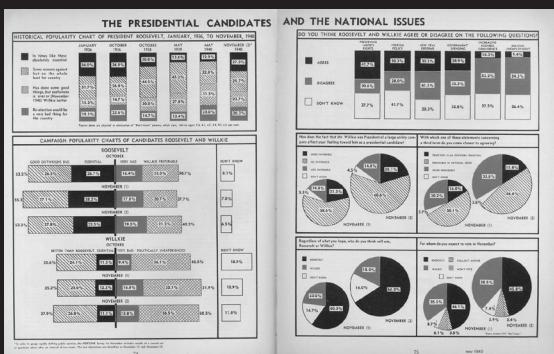


**Fig.1**  
Headquarters Town  
(New York)  
February 1960



**Fig.1**  
Cover February 1930  
(Navigation)  
by Tom Benrimo

**Fig.1**  
Naval Base,  
December  
1940



**Fig.1**  
Presidential Candidates,  
November 1940

## Fortune

|                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Launched                | 1930                     |
| Circulation today       | 830,000                  |
| Issues per Year in 1930 | 24 (now 17)              |
| Country                 | United States of America |

|                         |                |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| Editor-in-Chief in 1930 | Henry Luce     |
| Art Director in 1930    | T. M. Clelland |

Fortune was founded right at the beginning of the Great Depression 1930; four months after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 – but maybe its appearance, that was so different from the other business magazines with their spreadsheets and statistics, let it survive. Its size was huge (28cm × 36cm) – and so was its price. Time magazine costs 5 ct at this time; the Fortune magazine was one of the most expensive magazines at the newsstand with its 1 Dollar price.

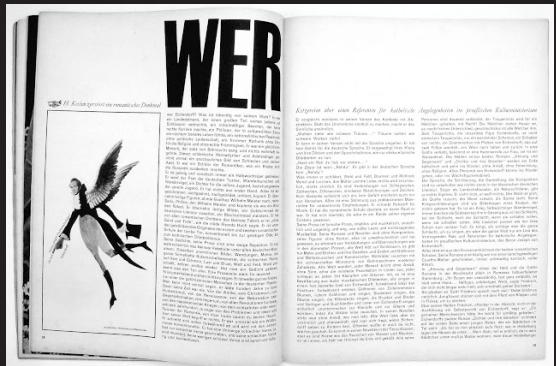
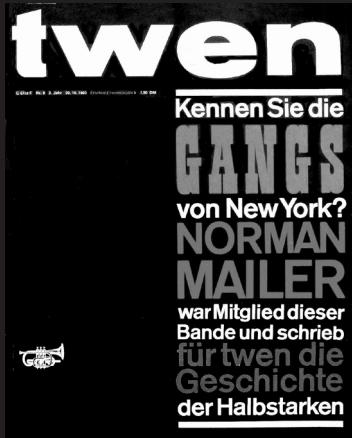
But it delivered. Fortune magazine employed designer like Max Gschwind, Irvig Geis and Rolf Klep, who created impressive information graphics, especially maps. Often they were shown in a threedimensional way, which would be considered even today as »innovative« design. Graphics that are not threedimensional were using strong colors, were bold and easy to read. The staff from Fortune obviously invested a lot in showing the business and economics numbers in a new, much more tangible way.

To do this, they also commissioned famous designer from outside their office in New York: Herbert Bayer designed more than five graphics for Fortune, Buckminster Fuller at least two. Today, Fortune is not known anymore for a great design, but more for concepts like the Fortune 500 list of the richest people in the world. Too bad.



twen

|                         |                  |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Launched                | 1959             |
| Discontinued            | 1971             |
| Circulation in 1959     | 100,000          |
| Issues per Year         | first 6, then 12 |
| Country                 | Germany          |
| Editor-in-Chief in 1959 | Adolf Theobald   |
| Art Director in 1959    | Willy Fleckhaus  |



In the year Fortune was founded, the german journalist Adolf Theobald was born. He wouldn't have been important for this this part of my Master's Thesis if he had not founded first the student magazine »Perspektiven«, then the »Student im Bild« and 1959 the maybe to date best youth magazine Germany ever had: »twen« magazine.

Best to date because of his decision to found this magazine together with advertising genius Stephan Wolf and creative director Willy Fleckhaus. With his 34 years, Fleckhaus created a highly polarizing appearance for a magazine that didn't fit to the other magazines on the newsstand. *Twen* was full of high contrasts, huge headlines, black pages, provoking images and articles: a great example for a minimalist yet bold design.



## Capital

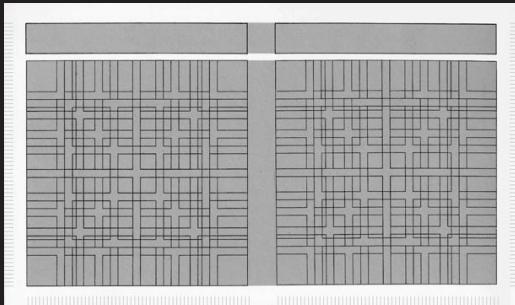
Launched 1962  
Circulation today 137,480  
Issues per Year in 1962 4 (now 12)  
Country Germany

Editor-in-Chief in 1962 Adolf Theobald  
Art Director in 1962 Karl Gerstner

Adolf Theobald's work didn't end at twenty. Three years after the youth magazine was founded, the business magazine Capital followed its way to the newsstand – again with Theobald as Editor-in-Chief and again with a great designer with whom he worked together.

Karl Gerstner studied in Basel as a student of Emil Ruder, and got into the advertising world with this company »GGK«, which was hugely successful in Switzerland. 1962 he switched to publishing. Capital commissioned him to design the back then still quarterly published business magazine. And like Fortune, Capital surprised its potential readership with an business-unlike design: Big size, huge images, simple explanations of coherences in the world of economics – and a distinctive grid.

The »modular grid« Gerstner designed for Capital is maybe the most innovative and thoughtful grid to date. The layers of different grids look complex at first, but it allowed a huge flexibility while still achieving a balanced design for the content. The 58 units of the square grid could be formed to columns with different widths; from having only one or two up to five and six columns on the page.



## 2.3 Contemporary Magazines

On the following pages I will present contemporary magazines. I choose magazines that I like, that are important for me and also try to have a diverse range.

|                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Presented magazines: | p40 NEON                   |
|                      | p42 WIRED                  |
|                      | p44 Fluter                 |
|                      | p46 Brand Eins             |
|                      | p48 Bloomberg Businessweek |
|                      | p50 COLORS                 |
|                      | p52 Apartamento            |
|                      | p54 Monocle                |
|                      | p56 CEREAL                 |
|                      | p58 IDPure                 |
|                      | p60 Offscreen              |
|                      | p62 IL                     |

NEON

Launched  
Circulation  
Issues per Year  
Country

2003  
227,516  
12  
Germany

Editor-in-Chief  
Art Director

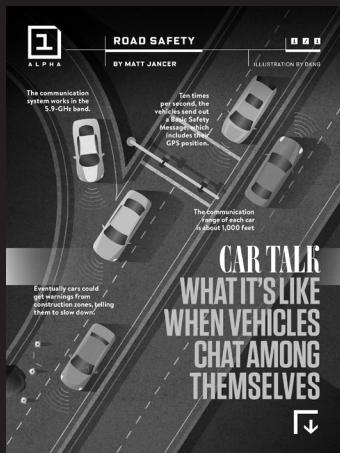
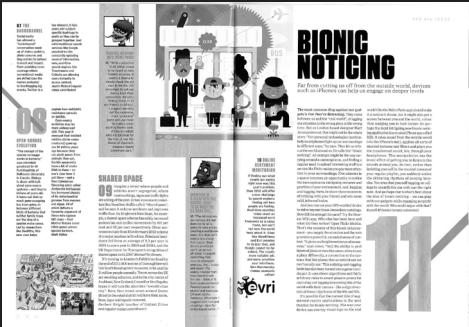
Oliver Stolle  
Oliver Kucharski  
Jonas Natterer



The first magazine I liked the design and content of was NEON magazine. Many cool teens and a lot of my peers were reading it, so I had a subscription, too – although the target group were actually people between the age of 18 to 28, I guess. The pictures in the magazine never showed teens, but more 20-somethings – but maybe that's what a teen wants to see. Also, I felt like I'm too young to have a lot of the problems NEON was talking about (financial problems, for example). I always kept a little bit of distance to the content.

The NEON was different in more than one way: The illustrations of the stories were always superb. They still are, I think. Illustrators like Sarah Illenberger created visual worlds with a simple idea, to the point; often with photography.

Another interesting aspect was the connection to the digital world. The vivid NEON network was one of the first social networks I joined in my young life (2005, I think – I was 15; and nobody in Germany had heard of Facebook yet.) They also let users write articles that I've often read. For me it felt quite normal to have this digital extension; but I guess they were one of the first publishers in Germany that connected print and digital.



## WIRED

Launched 1993  
Circulation 851,823  
Issues per Year 12  
Country United States of America

Editor-in-Chief Scott Dadich  
Art Director Bradley R. Hughes

When I've always held I little bit distance to the content of NEON, then I always had this distance to the design of WIRED. A typical love-hate relationship, I would say. This magazine was way to packed with techy design for my taste, but I loved that somebody was finally treating design elements in a creative and playful way. I saw design solutions I've never seen before. I really liked it.

The content was mind-blowing for me, too. I've been interested in cool technical stuff (on a beginners level, of course) since my father subscribed to the German P.M., a »tabloid«-like magazine for science, filled with stories about elevators to space or eating algae as solution for world hunger. So WIRED was a perfect channel for this site of me.

And it still is. WIRED doesn't disappointed in asking questions first – or, if already asked, finding answers to them. It's also doing a great job online with a lot of interesting articles published every day.



## Fluter

|                 |         |
|-----------------|---------|
| Launched        | 2011    |
| Circulation     | 325,000 |
| Issues per Year | 4       |
| Country         | Germany |

Editor-in-Chief  
Thorsten Schilling  
Art Director  
Jan Spading

I have no idea how the Fluter magazine and I met – was it on a party in a shared flat? Was it during a visit of the Bundestag in Berlin? Fluter is a free magazine for the youth, published by the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung) – but the content is surprisingly critical and the design is surprisingly great. It reminds me of the magazine »Reportagen«: both magazines string together long articles without any sections or shorter stories up front (Front of Book pages).

It's the first magazine that I encountered which haven't had ads at all – and which used the Helvetica. Like the BrandEins it's mono-thematic, but not about business, but politics. I have to admit that I'm more interest in economics and business than in politics – and I've always wondered if that's the reason that I like the BrandEins more than the Fluter (although I've always read almost every article in the Fluter).



Brand Eins

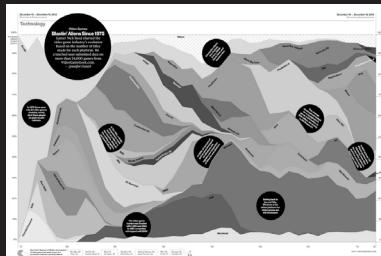
|                 |         |
|-----------------|---------|
| Launched        | 1999    |
| Circulation     | 95,898  |
| Issues per Year | 12      |
| Country         | Germany |

Editor-in-Chief Gabriele Fischer  
Art Director Mike Meiré [→p254:Feedback](#)

Brand Eins is a business and economics magazine from Germany, designed by Mike Meiré (who told me at the qved conference in Munich that the BrandEins is the only magazine for that he still opens InDesign). The reduced design is quite different from »normal« business magazines here in Germany; but it fits perfectly to the also not »normal« stories that you can find in this magazine.

BrandEins is really good in telling stories. They are often talking to a lot of founders, to losers and winners. BrandEins does a great job in structuring their content, too. And they have a philosophical part at the beginning of the middle part in which the magazine focuses on one topic.

I'm interested in business and am interested in good design, so the Brand Eins was love at the first sight shortly after I started studying – I remember going to the library here in Weimar to read all the old issues on a regular basis.



Bloomberg  
Businessweek

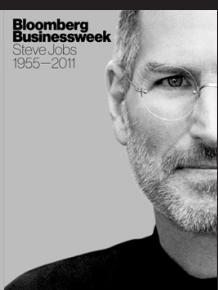
Launched  
Circulation  
Issues per Year  
Country

1929  
(bought by Bloomberg in 2010)  
990,683  
52  
United States of America

Editor-in-Chief  
Art Director  
Josh Tyrangiel  
Richard Turley → p250:Feedback  
(left in April 2014);  
now: Rob Vargas, Tracy Ma

**How To Get Rich With Tattoos**

**Follow Your Instincts**



Toronto, October 2011. Steve Jobs died two days before, and I was strolling through the small shop with the surprisingly broad newspaper and magazine offer, to see how the print media reacted to his death. I remember this moment as it's yesterday: How I saw the silver cover. How I opened the magazine. How I flicked through the pages. How I looked at the cover again, to read the name of the magazine: Bloomberg Businessweek? Strange name – but what they did was genius. I remember standing there, forgetting the world around me and thinking: THAT's the magazine of magazines; that's how a magazine is supposed to be. I bought only two or three magazines during my six months in Toronto, but this special issue of the Bloomberg Businessweek was one of them.

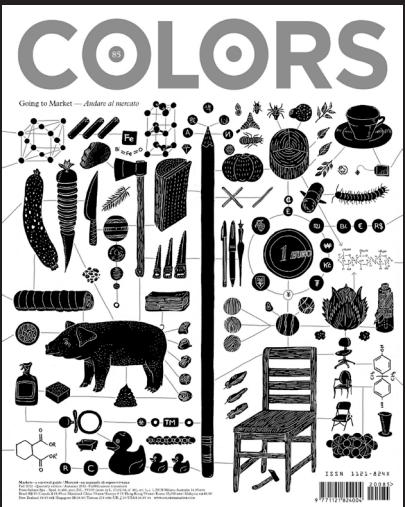
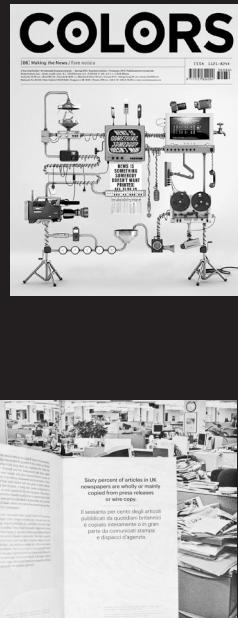
Like Fortune, Capital and Brand Eins before, Bloomberg Businessweek surprises the reader with what a business magazine can look like; but in a more distorted way. Their design department has a very experimental style, that's still in a very strict and well-built grid.



## COLORS

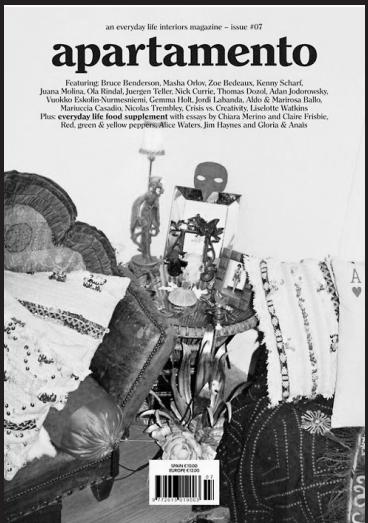
Launched 1991  
Circulation 250,000  
Issues per Year 4  
Country Italy

Editor-in-Chief Patrick Waterhouse  
Art Director Ramon Pez



The COLORS magazine could have been in the »historical« section as well: The work of Tibor Kalman and his team between 1991 and 1995 was hugely provocative in asking questions and showing images (often also manipulated, like the black queen of England with the headline »What if...?«). Back then, COLORS magazine wanted to celebrate a globalised world.

Today, it is more a guide for the complexity that resulted from the globalisation; with comics showing how you report about drones (issue #86, Making the News) or infographics explaining how you can build your own toilet (issue #82, Shit). Patrick Waterhouse [→p251:Feedback](#) wants to let the reader understand this world a little bit better. The design for that is reduced, but the content is so strong that it speaks for itself.



an everyday life interiors magazine - issue #07

# apartamento

Featuring: Bruce Benderson, Masha Orlov, Zoe Redouxe, Kenny Scharf, Juana Molina, Ola Rinald, Jürgen Teller, Nick Currie, Thomas Dzoz, Adam Jodowesky, Vandana Ekdewise, Michael Gudinski, Gert Ledermann, Mariana Ballo, Marcella Casalda, Nicolle Penney, Crisis vs Creativity, Liseboi, Claire Waters, Plus: everyday life food supplement with essays by Clara Merino and Claire Frisbie, Red, green & yellow peperoni Alice Waters, Jon Haines, Gloria & Anatia

## Apartamento

Launched

2008

Circulation

80,000

Issues per Year

2

Country

Spain

Editor-in-Chief

Nacho Alegrel

Art Director

Omar Sosa

I didn't take Apartamento seriously when I first encountered it a few years ago – but this magazine surprised me with its huge success. Still an deeply independent magazine, they sell more than very mainstream-looking magazines like Monocle. Apartamento is a small-size magazine from Barcelona, where Omar Sosa and Nacho Alegrel wanted to move to a new apartment and were looking for interior inspiration. Disappointed by the choice on the newsstand they were spontaneously making an own magazines about apartments and their owners – authentic to the core, with snapshot-like photos and honest interviews.

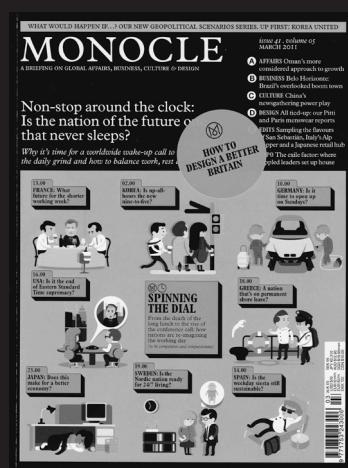
Maybe besides the success, Apartamento surprises with its design: Personally, I've never thought that Futura as a text font could work that well for a magazine.



## Monocle

Launched 2007  
Circulation 75,575  
Issues per Year 10  
Country United Kingdom

Editor-in-Chief Tyler Brûlé  
Art Director Ken Leung



Before bringing Monocle to life, Tyler Brûlé launched Wall-paper, a very successful fashion and style magazine in the 1990s. With Monocle, it seems, Brûlé has even bigger plans: This man wants to build an imperium. With his obviously great skills in marketing, the Editor-in-Chief has great connections into the corporate world (every issue has at least two multi-page »advertisorials«), a radio channel, an own fasion label, shops and café hourses on all over the world.

Like COLORS magazine, Monocle is there for the readership who knows the world – but in a completely other direction. When COLORS is asking serious questions, Moncole is showing smiling owners of small shops, succesful chefs or architects and buildings that look good. This magazine is there for getting design and small-business inspiration from all over the world. It shows you where you should eat when you land at the airport in Singapore and explains why Berlin can't be on the top of their »100 best cities to live« list. It is, so to say, a very well-behaved magazine.

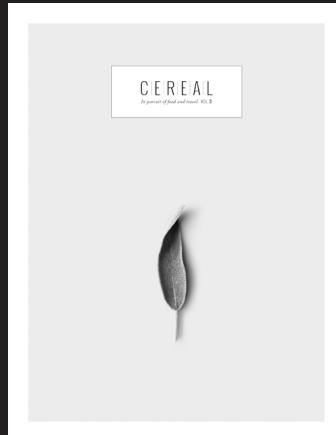
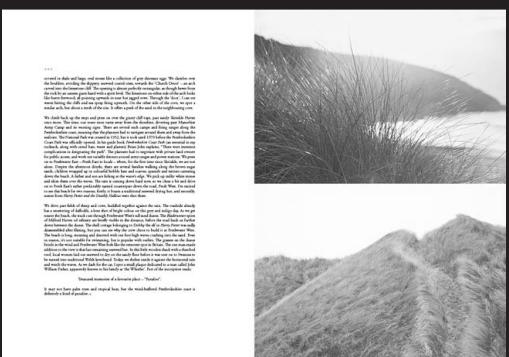
The design mirrors that and was still very fresh and innovative when it came out in 2007: No big magazine before had so many small elements on all the pages. The average spread in Monocle presents the reader at least six or seven images; often more. Even the cover reflects this, with often showing small illustrations and a lot of text on it.



## CEREAL

Launched 2012  
Circulation 20,000  
Issues per Year 4  
Country United Kingdom

Editor-in-Chief Rosa Park  
Art Director Rich Stapleton



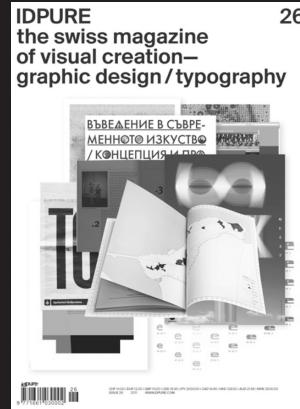
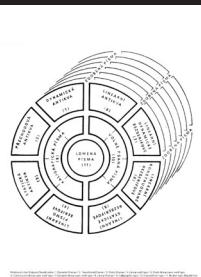
CEREAL is the most extreme magazine I know – it is just incredible calm. I mean, they have So. Much. White. Space. Sometimes, their white space is surrounded by even more white space. They have one map in their magazine, and the rest are calm photos and text with the always same margin. Personally, I think it's too calm – but I have a lot of respect for designing such a minimalist magazine. It seems to be a trend in the last few years: Similar reduced magazines are Another Escape → p64: Feedback of Editor-in-Chief Rachel Maria Taylor, Kinfolk, TUSK and Smith Journal.



### Nara, the Typeface that Never Existed

The Nara typeface was completed more than 20 years after the initial design. This is the story of the search for gaps in type classification.

I had been fascinated by the idea of "non-existent" typefaces, designs that had never been conceived or realized... More importantly, I realized that perhaps whole categories of type were missing from history!

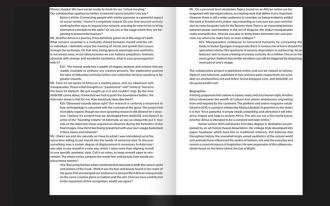


### IDPure

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Launched        | 2004  |
| Circulation     | 9500  |
| Issues per Year | 5     |
| Country         | Swiss |

|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Editor-in-Chief | Thierry Hausermann |
| Art Director    | Thierry Hausermann |

IDPure is a swiss magazine with a very simple structure: It features three design bureaus every issue besides some articles about design theory and some presentations of student work. This magazine exists since 2004, but a few years ago it was redesigned. Before, it looked like a lot of other design magazines (e.g. the german Novum). Now, this magazine is a great example for a simple structure and how this can make a magazine look minimalist. It is also one of the rare contemporary magazines I know that are reduced yet experimental in their design.





## Offscreen

Launched  
Circulation  
Issues per Year  
Country

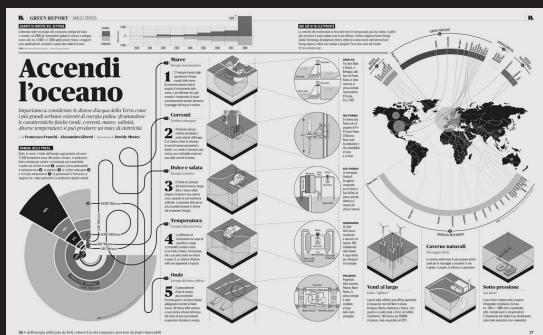
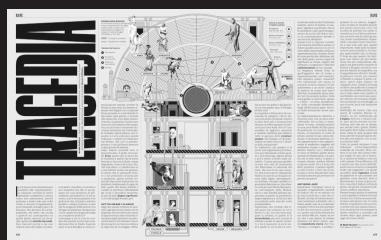
2008  
80,000?  
2  
Spain

Editor-in-Chief  
Art Director

Nacho Alegrel  
Omar Sosa

Like WIRED, Offscreen convinced my technology-interested side with their content: This magazine wants to show the »the people behind the pixels« (like Product Designer at Facebook, Founder of Start-Ups etc.), and it does this with in-depth interviews and a little bit too plain photographies of the persons and their environments. Offscreen – like my magazine dotview – bring the web into print; or let's say, the makers of the web. Like Apartamento, the format of the magazine is quite small; but it's less strong in its choice of the typeface or colors. To the contrary, Offscreen is a well-designed, but very calm magazine. However, like Intern magazine it's a great example for a one-man-show: The German Kai Brach, now living in Melbourne, Australia, is the founder, designer and Editor-in-Chief of this magazine.



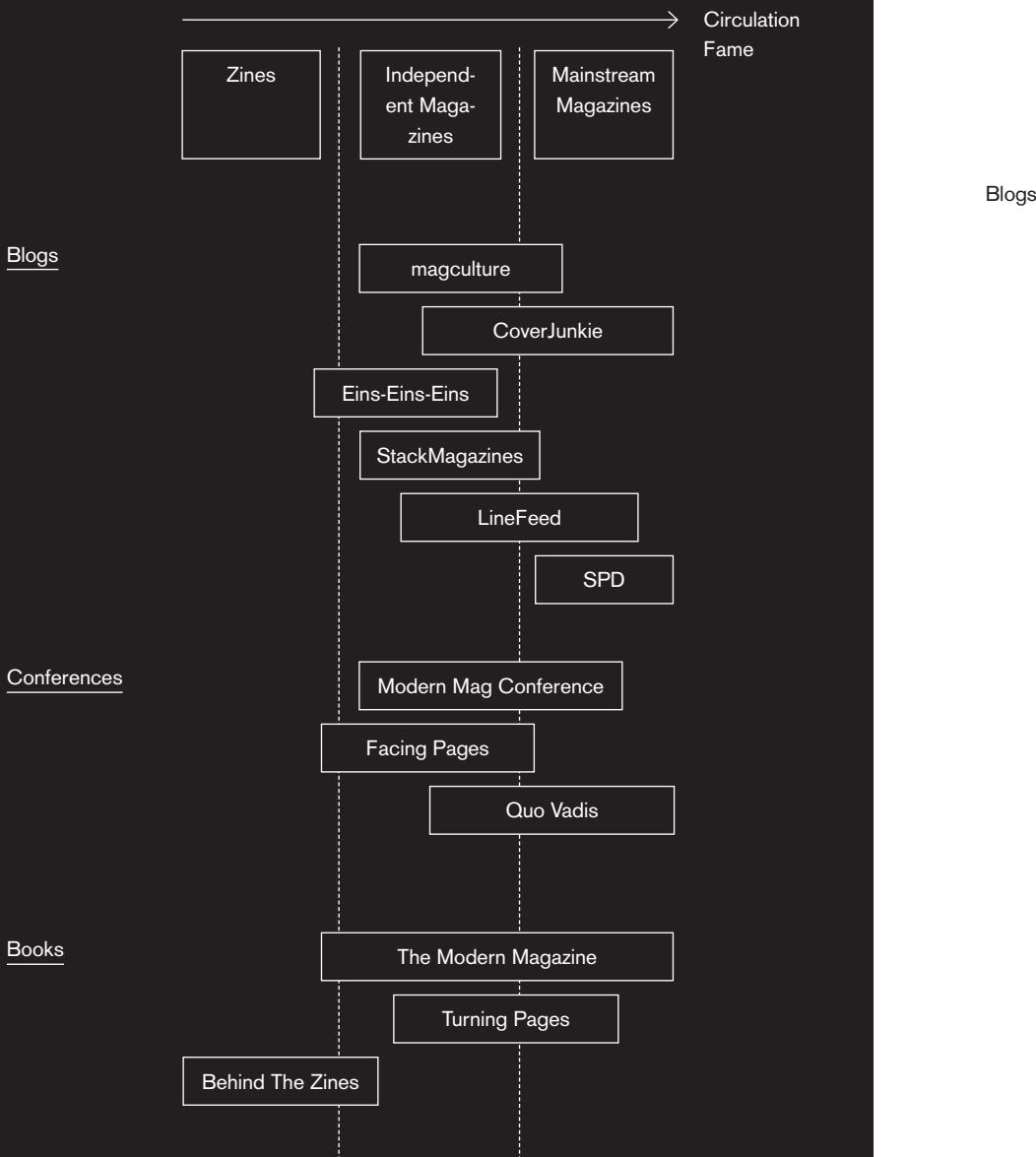


## IL – Intelligence in Lifestyle

Launched  
2008  
Circulation  
194,575  
Issues per Year  
12  
Country  
Italy

Editor-in-Chief  
Christian Rocca  
Art Director  
Francesco Franchi

IL comes once a month with the newspaper Il Sole 24 Ore and is afterwards sold at italian newsstands without the newspaper. I features articles about lifestyle, culture, economics and politics – and sadly, I can't read it. I can, however, admire the design. The young Art Director Francesco Franchi (who won't be mentioned the last time here in this Master's Thesis) has created a magazine with a great focus on information graphics. It seems like there is one spread with a graphic at least in each section, but especially often at the end of the magazine: There, the »Rane« section starts and amazes with a combination of twen-like bold headlines, light green and pastel red and an info graphic on almost every page. Based in the past not only with its retro design, Franchi uses the modular grid created by Karl Gerstner for Capital. As one of the best monthly magazines I know, I'm disappointed that something like this can't be found in Germany.



## 2.4 The current Magazine Design Scene

The here mentioned blogs, conferences and books helped me a lot to get into the independent magazine scene:

Jeremy Leslie [→p251:Feedback](#) does a great job in posting industry news on his blog **magculture.com**. It is THE blog to read for information about mainstream, but especially indie mags. Every monday, he also interviews one magazine maker with always the same questions.

What the BookCoverArchive.com is for books, **CoverJunkie.com** is for magazines. Amsterdam based Jaap Biemans collects the best magazine covers from all over the world.

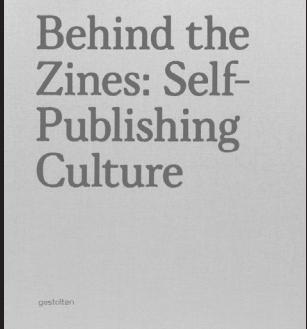
Lena-F. Naerger, Mirjam Sieger und Linda Moers from **Eins-Eins-Eins-Magazin.de** take their time to present magazines. The three german students show their beloved magazines beautifully photographed and put video interviews with the mag makers on their website.

**MagPile.com** is more a wiki platform than a blog. The aim is to create a huge collection of every magazine issue out there. Registered people can submit and like issues, write reviews about them, and of course can buy them.

Founder Steven Watson [→p250:Feedback](#) from **StackMagazines.com** – a subscription service for independent magazines – reviews one mag per week in »Two-Minutes«-Videos on their blog.

Michael Bojkowski [→p249:Feedback](#) and his LineFeed.me is another video review. Unregularly, he flicks through different magazines and presents industry news on **Vimeo.com/Bojkowski**.

The Society of Publication Designer has more than one blog in their menu, but **spd.org/the-process** is especially interesting. It offers insights into the designing process of high-class magazines like WIRED and Times.



## Conferences

The already mentioned Jeremy Leslie organizes a regular meet-up called **Print-Out** – initially in London, now also in Bristol –, to which he invites three to five magazine maker. He also organised the intimate **Modern Magazine Conference** in London, a very recommendable one-day event.

For whom one day is not enough should have a look at **Quo vadis, Editorial Design?**: A three-day conference in Munich, organised by Boris Kochan and his studio. Hundreds of people listen to known and wanna-be magazine designer of mainstream and indie magazines.

More focused on only niche magazines is **Facing Pages**, the leading biennale on independent magazines in Europe. Joost van der Steen and William van Giessen from O.K. PARKING organize this small two-day event in Arnhem, the Netherlands.

## Books

Books about the basics of Editorial Design are a lot out there, but which show the current magazine design scene?

Jeremy Leslie – again – has published not only one book about magazine design; the latest one being **The Modern Magazine** (which the conference was named after).

The Gestalten publisher →[p249:Feedback from Creative Director Sven Ehmann](#) has one eye on the magazine scene as well, publishing a few books about it: **Turning Pages** →[p248:Feedback from Designer Floyd Schulze](#) comes with intelligent texts about aspects like structure, grid etc. – and, as usual, lots of examples. **Behind the Zines** shows more anachic work in the zine field at the border to indie magazines. And the latest book interesting for magazine designers is **Designing News** by Francesco Franchi, a theoretical book based on Franchi's graduation thesis with focus on redesigns and reactions to the publishing shift.

## Categorisation 1: Monothematic and Monosection

|               | Monothematic Magazines<br>(with sample topics)        | Monosection Magazines |
|---------------|---|-----------------------|
| Brand Eins    | Market, Privacy, Motivation, Borders, Curiosity, Risk | Business              |
| Fluter        | Family, Democracy, Europe, Poverty, Internet, Protest | Politics              |
| <b>COLORS</b> | Art, Apocalypse, Happiness, Shit, Superheros, Slums   | —                     |
| Apartamento   | —   | Apartments            |
| Businessweek  | —   | Business & Economics  |
| IDPure        | —   | Graphic Design        |
| Offscreen     | —   | Technology            |
| WIRED         | —   | Technology            |
| Monocle       | —   | —                     |
| NEON          | —   | —                     |
| IL            | —   | —                     |
| CEREAL        | —   | —                     |

## 2 What's out there

### 2.5 Categorisation of Magazines

Experience has shown me that categorizing something can help to understand it. Throughout my Master's Thesis process I tried different forms of categorizations and have always discovered a new aspect about magazines in general and the twelve chosen magazines in particular. However, the categorization of the magazines often happened spontaneously and subjective. I explain the following models more as a tool and way to think than as an exact classification.

#### 1 Mono-thematic and Mono-section

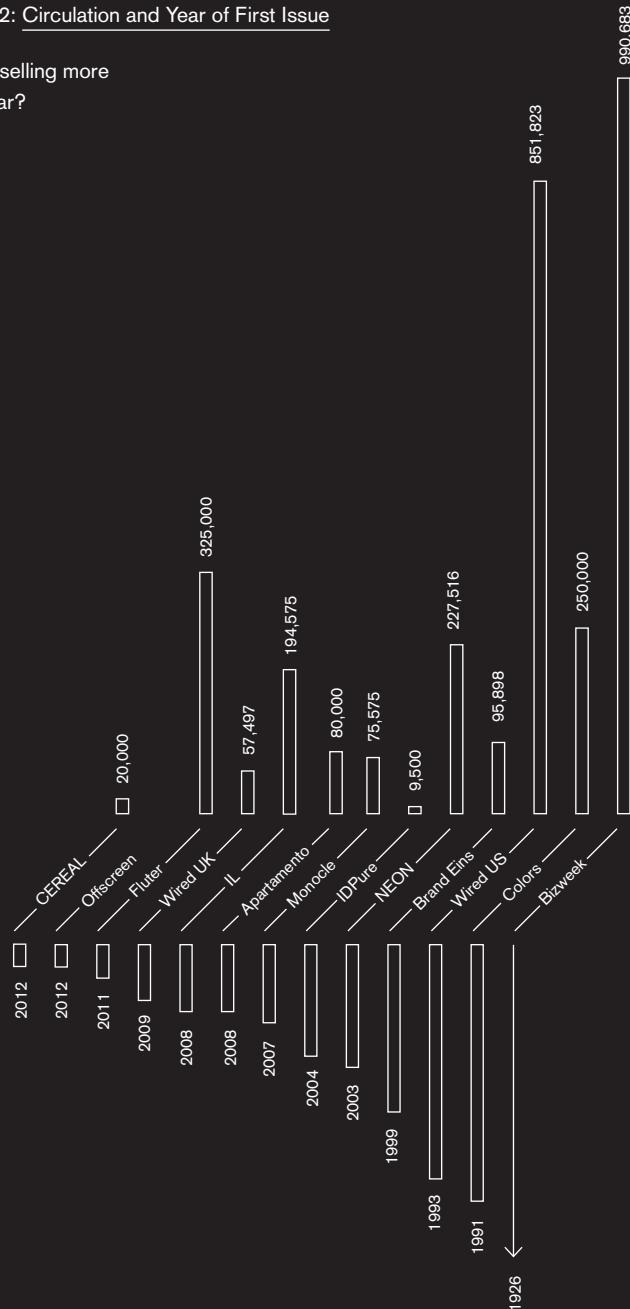
As seen in the definition of the term »Magazine« → p28, magazines are »often on a particular subject«. This subject is what I call a »sector«. Newspaper for example are almost never monosectional publications, because they feature news from different fields, like politics, economics or sports. On the contrary, magazines are most often at least a little bit mono-sectional in high dependence from their target group – the spreadsheet on the left page shows only very strong sections. NEON → p40 for example wants to show their young audience the open concept of »young lifestyle« – and Moncle → p54 promises to bring »a fresh global perspective« to their often travelling readership.

The decision to cover only one topic in the whole magazine – meaning, to publish a monothematic magazine – brings the magazine closer to a isolated, book-like object. Especially monothematic issues without a specific sector and/or without the strict and repeating structure of magazines like Brand Eins → p46 often feel unattached to their past and future issues. A good example here is COLORS → p46 magazine. The topics covered are diverse and the structure is different each time. The only connecting characteristic of all issues is the design, principles like »Diversity is Good« and the drive to explain people their globalised world. Issues of the german monothematic magazine DUMMY feels even more disconnecting from each other issue because of their always changing Art Direction.

Maybe the most interesting approach is to take one broad topic and see it with the »eyes« from one sector. Brand Eins

## Categorisation 2: Circulation and Year of First Issue

Are magazines selling more copies each year?



## 2 Circulation and Year of First Issue

for example, as a theme-based magazine in a specific sector – business – covers topics like market, privacy, motivation, borders, curiosity, risk, capitalism and transparency; themes that could work somehow for articles about business-related ideas, people and companies.

The second categorization is the only number-based and therefore objective one: The number of copies and the year of the first issue are shown on the left pages [p70](#). It poses the question if magazines are selling more copies with each year. If only seeing this diverse group of twelve indie and mainstream magazines, the answer is negative because of firstly the different demand (that's dependend from price and marketing) and secondly the area of distribution.

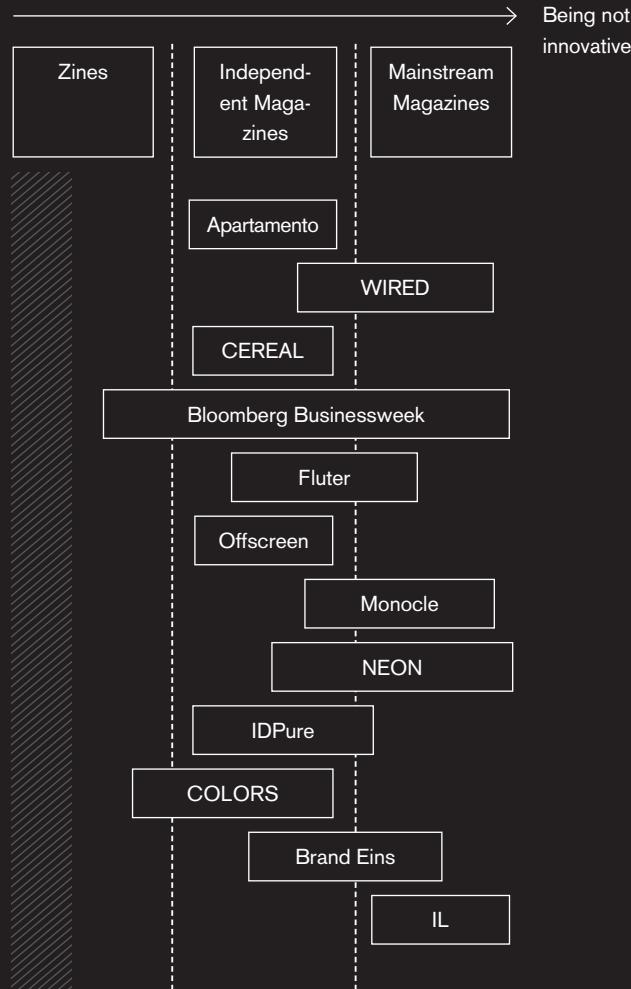
COLORS, for example, decided to stay small in the moment they chose topics and a retail price that does not draw the attention of the mainstream – but they're selling in more than 60 countries. The only german magazine Fluter with similar topics should therefore be sold a lot less. However, Fluter is free because of its support by the german government; and free is always a nice »buying« incentive.

Bloomberg Businessweek also has its focus market in only one country, but that's a big one (the United States of America). And the business sector they're covering is far more mainstream. In comparison, Brand Eins has quite good sales figures for publishing in the same sector in Germany only and with a more »indie« approach. In addition, Brand Eins is a monothematic magazine, which tend to sell less: Multithematical magazines offer more than one topic to be interesting for the reader, while the potential reader of a monothematic magazine is either interested in the one topic the magazine offers – or not.

## 3 Indie vs. Mainstream

On the next page [p72](#), a very simple categorization can be found: Does each of the twelve magazines feel more independent or more mainstream? A mainstream magazine, in my definition, is a publication that offers ideas that most people (in one sector) are interested in, in a form that most people would feel is appealing and appropriate for this kind of magazine. This publication doesn't have to be the bestseller of all magazines, but it needs to act like it wants to be the most selling magazine on the market (again, in its sector).

### Categorisation 3: Indie vs. Mainstream



Meaning, it can't be doing things a lot differently than anybody else who wants to sell a lot of copies. Typical mainstream magazines for different target groups are TV magazines, Time magazine, Der Spiegel, Stern, Reader's Digest, Cosmopolitan, Good Housekeeping and People magazine. In comparison with those magazines, magazines like WIRED, IL and NEON look alternative. But in relation to the other evaluated magazines, the three become mainstream.

As we've seen, Fluter's circulation is higher than the one of magazines like Brand Eins or IL, but the magazine still preserves the image of an independent magazine. Even more extreme in this categorization is Bloomberg Businessweek. As the highest selling magazine in my list, Bloomberg Businessweek is definitely a mainstream magazine – but the design approach remains zine-y and separates itself therefore a lot from other business magazines.

#### 4 What Designers like

With the next model →<sup>p74</sup> we're coming closer to the design of the twelve chosen magazines. The hypothesis here is that mostly independent magazines – like Apartamento, Offscreen, IDPure and CEREAL of course – are held in a minimalist designs in comparison to clustered mainstream magazines. It seems like designers who produce new magazines are mostly people who prefer white space.

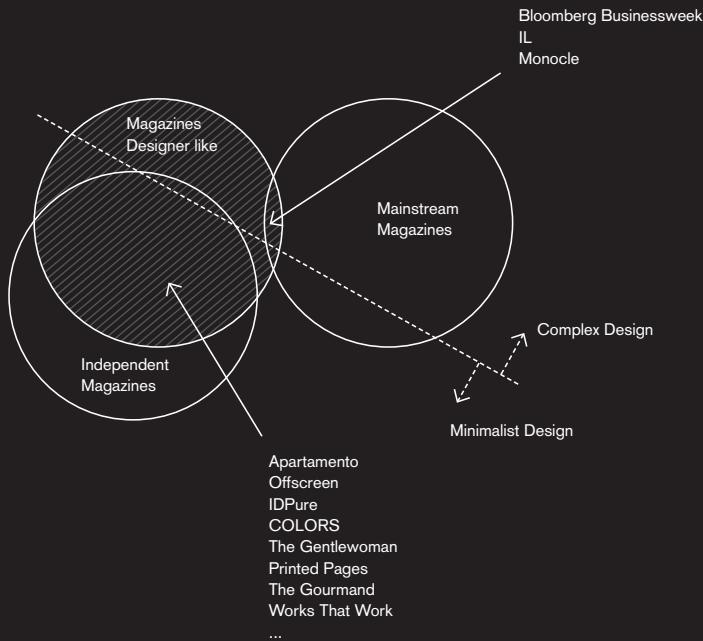
#### 5 Complexity & Love for Experimentation

This graphic →<sup>p76</sup> is a detailed version of the model before: Again, it shows which magazines are minimalist and which are more complex. However, this time they are ordered on a scale between the two poles »complex design« and »minimalist design« – and, because it's a 2-by-2-matrix, the magazines are also sorted regarding their love for experimentation. Magazines with conservative designs are more on the bottom, magazines with more experimental design on the top.

Of course, the definitions of terms like »experimental«, »complex« or »conservative« are indistinct and, again, highly subjective. But if one accepts this, they are interesting ideas to read out of this model.

First, the design of all magazines we've categorized as »mainstream« is far more complex than the one of the independent magazines. We can't see this strong cluster in the vertical axis: Both mainstream and independent magazines can have

#### Categorisation 4: What Designers like



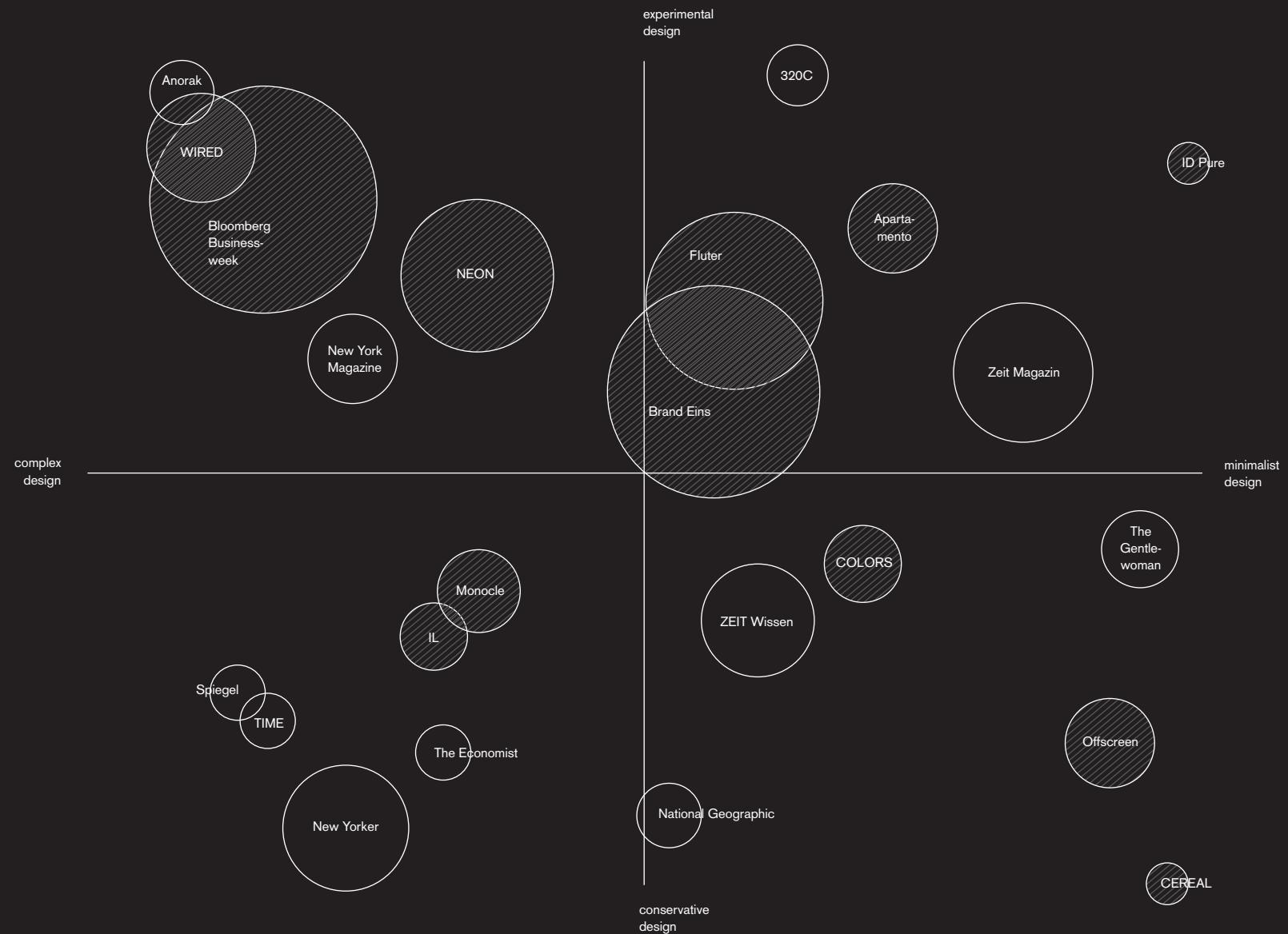
#### 6 Focus on Magazine Elements

experimental and conservative design. That means that there is nothing like a strong »minimalist and experimental« design that one would consider mainstream. »Complex and experimental«, however, is possible to accept as »mainstream«, as magazines like New York magazine or WIRED evince.

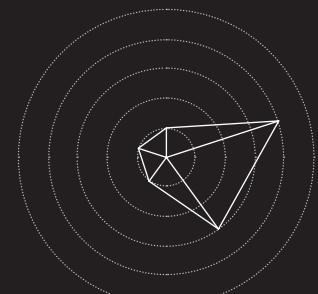
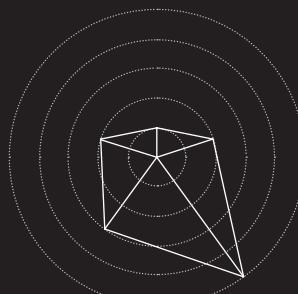
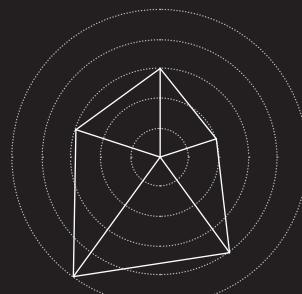
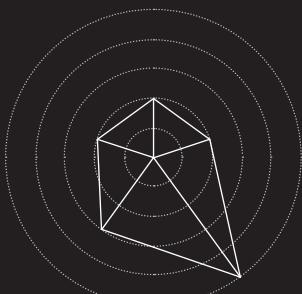
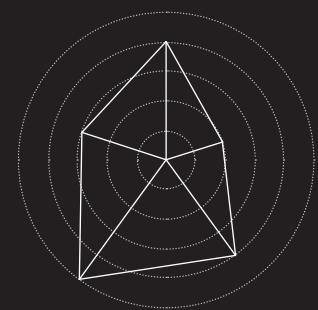
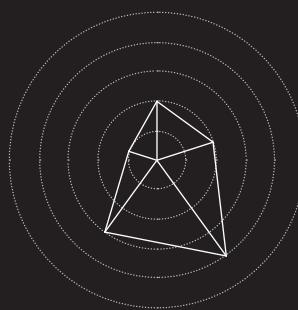
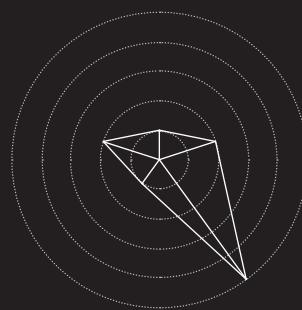
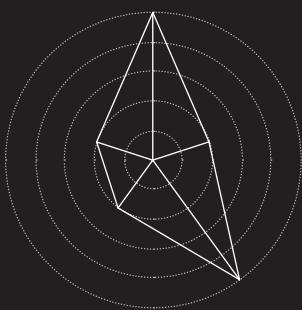
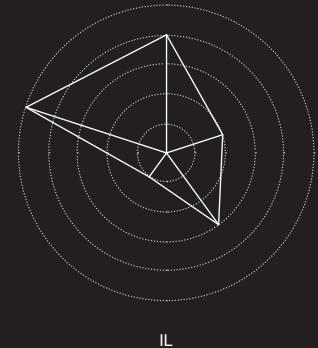
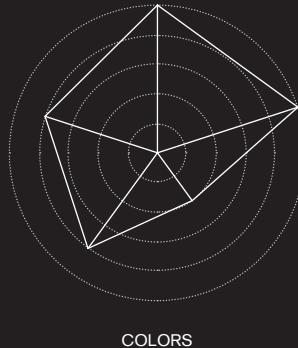
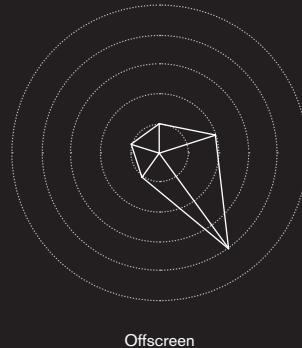
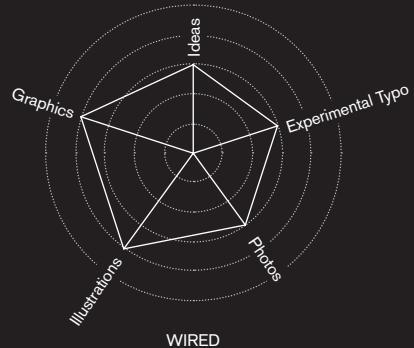
Secondly, we have magazines who are at the extreme pole of minimalism, like CEREAL and IDPure; but I couldn't find magazines who are extremely complex. That poses the question: Is minimalism something we feel closer to than complexity?

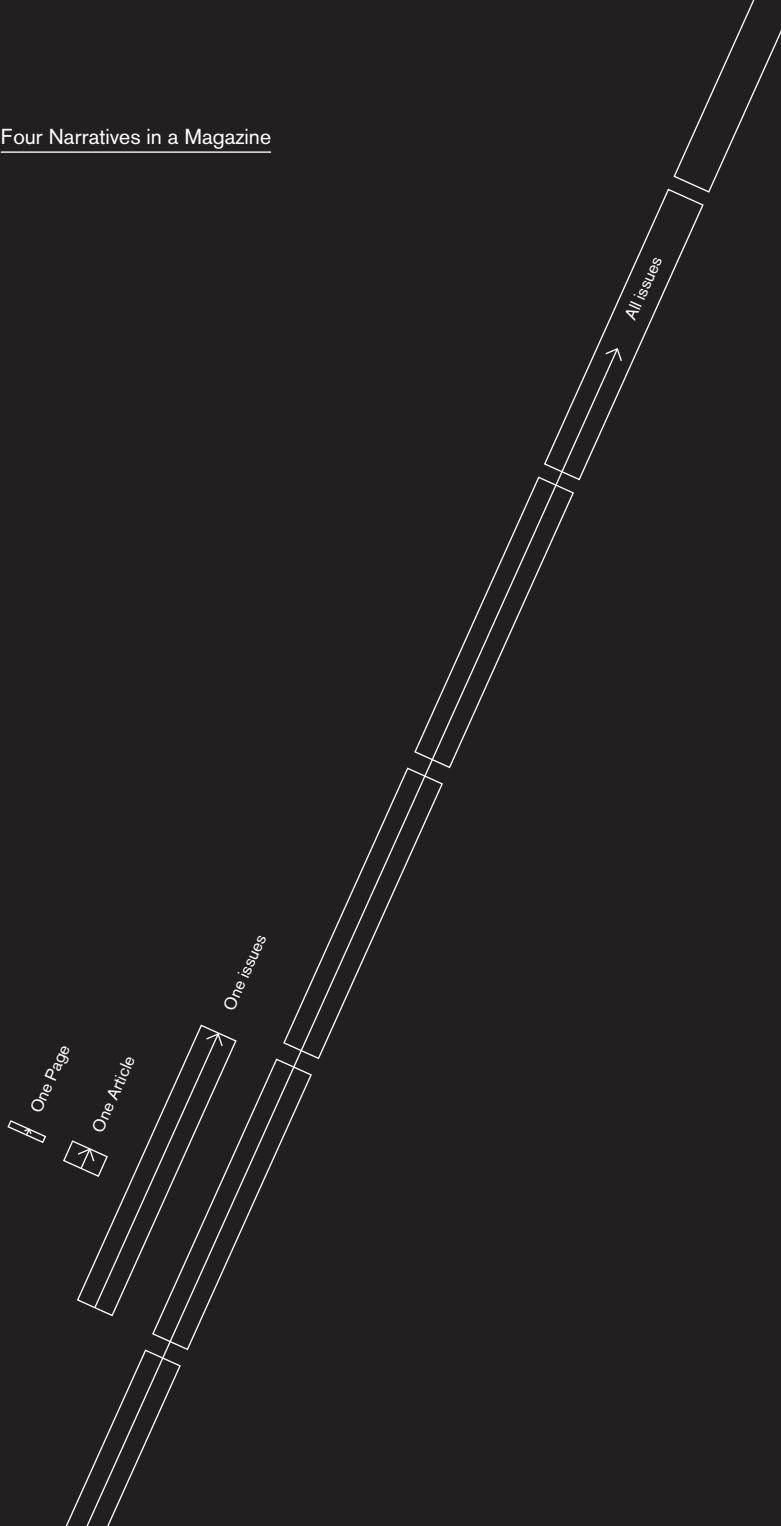
The last graphic → p<sup>78</sup> goes more into detail and shows the focus that each design department has on specific design elements (analysed by an external observer). In my opinion and besides the articles, magazines can shine with ideas (=using every element on the page to communicate a statement), information graphics, experiments with typography, high-quality photography and illustrations. They are magazines which unique selling proposition is to do only one of these elements, but extremely well. Bloomberg Businessweek focuses on the communication of ideas, the children's magazine Anorak and fashion magazine Herself are using only illustrations and IN GRAPHICS is a magazine full with only information graphics. However, most magazines are using a lot of these elements equally, as the graphic shows. But of course, using these elements is not enough. Magazines with little rating like Offscreen or IDPure have their focus more on great content or an unusual layout concept.

#### Categorisation 5: Complexity & Love for Experimentation



Categorisation 6: Focus on Magazine Elements





## 2.6 Narratives of a Magazine

That's what I learned in the last three months: Magazines are extremely story focused. When conceiving a magazine, you need to build four narratives:

1. the narrative of a page
2. the narrative of an article
3. the narrative of an issue
4. the narrative across the past and future issues

Of course, these single kind of narratives can interfere with each other. On the following pages, I'll try nonetheless to explain them separately:

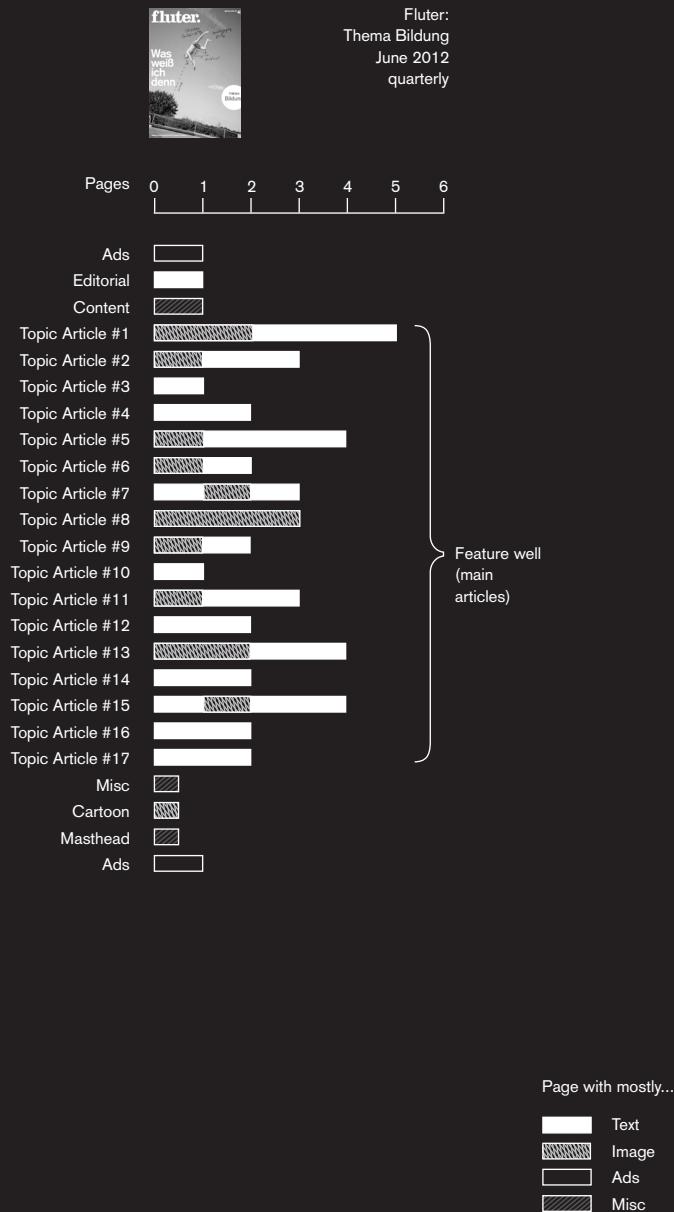
### 1 The Narrative of a Page

On a page, the goal is a) to motivate the reader to start or continue reading and b) to lead the reader to the information in the right chronically and hierachically order.

The first aim can be reached with what I call »motivational elements«, like headlines and sub headlines, images, captions, illustrations and small information graphics. Included in the first aim is to have a composition →<sup>p98</sup> that differs from page to page to keep the reader's interest – and that doesn't interfere with your second goal, the constant reading flow of your reader.

### 2 The Narrative of an article

The aim of the narrative of an article is similar to the one of a page. On a multipage story, the big aim on page one is to motivate the reader to read. It's often noticeable that feature stories beginn with big images (and/or an opener spread), which get smaller with every next page. The thinking behind this: In the first few minutes of being concerned with a text a reader might change his or her mind and stop reading. However, because of loss aversion, the reader usually won't stop reading the article 200 words before its end. So in the beginning of the article, the images have more the purpose of giving an incentive to read; in the end they become more and more information carrier.



### 3 The Narrative of an issue

Thinking about the structure of magazines was a constant companion during my Master's Thesis process. To get more knowledge about it quickly, I started analyzing other publications before designing my own dotview magazines.

The first one was the monothematic Fluter →p82, the magazine supported by the german government; therefore it's one of the rare magazines without ads. But the most surprising fact was its homogeneity – there is no clear structure. At all. Fluter just doesn't have magazine-typical parts like the front and the back of book: It doesn't start with short articles that one can find in every issue; and it doesn't end with them.

But is this an unsuccessful magazine structure? I'm not sure about that. It still works very well as a magazine for me, although Fluter or the magazine Reportagen could work as books of a series as well. And the other way round: If only graphics, illustrations, photos and a distinctive layout distinguishes a book from a magazine, then books like »Das Allerletzte« by Tom Ising and Marc Ritter are easily confusable with a hardcover magazine. This book is the first and only issue of a magazine.

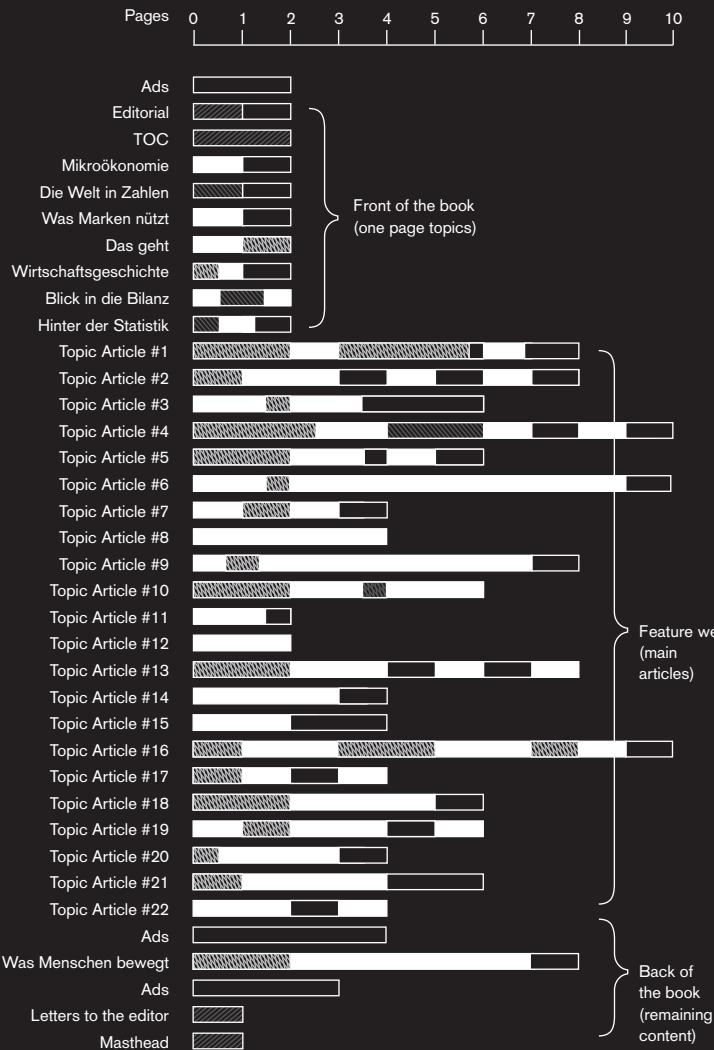
Continuing my search for a great structure, I soon found the perfect monothematic magazine in Brand Eins →p84: It has a distinctive structure, but can act freely in its theme-based part. You can actually see the structure of the magazine very clear in this abstract graphic. In the front of the book, the magazine shows the same spreads every month: They are about business people, brands, business history, numbers and graphics and balance sheets. Through them, the reader gets slowly introduced to the topic of »business«. And only after that you come to the actually »theme« of this theme-based magazine with a lot of different articles. (In this case, the issue is about »specialists«. Brand Eins often covers topics that you wouldn't link to the business world immediately. So the introduction to the business mindset on the first pages is even more important.) Then, the magazine closes quickly with just one more article that's not theme-based, letters to the editor and the imprint. This magazine is, so to say, a Fluter or Reportagen magazine packed into the middle of a very sorted magazine like Bloomberg Businessweek or TIME magazine.

The third magazine I analysed is the Bloomberg Businessweek →p85, a non-monothematic, but monosectional magazine. It has six sections like »Global Economics«, »ETC.« or

## Brand Eins



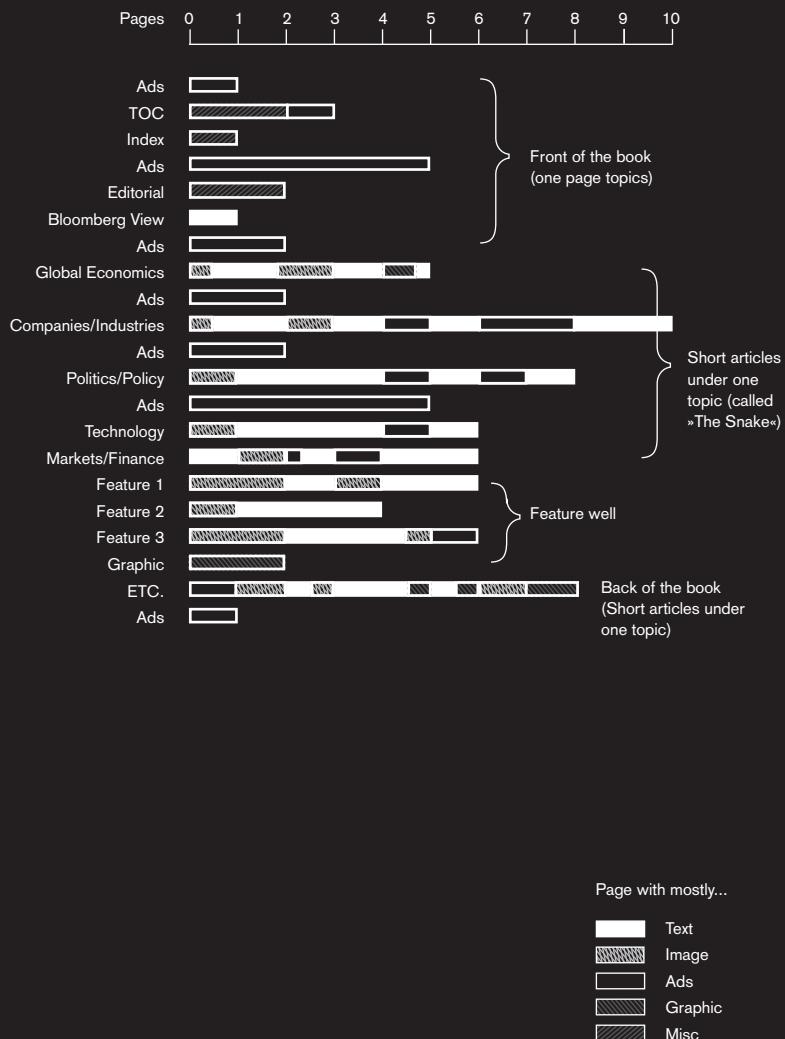
Brand Eins  
Thema Spezialisten  
October 10, 2012  
monthly

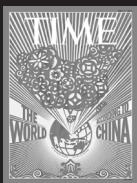


## Bloomberg Businessweek

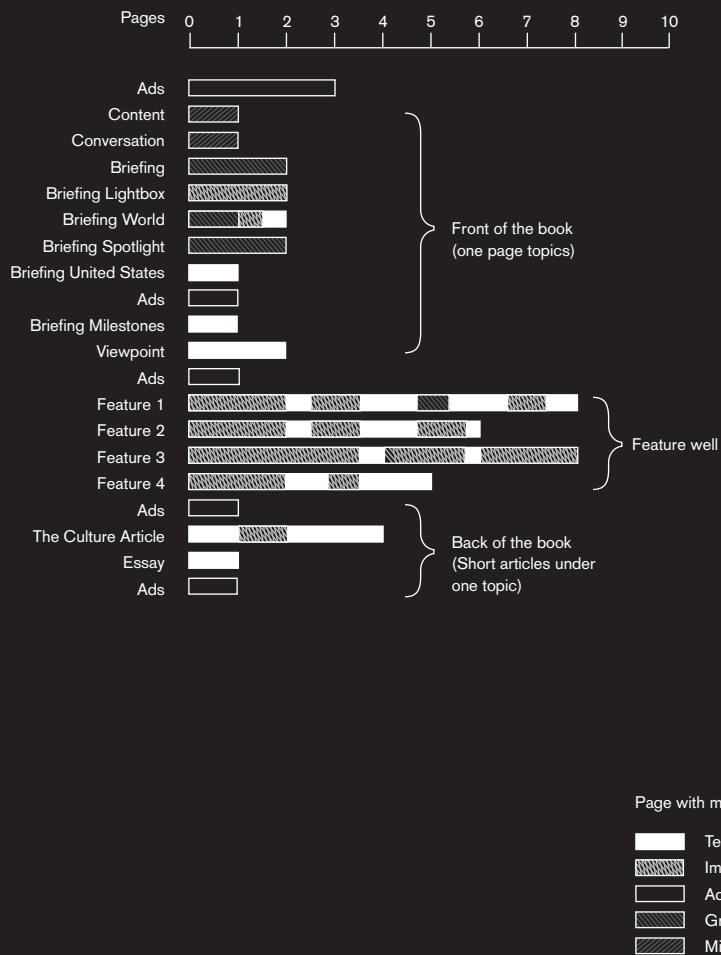


Bloomberg  
Businessweek  
May 27 – June 2, 2013  
weekly





Time Magazine  
June 17, 2013



»Technology« and three feature stories about different topics. The interesting part here are the (almost) missing ads in the feature well, while there are lots of ads disrupting the sections in the front of the magazine.

Speaking of ads: The fourth analysed magazine, Time magazine → p86, has almost none of them – especially not in the Feature well. In contrast to Bloomberg Businessweek, Time has longer features with a lot more images and no sections in the front of book, but only in each issue recurring spreads. Of course, theoretical backup can be found to such structures. Wolf Brielmäier explains in his book »Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenlayout« that there are three models → p88. The homogeneity model exists especially for scientific journals: the articles have almost all the same length; there is not dramaturgy or narrative observable. As we've seen, this structure is also close to the one of Fluter.

According to Brielmäier, the jacket model works best for monothematic magazines. And indeed, we can recognize this model especially in the structure of Brand Eins. Surprisingly, it seems to be working with the Time magazine and with Bloomberg Businessweek as well. Enclosed by the »jacket« is not the monothematic section, but the Feature well.

The wave model is supposed to be for multithematic and multisectional magazines like Stern or Spiegel. Maybe Time is too short to use it – and Bloomberg Businessweek is too focused on Business.

#### 4 The Narrative across the past and future issues

In my magazine design class at the York University in Toronto, our professor Paul Sych once told us: »You don't know if your magazine design works until you do a second issue with another content. Your design will change a lot. And then you won't like your first issue anymore.« Doing a second issue forces the designer to change his or her mindset from designing a book-like object to designing a series.

As mentioned before, doing this means seeing a second and third and fourth chance. The designer at Bloomberg Businessweek are designing such experimental layouts because they know they have a lot of future magazines to fill and to make it differently.

But because magazines are brands, it can't be that different. With every issue, you build – hopefully – a readership, who appreciates this magazine because it's their idea of good con-

## Models for a magazine structure

Pages | | | | | | | | | |

1. Homogeneity model



1. Jacket model



1. Wave model



tent and good style. Abrupt redesigns means losing readers and building a new readership from the ground. Therefore, magazines – especially mainstream ones with a conservative target group – must have the same tonality and style over a lot of issues. There are only a few magazines who dare to use »change and love for experimentality« as their brand; one of them being the already mentioned DUMMY.

### 3 Thinking about the What (Aesthetics)

3.1 Minimalism

3.2 Tension and Balance

## Categorisation 1: Two reading experiences

based on a study about readability and white space

|                                     | Margins (Micro White Space)  | No Margins   |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| Optimal Leading (Macro White Space) | <p><i>The following excerpt is from Eyes on the Prize, the companion guide to the public television series on America's civil rights struggle.</i></p> <p>During the 1950 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attorneys Charles H. Houston, William Hastie, James M. Nabrit, Leonidas C. Dyer, and Thurgood Marshall charted a legal strategy designed to end segregation in education. They developed a series of legal cases challenging segregation in graduate schools and professional schools. Houston believed that the best strategy was to begin at the highest academic level in order to mitigate fear of race mixing that could create even greater hostility and reluctance on the part of white judges. After establishing a solid record of victories in graduate schools, the NAACP then decided to launch an all-out attack on the separate-but-equal doctrine in primary and secondary schools. The strategy proved successful. In four major United States Supreme Court decisions precedents were established that would enable the NAACP to commit a solid assault on the separate-but-equal doctrine in primary and secondary schools. <i>Eyes on the Prize, The Companion Guide to the Public Television Series on America's Civil Rights Struggle</i> (1987).</p> | <p><i>The following excerpt is from Eyes on the Prize, the companion guide to the public television series on America's civil rights struggle.</i></p> <p>During the 1950 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attorneys Charles H. Houston, William Hastie, James M. Nabrit, Leonidas C. Dyer, and Thurgood Marshall charted a legal strategy designed to end segregation in education. They developed a series of legal cases challenging segregation in graduate schools and professional schools. Houston believed that the best strategy was to begin at the highest academic level in order to mitigate fear of race mixing that could create even greater hostility and reluctance on the part of white judges. After establishing a solid record of victories in graduate schools, the NAACP then decided to launch an all-out attack on the separate-but-equal doctrine in primary and secondary schools. The strategy proved successful. In four major United States Supreme Court decisions precedents were established that would enable the NAACP to commit a solid assault on the separate-but-equal doctrine in primary and secondary schools. <i>Eyes on the Prize, The Companion Guide to the Public Television Series on America's Civil Rights Struggle</i> (1987).</p> |
| Sub-optimal Leading                 | <p><i>The following excerpt is from Eyes on the Prize, the companion guide to the public television series on America's civil rights struggle.</i></p> <p>During the 1950 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) attorneys Charles H. Houston, William Hastie, James M. Nabrit, Leonidas C. Dyer, and Thurgood Marshall charted a legal strategy designed to end segregation in education. They developed a series of legal cases challenging segregation in graduate schools and professional schools. Houston believed that the best strategy was to begin at the highest academic level in order to mitigate fear of race mixing that could create even greater hostility and reluctance on the part of white judges. After establishing a solid record of victories in graduate schools, the NAACP then decided to launch an all-out attack on the separate-but-equal doctrine in primary and secondary schools. The strategy proved successful. In four major United States Supreme Court decisions precedents were established that would enable the NAACP to commit a solid assault on the separate-but-equal doctrine in primary and secondary schools. <i>Eyes on the Prize, The Companion Guide to the Public Television Series on America's Civil Rights Struggle</i> (1987).</p> | <p><b>More preference</b></p> <p><b>Less preference</b></p>  |

|                   |  |  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Reading Speed     | Less words per minute  | More words per minute  |
| Comprehension     | Better Comprehension   | Worse Comprehension  |
| Two reading modes | Comprehension is King<br>> weekend relaxation<br>> understanding | Speed is King<br>> fast (business) world<br>> focus on information |



CEREAL



Bloomberg Businessweek

»The simplicity of the layout of the calm ocean put my mind in a relaxed state for reading and concentration. Life is simple, as it is. This magazine reflects that.«

– Phoebe Tay

»I think most people probably pick up a magazine, flick through it, look at the things they want to read, put it down, and then pick it up again when they've got some time to engage in the longer articles.«

– Richard Turley

Sources: <http://psychology.wichita.edu/surl/usabilitynews/62/whitespace.htm>  
<http://phoebetay.wordpress.com/2013/05/11/cereal/>

## 3 Thinking about the What (Aesthetics)

### 3.1 Minimalism

As mentioned before → p73, a lot of independent magazine makers are home in the area of minimalist and reduced magazine design – examples are IDPURE, CEREAL, Kinfolk, Another Escape, The Gentlewoman, Smith Journal, Hole & Corner, Mr. Wolf, MADE Quarterly, Bunch, The Alpine Review (a magazine from Montreal, by the way) and the new redesigned Boat Magazine.

The reasons for that can be guessed: Are designers stretching the content so that the magazine looks more filled with buying incentives than it is? Or are they trying to make the content more »precious« so that it justifies the high printing and distribution costs that are maybe the biggest obstacle for small magazines? Is minimalistism maybe the first step of the evolution for every magazine and they still need to develop? Or are magazine makers try to save the expenses for hiring a designer who for example thinks of a complicated grid system?

Another possible reason to use minimalism is to build a distinct distance to the complexity of the modern world (in which mainstream magazines play a certain part).

Curious what difference the design plays in the reading experience, I did some research and found a study from the Psychology Department of the Wichita State University in Kansas, U.S. → p92. It suggests that we can read more word per minute in a magazine layout without margins, but that we better understand what we read when going through a magazine with more white space.

Building on that we can distinguish between two reading modes: Minimalist magazines like CEREAL trigger the one in which comprehension is most important. These magazines are for relaxation; for fleeing from the complex world. A reader from CEREAL, Phoebe Tay, mentions the relaxed state in which the reading of CEREAL puts her mind.

In contrast to that, more packed magazines like the Bloomberg Businessweek present information quickly absorbable for their target audience: stressed businessmen.

## 1. Reduce

The simplest way to achieve simplicity is through thoughtful reduction. How? Shrink, Hide, Embody.

## 2. Organize

Organization makes a system of many appear fewer

## 3. Time

Savings in time feel like simplicity.

## 4. Learn

Knowledge makes everything simpler.

## 5. Differences

Simplicity and complexity need each other.

## 6. Context

What lies in the periphery of simplicity is definitely not peripheral.

## 7. Emotion

More emotions are better than less.

## 8. Trust

In simplicity we trust.

## 9. Failure

Some things can never be made simple.

## 10. The one

Simplicity is about subtracting the obvious, and adding the meaningful.

## Laws of Simplicity

The previous creative director of Bloomberg Businessweek, Richard Turley, reflects this with saying that his audience »flicks through« the magazine.

According to the study and the two quotes, independent magazines are right when laying out their content in a minimalist way – they just set a counterpart to the fast-moving complex world out there.

But what does »minimalism« mean? When I explained people that I want to design a minimalist magazine, everybody seemed to have a very specific picture of something like this in mind. Sure, lots of white space. But is this everything? What IS minimalism, regarding magazine design?

Before explaining the forms of minimalism, I want to look at ways of making something simpler. Being an avid reader of John Maedas book »The Laws of Simplicity«, I tried to transfer his ten rules of reducing in the field of magazine design. Rule 1, Reduce, can be transferred to a lot of visual elements as we will see later.

Rule 2 to 4, Organize, Time and Learn, can be realized through showing the reader a simple way to navigate through the magazine and find information fast. Short summaries of articles at their end, sub-headlines, deck copies, image captions and information graphics are possibilities to do this. This is minimalism that works through better readability and understanding. The content is king; the designer shouldn't draw attention to the design.

Rule 5 is important for many steps in publishing a magazine, but it begins with finding a niche: If every Girl's magazine looks pink and is printed on high-gloss paper, maybe you could consider producing a magazine for smart kids that looks authentic and has a slightly different color palette – that's what Anorak did. The fifth and sixth rule will also be explained in the second part of this chapter.

Rule 7 and 9 are similar when considering magazine design. It basically defends the complexity of celebrity magazines like People magazine, which feature human interest stories in a very emotional way. These stories wouldn't touch their audience if designed in an extreme reduced CEREAL style. But among others because of their design, the eighth rule is very true and works in favor of independent magazine: In minimalist design we trust.

## Forms and Ways to Minimalism

1. Forms of Minimalism
2. Ways to Minimalism

Combined in the spreadsheet:

|                              | 2.1 Reducing   | 2.2 Make it understood  | dotview #3a | dotview #3b | CE-REAL | Apartamento |
|------------------------------|--|---|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|
| 1.1 Micro Typography         | Minimal typefaces like Futura  | Readable typefaces like book or newspaper typefaces                                       | medium      | medium      | no      | yes         |
|                              | Small font sizes   | Type sizes optimised for readability  | medium      | medium      | yes     | medium      |
|                              | Limited number of typefaces  | Enough different typefaces to make the reader understand the differences in content       | no          | yes         | no      | yes         |
| 1.2 Macro Typography         | Full Justification to be »blocky«                                    | Decision based on the type face, if full justification or not                             | no          | yes         | yes     | yes         |
| 1.3 Content                  | Little content on each page  | Bringing content together that supports the intention of each page                        | no          | yes         | yes     | medium      |
|                              | Same media form throughout the mag                                   |   | no          | no          | no      | no          |
| 1.4 Colors                   | Little colors  | Use colors that make the reader understand the differences in content                     | no          | yes         | yes     | no          |
| 1.5 Photography              | Reduced shapes   | Photography as content (e.g. article) supporting element                                  | no          | no          | no      | no          |
|                              | Reduced colors   | Calming content   | no          | yes         | yes     | no          |
| 1.6 Layout                   | Consistency: Layout on every page is the same                        | Layout as reading flow influencing tool that brings the reader to read in the right order | no          | no          | yes     | no          |
|                              | Lots of white space  |   | no          | no          | yes     | no          |
| 1.7 Graphics                 | Less »data-ink« (Tufte): Remove elements that don't communicate data | Communicate the reader a story and specific ideas instead of oceans of data.              | no          | yes         | yes     | no          |
| Score                        |  |   |             |             |         |             |
| 1/12    7/12    9/12    4/12 |  |   |             |             |         |             |

## Forms and Ways to Minimalism

After borrowing the 1st rule – reducing – and the 2nd, 3rd and 4th rule – understanding – as ways to minimalism from Maeda, I began thinking on which elements (forms) they can be applied.

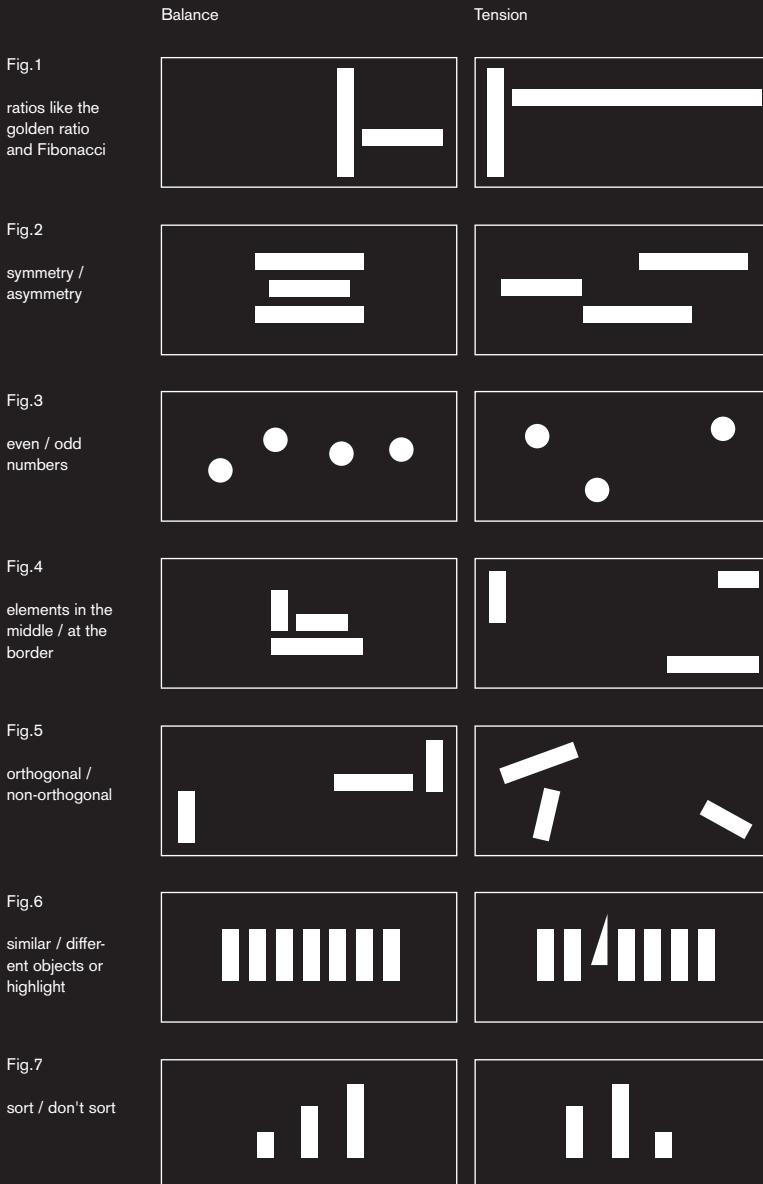
I came up with seven elements that are important for magazine design when thinking about reducing (they are close to the ones I already mentioned in the categorization part →<sup>p78</sup>):

1. Minimalism in micro typography
2. Minimalism in macro typography
3. Minimalism in content
4. Minimalism in colors
5. Minimalism in photography
6. Minimalism in layout
7. Minimalism in graphics

I then combined them with the two possible ways of reducing to get a table →<sup>p96</sup>. It was interesting to see that specific elements that wouldn't be considered minimalist (like detailed serif fonts) become so when looking at them through the »understanding« glasses. Often, minimalism through reducing and minimalism through making it understood conflict with each other, like using as little colors as possible and using colors to show a structure of a text or a whole issue. Here, maybe the 10th rule of simplicity can help with the decision in specific cases: »Simplicity is about subtracting the obvious, and adding the meaningful.«

After preparing this system, I wanted to know if it works with real magazines. I used it on my first two versions of the dotview magazine (the very complex and the minimalist one) and then on CEREAL, the most minimalist magazine I know. CEREAL got 9 out of 12 possible points – which is very high considering that I really tried to work very reduced with my second magazine and got only 7 points. Apparently I did something right with my first (complex) magazine, which got only 1 point. The magazine Apartamento, from me considered as medium reduced, got 4 points. Looks like in comparison with just saying »This is minimalist design«, I build a rough system that can explain why.

## 3.2 Tension and Balance



Principles for Composition

The composition of everything twodimensional like illustrations, photographies and magazine spreads has been a skill I wanted to groove for at least the past eight years. It is still one of my biggest interests in visual communications.

What is the challenge? Well, if you have an axis with the two poles »tension« and »harmony«, you want your composition right in the middle (if you paint, maybe a little bit more to »tension«, in magazine design maybe a little bit more to »harmony«.) To achieve this, I personally use some principles from which I will list a collection here →[p98](#):

- Use ratios like the golden ratio and the Fibonacci numbers to create harmony; ignore them to create tension.
- Use symmetry to create harmony (»Symmetrie ist die Ästhetik des kleinen Mannes«, as my father used to quote); use asymmetry to create tension.
- Use even numbers to create harmony; use odd numbers for elements to create tension – especially if you can count them with a glimpse (everything below 7).
- Bring elements in the middle of your page to create harmony; bring elements at the border of your page to create tension.
- Arrange elements orthogonal to the border of your page to create harmony; arrange elements non-orthogonal to create tension.
- Use similar objects to create harmony; use different objects and/or a highlight to create tension.
- Sort objects to create harmony, don't sort them to create tension.

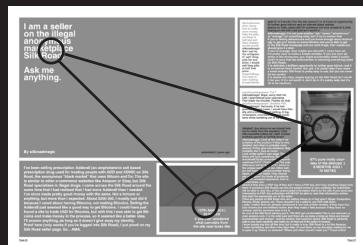
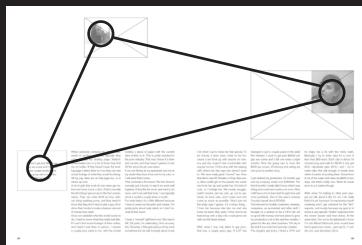
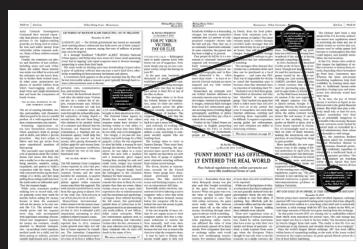
As one can see →[p100](#), I especially often use a triangular composition – it's one of the easiest forms of arranging something so that it looks well composed. »The Sistine Madonna« by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino is based on the same principle;

## Some Principles for Composition (in Use)

### Triangular Composition



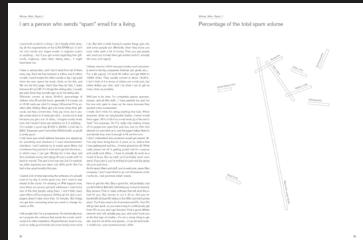
»The Sistine Madonna« by Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino



### Elements at the Border



### Non-orthogonal



### Balance & Harmony

back then (1513) surely to remind of the holy trinity (like many other art works around this time). Nowadays one can bring more tension in the own work with making the sides of the triangles as different as possible. One long side and two short (imaginative) sides of a triangle are considered more interesting than a equilateral triangle like the one from Raffaello.

Basically, what creates tension and what one can see in almost all the principles, is contrast. A long time I thought harmony and balance are the same →[p102](#) – but balance is tension, so at the same time balance is the balance between harmony and tension. With time, only harmony gets dull and boring. The human species needs variety and diversion, and so needs the magazine. This has always been one of the greatest struggles in visual communication for me: To find the point on an axis between these both extremes that's perfect for the reading experience is tricky. You want the reader to understand the design language in the magazine – so you'll need one. But you also want to surprise the reader and get bold on this or that page, so you need to break out of your magazine language. I guess the best magazine is the one where you get surprised while flicking through it, but in which you clearly see the difference to the ads in the mag.

In the end, you need a compromise between tension and harmony, between quiet and loud, between your system (grid) and breaking out, between new and traditional – and between emotion (communication) and ratio (information), as Francesco Franchi points out in his book »Designing News«(p64): »The journalist and designer must move within a spectrum that includes raw information at one end and communication at the other, staying somewhere in the middle. Consciously choosing this position ensures that they do not fall into the trap of either supplying a plethora of facts and figures or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, editorializing by guiding readers' opinion and employing an aesthetic that is an end in itself.«

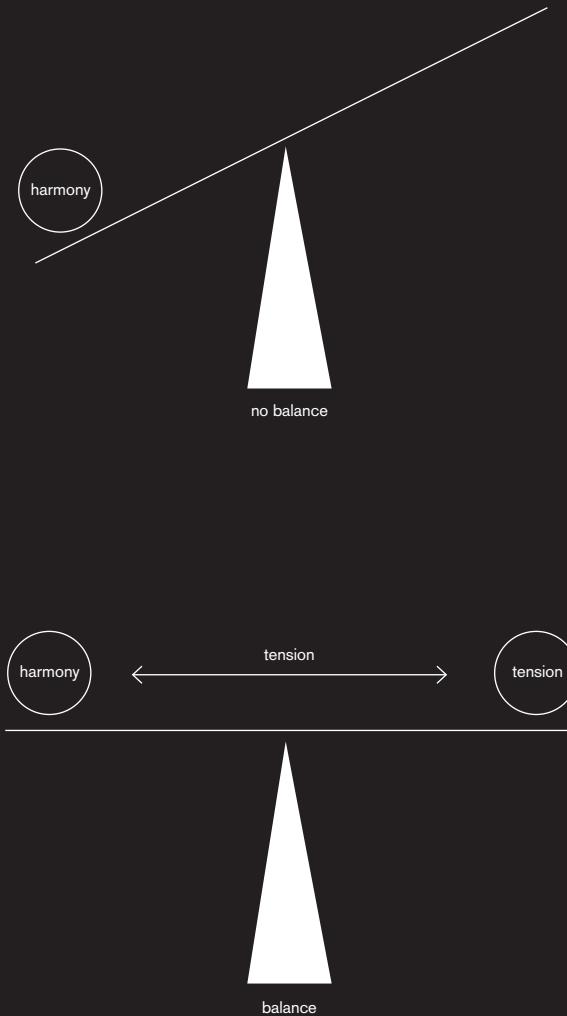
## The difference between Harmony and Balance

Harmony! What is harmony? I thought I know that – but then I had an inspiring conversation with my friend M. This conversation went like this:

- L: I like harmony. If somebody talks a lot in a conversation, then I'm talking only a little bit. If somebody likes to talk less, I talk more. I'm always striving for balance.
- M: I noticed that. If somebody has a strong opinion, you always have the opinion on the other side of the scale.
- L: That's true. I like to think in scales or axes. And I feel like the scale topples when everybody is on the same page.
- M: But that's not harmony.
- L: It's not?
- M: You're creating arguments with this attitude. Harmony means exactly that everybody IS on the same page, not the opposite.

I found that super interesting. Especially, because my friend M. really designs according to her definition of harmony: Everything on her pages exists beautifully in coexistence with every other element.

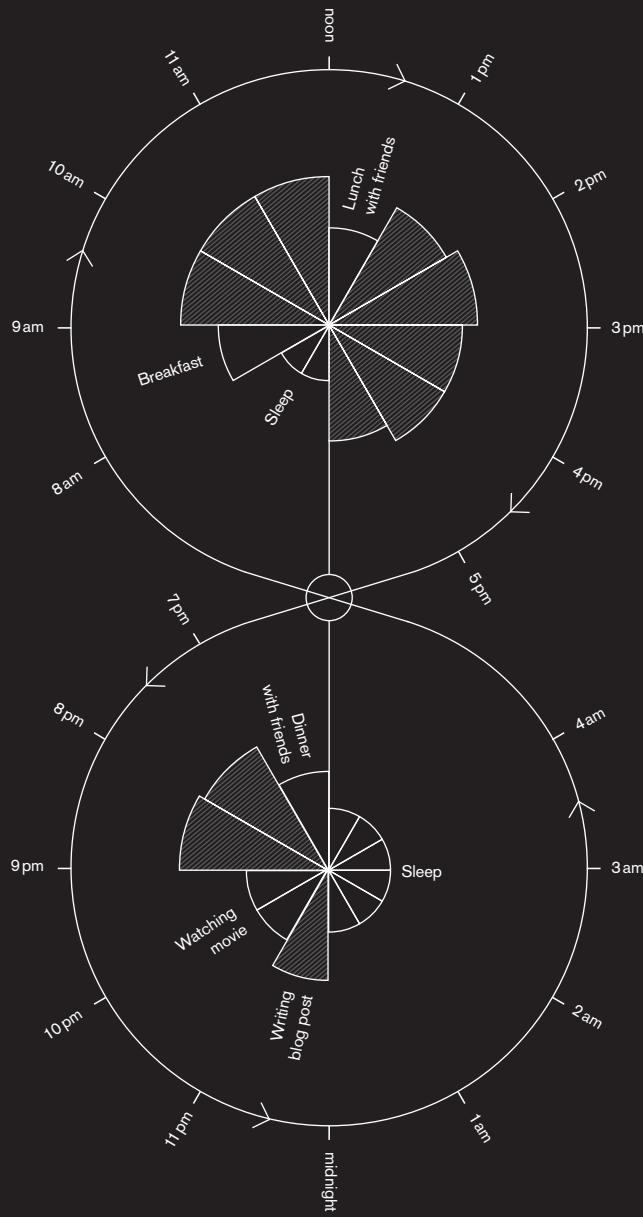
I, however, try to find contrasts. I try to use super thin and super thick lines on the same page. Bold elements and delicate ones. A lot of white space and a lot of complexity.



## 4 Thinking about the How (Creative Process)

- 4.1 Get better, faster
- 4.2 Copy and Paste
- 4.3 Bringing my Work out there

## 4.1 Get better, faster



Understand  
your capacity

Gather  
together

One goal of my Master's Thesis is to first understand and then to improve my working methods. As a matter of fact, I think a lot about how I work and how I can improve it. I'm reading quite a lot articles about productivity and try little hacks that can make procedures more efficient (like shortcut keys).

I don't think about these things to leave the computer sooner, but to fit more successful results into the hours that I work each day. I do like to work more than my friends [→p106](#). Not because I'm afraid I won't get my work load done in time – I'm almost always ahead of my plan – but because I like it. SO. MUCH. Design is just fun. Hours are passing by really quickly in this profession: it's so easy to get into the »flow« as a designer.

As one can see from my visualised day schedule, I'm working most efficiently in the morning (although I'm more creative and willed to take risks during the night). I knew that already before starting my Master's Thesis – but I wanted to know more. Here are the lessons I learned while working on my Master's Thesis:

One »hack« I tried pretty successfully in my Master's Thesis from the beginning was documenting my process almost every night with the help of my blog [themagazinedesignproject.tumblr.com](http://themagazinedesignproject.tumblr.com). I answered questions like: What have I done today? What was successful? What wasn't? Why? What are the next steps? Doing this every day helped me understanding what I can achieve in one day. With time, I could set more realistic goals for my day, which I then would not over- nor underachieve. (The blog also had other positive effects like bringing my work out there [→p127](#) and having a conversation with people who are interested in what I'm doing.)

The second most helpful concept during my Master's Thesis was the »Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse« (task force graduation class). It was basically an independent Master's colloquium: Four friends of mine and I organised us a room and projector every two weeks and talked about our process.

The purpose? We started it to finally get good feedback. In university courses one notices that feedback is rare: Not because of missing good thoughts in the brains of the students, but because of the peer pressure. I've never been an exception to this, sadly. The Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse circle was supposed to be small, so the not-so-dumb but shy people like I can flourish a little bit more.

Gathering together as a group of five people worked perfectly for this aim. Everybody was constantly focussed in the discussion, because everybody thought about how she or he could build on the argument of the neighbor.

The meetings always worked in the same modus: My friends and I got exactly half an hour and could use this time and the audience as he or she wanted to. Some showed layouts and let others draw in with green and red pens to know what they liked and disliked. Some did workshops and taught us how to come up with more ideas in a shorter period of time.

I thought the Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse would be a nice idea, but it was surprised about how great it actually was. We see each other almost every day for lunch where we talk about our work as well – and I was not sure how much a formal presentation and discussion of our work could differ from lunch meetings. But it differed a lot! The discussions were deeper, I got more helpful feedback and heard ideas from my friends about my work that I've never heard before.

Personally, I used the Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse as a motivation to elaborate on ideas I had in mind while designing the individual magazines. The meetings and presentations forced me to sort my thoughts and my process. Presenting is – not only for the audience, but especially for me – an overview over what I've done so far and a checking if everything makes sense. I knew this before, but it just surprises me every time again how helpful preparing a presentation really is.

Investing in a distant future instead of in the near future is hard for the human race. This theory is related to a fact that's called hyperbolic discounting: If asked »Would you prefer a dollar today or three dollars tomorrow?«, the average person will take the dollar today. →[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperbolic\\_discounting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperbolic_discounting). So working on a Master's Thesis that's due in a few months is unconvient, too; especially when the sun and your friends are waiting outside.

## Go Small Steps

For me, it helped a great deal to set own deadlines. I like deadlines: I like the feeling of finishing something. And it was very important for me to finish designing one magazine before starting with the next one. (Fortunately, my plan was working as scheduled.) Thinking of creating three magazines in three months can have a daunting effect, but thinking of desinging a magazine in four weeks or an info graphic in one day is do-able. A second example of doing small steps is this theoretical part of my Master's Thesis: I came up with almost all the here described ideas in the preparation of presentations for the Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse or while writing a blog post. The basis for a lot of graphics here can also be found in presentations or blog posts from the last few months. In the end, everything comes together (and allows me to write and design this theoretical part in one week).

### Take Breaks to get inspired

The third realisation of doing small steps is my personal productivity score. In the beginning of my Master's Thesis I drew a calender with 126 days in 18 weeks and hung it on my wall. Every night when I came home, I rated my productiviy of the current day from one to five stars.

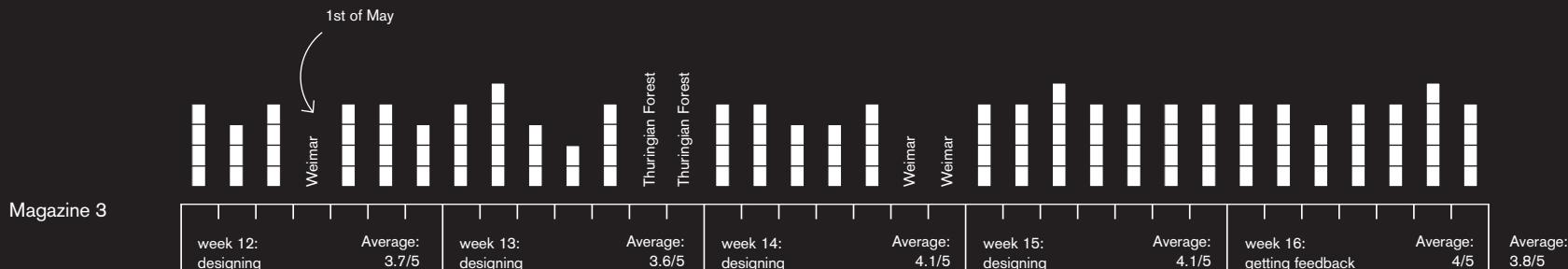
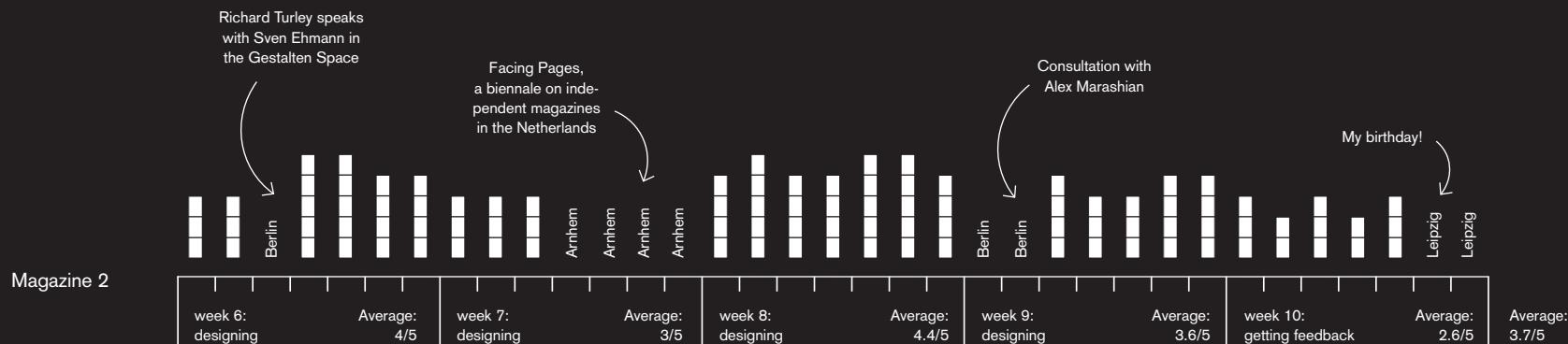
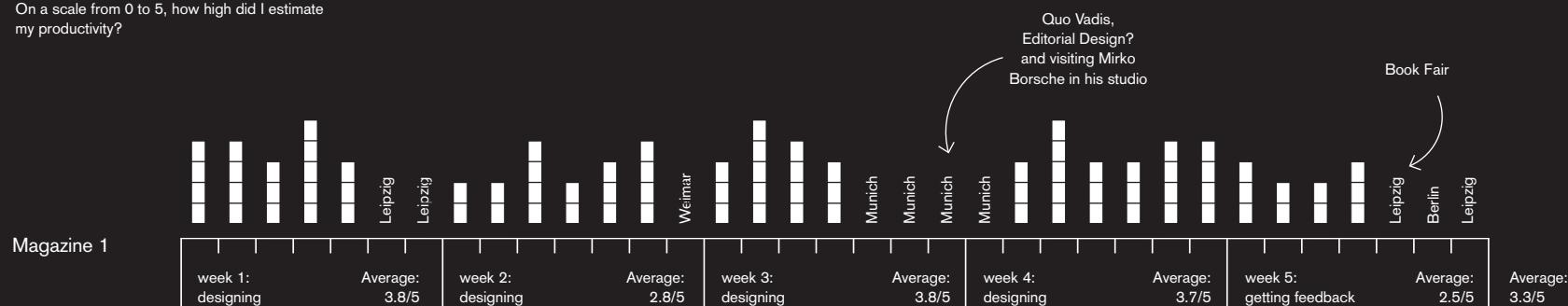
One can see →<sup>110</sup> that the first two weeks in which I was asking for feedback have a lower average score than the weeks in which I was designing. In this weeks, I had a lot of printing problems and felt very passive just reacting to the the points on my long to-do-list.

One can also see the peaks: I had an huge productivity boost after meeting Richard Turley (ex-Creative Director of Bloomberg Businessweek, →<sup>250:Feedback</sup>) and Sven Ehmann (Creative Director of Gestalten publisher, →<sup>249: Feedback</sup>) in Berlin in week 6. I came back with so many good ideas and had such productive days afterwards that I ask myself: Have I even lost time while being away from the computer for 24 hours? Or was it, to the contrary, a great time-saver? How much productivtiy do you gain after talking to inspiring people or after other motivating activities? Is it more than you lose while not working? What is the perfect ratio between inspiration time and productivity time?

I still don't know the answer to that, but I'm curious to get to know more about this issue in the future. All I know so far is that one indeed needs inspirational breaks (I noticed this because I didn't take them very often).

## My Process with Productivity Score

On a scale from 0 to 5, how high did I estimate my productivity?



»There are known knowns.  
 These are things we know  
 that we know. There are  
 known unknowns. That is to  
 say, there are things that we  
 know we don't know. But  
 there are also unknown un-  
 knowns. There are things we  
 don't know we don't know.«  
 – Donald Rumsfeld

|                      | Knowledge is know  | Knowledge is unknow   |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Things we know       | Known Knowns<br><br>We know these things.<br>e.g.: »I know that there is a magazine called Brand Eins.«                          | Unknown Knows<br><br>We intentionally refuse to acknowledge that we known these things.<br>e.g. »I don't know that there are nice magazines out there than the one I design.« |
| Things we don't know | Known Unknowns<br><br>We know that we don't know these things.<br>e.g. »I know that I don't know every magazine on this planet.« | Unknown Unknowns<br><br>We don't know that we don't know these things.<br>e.g. »I'm certain that they are only 10 magazines on this planet.«                                  |

Think before  
doing stuff

»Spend one hour per day thinking about what you want to do on this day.« – I don't remember where I got this quote from, but it's burned into my head. Not because I'm actually practising this kind of advice (personally, I think one hour is too much, but of course I could be wrong), but because it's the exact opposite of what I and so many other designers are doing. Designers are threatened to do stuff without thinking. I noticed this when I tried another possibility of getting to know how I work: I recorded a few screen videos that lets me see how I'm moving things in InDesign. I sat down with no ideas how to combine the text and the comments on the spread, and 40 minutes later (squeezed into five minutes video time) I came up with a spread (Bitcoin spread →[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3xwqK\\_7lYs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3xwqK_7lYs) or YouTube page (not in the final magazine) →<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fT2eHnuSYSQ>). Here on can see nicely that I discarded the nicer versions because I thought there are not boxy and complex enough for the first issue). I got carried away with some details in the process, like moving boxes only a little bit up and down; and I learned that I should separate even more the rough composition/concept work from the fine margins/typo work.

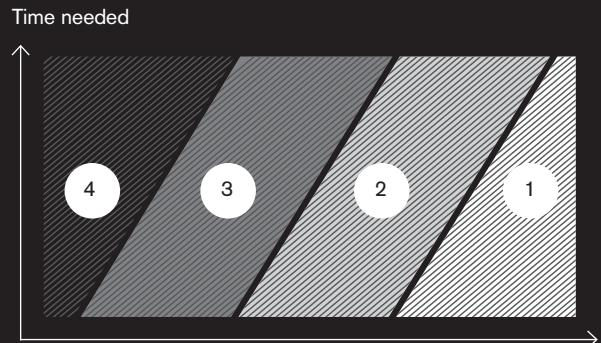
But the crucial lesson here was that thinking through doing works only at least as well as thinking before doing. I could have saved myself a lot of time with planning some visual ideas before realizing them. But how well it really works? Here again, I don't know the answer yet: When is thinking better and when doing?

Avoid  
Unknown  
Unknowns

I've always been afraid of the knowledge and skills that I should have – because it would make my work so much more easier / relevant / better / [positive adjective] – but don't know it. This knowledge, of which you don't even know that you don't know it, is called Unknown Unknowns ↗[p112](#). It can be the project out there that's extremly similar to what you're working on but had no idea it exists. It can be a life hack, a person or anything else. Unknown Unknowns are the missing piece of a puzzle of which you don't know how large it really is. Unknown Unknowns are archenemies in the early days of every project.

## What to do next

based on the Eisenhower Matrix



How much you learn  
OR Outcome  
OR Drive / Mood  
OR Urgency  
OR Importance

How can you avoid them?

- Read summative Wikipedia article.
- Spend some time checking if your topic is called differently by people who have something interesting to say about this topic; e.g. »Group Based Associative Idea Generation« instead of »Brainstorming« or »Development of Graphical Methods« instead of »Information Design«.
- Get to know experts in this field and ask: What are they doing the whole day? With what or who are they spending their time? What is important to them?
- Ask questions, as many as possible. Especially the Why-Questions. And the Why-of-the-Why-of-the-Why-Question.
- Read as broad as possible: Not only your always same blogs and books, but also about the business or production side of it, about artistic, historical or psychological approaches etc. The goal is to get as many perspectives on one topic as possible.

Read

Especially the last one is important. Read a lot. Read in every direction. Or in one – it doesn't matter so much, just read. I read too little, and I notice that a lot.

I usually use books for a »break to get inspired«; meaning, as triggers to new ideas: When I'm reading a book, every other chapter my thoughts get inspired by a specific sentence or phrase and move to the space in the part of my brain where ideas are made (making ideas mean mostly combining them; it's my own Mind Morphological Matrix → p120, so to say). Reading the first part of seven chapters in Francesco Franchi's Designing News for example took ages...I was constantly with my eyes in my brain instead of on the paper. (I made the experience that my thoughts are flowing better the more abstract the text is.)

Structure your thoughts (with models)

As evident throughout my Master's Thesis, I'm a huge fan of information graphics. I like every part of doing an info graphic. I like looking for the most interesting data. I like to use and learn new formulas in Excel or Google Fusion Tables. I like using tools like Pivot Tables and Tableau to explore the data; to see if there is a statement that I could visualize. I like thinking about how you can bring all the interesting data on

## SWOT analysis

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Strengths / Assets  | Opportunities  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Software Skills</li><li>• Supervisors</li><li>• Possibilities at the university:<br/>Library, Workshops etc.</li><li>• Enough Time (18 weeks)</li><li>• I designed magazines before</li><li>• I designed graphics before</li><li>• Support from friends</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning more about the editorial site of magazines</li><li>• Learning more about which design decisions I should make</li><li>• Bringing my designs out there</li></ul>           |
| Weaknesses / Liabilities  | Threats  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No idea about the editorial site of magazine sites</li><li>• No idea about how good my designs are in comparison with others</li></ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Underrating the effort of making magazines</li><li>• Choosing topics that are not working for the magazines</li><li>• Not seeing obvious mistakes<br/>(Unknown Unknowns)</li></ul> |

paper (form follows statement!). I like the challenge that you first have to think or you're loosing a lot of time while moving elements from one corner to another. And I like the result.

However, one of the best parts of doing an information graphic is sorting the information and data available. I try to bring this aspect in almost every corner of my life and use models to organize my thoughts (similarly to organizing the thoughts and the process while preparing presentations).

Here I want to present some models that have been essential for me during the last years and this Master's Thesis.

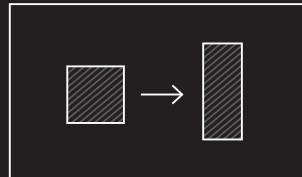
The first model is close to the Eisenhower Matrix, which orders tasks according to their importance and urgency. Here I ordner tasks regarding the time needed to accomplish them and the (learning) outcome / urgency / importance etc. [→p114](#). It basically shows your order of priority with which you should work at your tasks. The less time you need to finish a task and the more you gain out of it or the more urgent or important it is or the more you like to do it; the higher should it be on your priority list of to-do's. I even think – and I tried to visualise it – that something not so urgent or important should be done first if it takes significant less time to do it.

The second model is the SWOT analysis [→p116](#). I put my own strengths, weaknesses and possible oppurtunities and threats regarding this Master's Thesis in it. While doing this, I noticed how dangerous such an analysis can be: It forces you to see a problem, idea or action from another point of view, which is great; but it does not necessarily asks you what to do next with this new view on things. Related to the SWOT analysis, it's nice to see this overview – but it's also very important that I go the next step and ask myself: How can I focus more on my strengths, how can I compensate my weaknesses? (Here I'm lucky, because all my weaknesses turn out as oppurtunities to learn something.) And how can I prepare myself for the threats?

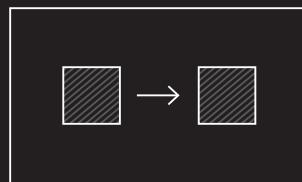
The third model will be explained in detail in the next chapter. It's not necessary to use all of them all the time. But in my experience, having them in mind as a possible perspective on things can be an incredible help.

## The Elements of Creativity

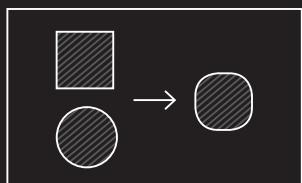
according to Kirby Ferguson in Everything is a Remix



Transform



Copy



Combine

Good artists copy, better artists steal.

4 Thinking about the How (Creative Process)

### 4.2 Copy and Paste

Ok, here's where I have to tell a little secret: I copy; shamelessly. I think one of my best works I've ever designed before this master's thesis was copied, too. I'm speaking about the documentation of my internship at Bloomberg Businessweek →p126 (and the AI32 graphics during this internship). Why do I think it turned out so amazing? Because I designed this documentation after my super inspiring time at Bloomberg. I sucked up their design and their attitude, let it float through my brain and then spit it on paper. With other words: I copied. Well, now it's several months – actually, exactly twelve – since my time at Bloomberg. Time passed, and so did my Bloomberg attitude. So what do I do? I noticed that one thing helps. I just ask one question: »What would my colleagues at Bloomberg do?« It helps so much. It works with every design (studio) superstar.

I don't want to do a design that looks like something the Bloomberg people design. They can do this so much better. And of course (and luckily!) I don't like every single piece of design they designed. But I just take their design approach, mix it up with my taste and my content and ask the question »What would they do?« until I like it. Or until I'm not stuck anymore. But do I feel bad? Do I feel like I don't make enough of an effort to design? No, I don't (anymore). I had to notice, »there is nothing new under the sun«-like, that so, SO many individual design ideas are already out there. I used to try hard to come up with an design idea in long days and weeks and months – only to notice afterwards that my so genius design idea was already implemented in at least one other design piece. I saw the same pattern with my friends. And then I thought: »Screw it. Just get to know more designs, early – and then have a wild range from which you can copy and combine, according to your content. If you have a really new idea on the way, even better. But don't force it.« I'm sure this works only so long in my career, but that's what I try now: I have a library of possibilities in my head, get samples out if I need them (meaning, if they fit to the task I'm working on), copy or transform and combine them.

## The Morphological Matrix

|                      | 1                  | 2              | 3                         | 4                    | 5                          | 6                     | 7                        | 8                | 9                       |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Size                 | As big as possible | Tabloid Size   | Newspaper Size            | As small as possible | Softcover Book Size        | 15 x 50 cm            | square                   | like a circle    | triangular              |
| Text Font            | Helvetica          | Futura         |                           | Minion Pro           |                            |                       |                          |                  |                         |
| Headline Font        | Helvetica          | Futura         | Minion Pro                | Garamond             | WingDings                  | Comic Sans            | Sabon                    | Rockwell         | Walbaum                 |
| Grid columns         | 2                  | 4              | 5                         | 8                    | 9                          | 11                    | 12                       | 20               | no grid                 |
| Photos               | no photos          | super small    | only stock photos         | unicolor             | only ones from before 1950 | with thick red border | censor all eyes          | only open source | only taken from friends |
| Information Graphics | no graphics        | as center-fold | with lots of pictures     | unicolor             | at least one Venn Diagram  | with thick red border | in same font as headline | one on each page | one on each page        |
| Illustrations        | No illustrations   | as center-fold | only from one illustrator | unicolor             | only ones with faces on it | with thick red border | small                    | one on each page | as cover                |

## Elements of Creativity

### Morphological Matrix

Transforming. Copying. Combining. According to Kirby Ferguson, these are the three pillars of every invention [→ p118](#). Ferguson is the author of the great video documentation »Everything is a Remix«, in which he explains pop-culture phenomena, like songs, movies or technological product that have been copied and combined in the past.

The creativity model that emphasizes the »combining« aspect the most is the Morphological Matrix [→ p120](#). It's just a table, but it's the visual model that amazes me the most (and that Karl Gerstner [→ p36](#) used as a way to choose typefaces).

How does it work? In the first column we write down the parameters of a product we want to generate ideas for, in this case »magazine size«, »text font« or »photos«. In the first row we simply put increasing numbers. In the body of the table we then generate ideas for each number. Of course we can write only seven numbers, but we can also set the goal to find at least 30 or 40 ideas for each parameter. Maybe the best thing about the Morphological Matrix is that it forces you to think about options for your parameter. The more specific the parameter (like »source of photos« instead of just »photos«), the more difficult it is to find ideas.

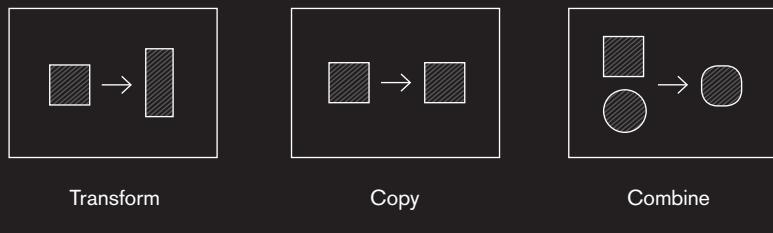
After filling all the rows with ideas, the combining begins: We select one idea from each row so that we have one parameter for each characteristic of our product.

And the possibilities are huge. In our example we have seven parameter and nine columns for ideas, so that we write down only 63 ideas. But after combining them, we have  $9^7$ , so 4,782,969 possible ideas. 4,8 million ideas sound like a lot – and we've only written down seven ideas for each parameter. It sounds like there are enough ideas on this planet for everyone, even if we »just« combine and don't come up with anything new.

In terms of graphic design and depending on the chosen parameter, the number of possibilites is even higher – because it's of course an option to choose more than one idea per row. For example, the photos in my magazine will be unicolor with a thick red border and only from open sources. Even if my parameter would be »sources for photos«, I could choose more than one option, e.g. »stock photos« and »open sources«.

Maybe you wonder: Will such a tool make us to better designer? I doubt that. But it's an argument for copying, and I like copying. When I speak about a »idea library« in my

The Morphological Matrix combined with the Elements of Creativity  
according to Kirby Ferguson in Everything is a Remix



| Ideas       | 1  | 2  | 3  |
|-------------|----|----|----|
| Parameter A | 1A | 2A | 3A |
| Parameter B | 1B | 2B | 3B |
| Parameter C | 1C | 2C | 3C |
| Parameter D | 1D | 2D | 3D |
| Parameter E | 1E | 2E | 3E |

| Ideas       | 1  | 2  | 3  |
|-------------|----|----|----|
| Parameter A | 1A | 2A | 3A |
| Parameter B | 1B | 2B | 3B |
| Parameter C | 1C | 2C | 3C |
| Parameter D | 1D | 2D | 3D |
| Parameter E | 1E | 2E | 3E |

| Ideas       | 1  | 2  | 3  |
|-------------|----|----|----|
| Parameter A | 1A | 2A | 3A |
| Parameter B | 1B | 2B | 3B |
| Parameter C | 1C | 2C | 3C |
| Parameter D | 1D | 2D | 3D |
| Parameter E | 1E | 2E | 3E |

Transformation can be used in brainstorming all the different parameters and ideas for the parameters. Possible transformations according to the Osborn Method are:

Copying means taking a product with all its ideas for each parameter and duplicate it.

Combined can be the parameters from different products.



Remove ← Reduce → Increase → Multiply

### Combining

head, I hope it works like this. The Morphological Matrix lets us understand how we think and how we come up with »innovation«, but without all the magic and muse around it. And maybe in the end, if we understand what we do, we can extend the doing, too.

Because I like the Morphological Matrix and Fergunsons elements of creativity, I thought it's actually possible to combine both (see what I did here? Combine is the third element of creativity) [→ p122](#). We use the element Copy to have a look at all the ideas that are already used by other projects – we then copy these ideas into one of our columns. To think of new ideas, we use the element Transform. For that we can also use other creativity techniques like the Osborn Method, which suggests removing, reducing, increasing and multiplying as forms of transformating. For example: Regarding a grid, we can increase the number of colums; for fonts we can reduce the number of used typefaces or the year of their creation. Afterwards, we combine the different ideas like shown in the explanation of the Morphological Matrix.

### 4.3 Bringing my work out there

|  | Views on Behance  | Appreciations | Viewer who appreciated   |
|--|---|---------------|--|
| Bloomberg Businessweek Internship (2013) | 296    | 42            | 14%   |
| dotview #1 (2011)                        | 115    | 16            | 14%   |
| Information Graphics for AI32 (2013)     | 112    | 12            | 11%   |
| dotview #3a (2014)                       | 73     | 12            | 16%   |
| dotview #3b (2014)                       | 101    | 9             | 9%    |
| What we've known (2013)                  | 178  | 6             | 3%  |

Get feedback through numbers

One big goal of my master thesis was »Bringing my work out there.« This is a side effect of my actual purpose to make my design better through feedback. And you need people for feedback, don't you.

So at more than one point of the process I thought about the whole »showing your work« thing. I've always had a website; since I was 14 years old or so. I was fascinated by webdesign and what you can do with HTML and CSS. I put my illustrations, some texts and photographies on different blogs and designed them. But never ever came anybody across these blog – and actually, I didn't expect this to happen. I wanted to have a website just because it was a nice way of presenting my works – for me. I still like this aspect: Seeing your work on your website or Behance profile makes it look differently. But of course, nowadays you want the attention. You want the acknowledgement and a lot of clicks on your »Appreciate it!« button. I think a lot of people use this as a nice and quite addictive (and therefore, at some point sadly disappointing) way to boost their self-confidence; but a lot of people also think they »need« to do it because »everybody does it« and they will have »advantages« (whatsoever) when they're applying for a job. I think that's not so true, especially not for employer (it's another story for freelancer). However, bringing my work out there was still one of the best aspects of my Master's Thesis. But why? What are the advantages? What did I learn?

Behance is great in showing you what »good« (or let's say: widely appreciated) design actually is just through the amount of views and appreciations you get on a project → p124. You can learn from that.

I uploaded six projects to Behance, among others the super big information design project »What we've known« I did in Oxford during my exchange semester, and the internship documentation of my time at the Bloomberg Businessweek → p126. I designed the latter one in maybe 10 days: One spread every three to four hours. The typography is just bad. The magazine



Decide  
between form  
and function

has no magazine-like structure or flow at all. In the information graphic, however, I put a lot of energy and consideration. And surprise: The numbers show that apparently a lot more people on Behance like the Bloomberg Internship Documentation more than the info graphic.

Well, what does this tell me? First, it tells me that the preview pics on Behance and every other similar platform are so small and the attention span of the viewer is so short that it just doesn't matter if you have high-end kerning. That the »big pictures«, the quickly seen concept, is much more important than details. And it demonstrates very nicely that Behance is not the best place to show magazine design: Nobody sees the structure. All the Behance user can see, are images. Discovering this, I felt like (magazine) designers have to decide: Do they want to produce quick, nice, Behance-worthy magazine spreads; »images« that work well in their portfolio and convince the viewer quickly? Or do they want to learn how to make »real« magazines and spending their time with thinking about the flow and articles instead of the design? The best design, of course, combines both – but it speaks for itself how many quick designs are out there, highly praised.

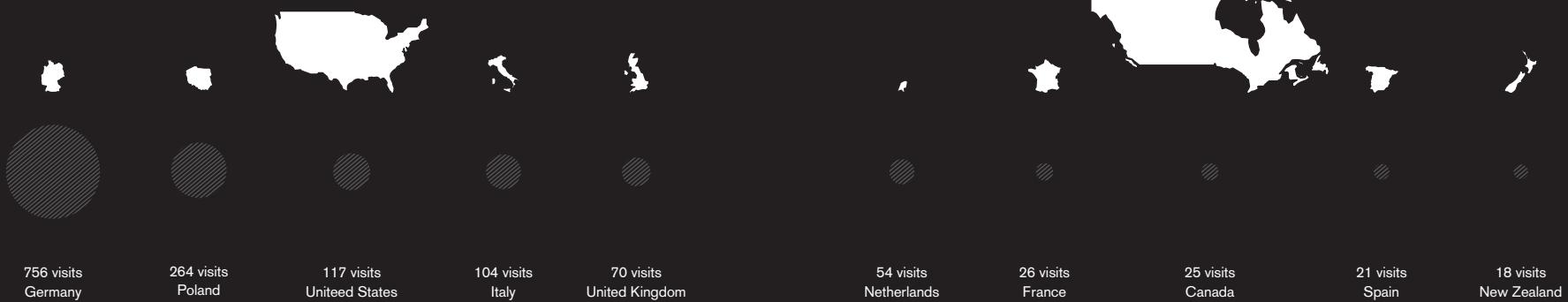
Outside ap-  
preciations  
lead to inside  
appreciation

Although I still doubted that Behance was right, it helped me to appreciate my own work. Suddenly I saw some beauty in the Internship Documentation that I haven't seen before. (I bet that would have happened to any other project, too.) Why I didn't see its shine before? I designed it in ten days and I didn't think that something I made in ten days can be good enough. That's DISPROVED. In fact, I've seen results from 5-hours-workshop published in design magazines. In my opinion it's all about intellectual preparation, or, as I called it earlier, a »break for inspiration and thinking« ↗p109. I prepared this magazine in my mind a lot. There were eight weeks time between the internship and the date on which I started to design the documentation for it. And during the 3-month-internship (at Bloomberg) itself I already started to think about the end product. So when I said that I needed 10 days to design the magazine with 64 pages, all I did was bringing the layouts, texts and info graphics from my mind on paper. After designing so many hours, days, weeks or even months

**31,777** words in 98 posts

That are 0.69 posts per day,  
containing 380 times the word  
»magazine« and 135 times the word  
»design«. In this thesis, 9,525 words  
of them are copied & pasted in the  
»Process« part of the magazines.

Visits from 49 nations, among others:



**1,609** visits



51.4% Returning Visitors  
48.6% New Visitors

10th of February 2014  
(week 1)

13 March, 2014  
26 page views

29 April, 2014  
60 page views

30 May, 2014  
125 page views

1st of June 2014  
(end of week 16)

| week 1 | week 2 | week 3 | week 4 | week 5 | week 6 | week 7 | week 8 | week 9 | week 10 | week 11 | week 12 | week 13 | week 14 | week 15 | week 16 |

»I don't know you but i love you. Great project you're working on, super interesting tumblr, I wish you all the best with your master thesis. I'll check your updates, cheers.«

April 4, 2014

»I had the pleasure to meet designers and editors like Ibrahim Nehme (from the Outpost, check out the fine but powerful work they're doing), Rachel & Jody from Another Escape, and Lisa! Haha! Most-smiling-person award, she pushed me to write more here, so here I am. Ciao Lisa :) She's a great mind, doing a super good work, I'm so glad I met her.«

May 31, 2014

»Ok, you worked a lot. It's always a good energy the one that comes with opening your blog, checking your work. Amazing quantity of things and unbelievable amount of self-direction and self motivation... And posts are funnier now that I know you ;)

But, about your magazines: I can tell you learned a lot in these months! The thing I enjoy the most when checking your work is always your sense of humour and confidence in doing it »your own way«, from the infographics design, to the funny titles of the subsections, to the ads and funny illustrations.«

by Jacopo Atzori, Milan, Italy

»Hi Lisa,  
in addition to my previous email I wanted to ask you something.  
Do you think you can do a short talk about your project and the discoveries you made?  
It would be fun, and a wild move, to ask you to give a talk at Facing Pages.  
Think about it and let me know a.s.a.p.!«  
William

»@lisacrost no worries, I really love your project.  
It was great to see your talk at @FacingPages2014«  
by @danielcecil

**»Appreciate the follow Lisa! Have thoroughly enjoyed reading of your process for 'dot view' on your blog. I'm looking at a similar subject for my Honours project this year, here in New Zealand.«**  
by @fenemorb

on a project you can loose your »fresh view« – personally, it's hard for me to judge this work in comparison with other works anymore (another reason why I like short projects so, SO much more). In the end you don't even think anymore that you created something special. Hearing what positive things other people have to say about your work can you help to see your work in a new light.

Somebody will like it

Push it.  
Push it hard.

I wondered: Will there be positive thing to say about my work? Because nobody of my peers told me: »Wow, it's so good, I bet people would publish it on their website!« What I've learned from that: I shouldn't listen so often to my own opinion or the one from my close environment (friends, class mates), but let people from far away decide if they like my stuff or not. There are so, so many magazines, blogs and other platforms on the world – eventually, somebody will like it. Maybe the secret of good design is that it increases the critical mass of people who can potentially find it likeable. But even »bad« design works: There is a »taste niche« (a »Circle of Taste« [→p245](#) as I will call it later) for everything.

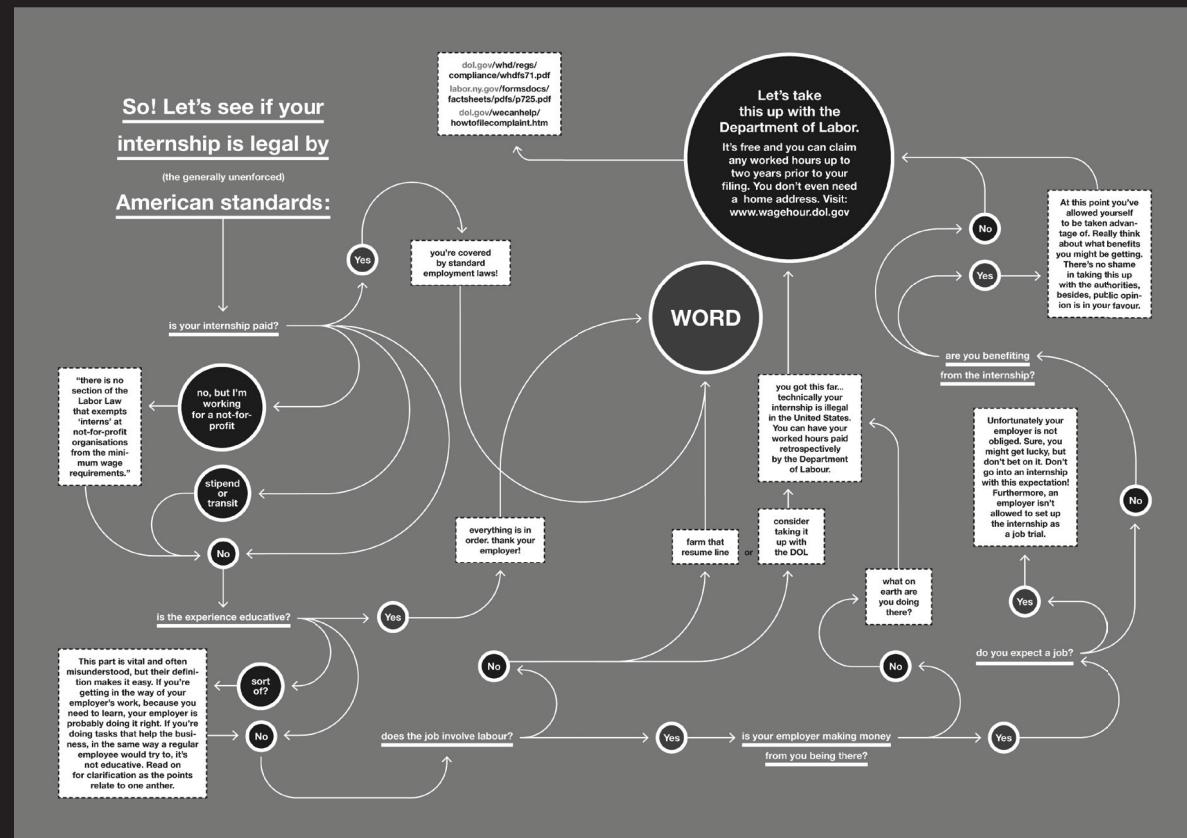
But you have to find this niche, because it doesn't find you (normally). When I was young and dumb, I thought: »If somebody finds my work on my website and likes it, they will tell the world.« Well, that was naive, incredibly naive. I didn't expect that the whole world suddenly says: »OMG I LOVE IT!!!!«, but maybe I expected that somebody would say: »Hey look, I found this designer by coincidence – she's not so bad!« Coincidence! Ladies and Gentleman, I proudly present one of the biggest mistakes in the thinking of a designer or artist. It goes like this: »Some day, somebody will discover me. I just have to wait.« I hope I will never think like this again, not even subconsciously (like I did it in this case). I think it's right to say: Everybody has to push in the beginning; but the more you are just average with your design, the more you have to push. And you ARE average, because there are hundreds of designer who are better than you. Which isn't a problem. They can't design day and night. And design blogs need something to blog about. And design magazines need something to write about. And what I've learned in the last three days: Design blogs and magazines are likely to publish something that's not

»For the most part here at intern, our talent posts look at the broad portfolios of emergent creative talent. Resultantly, it was with great intrigue that we approached Lisa Rost's project »Lessons Learned at Bloomberg Businessweek«. As you can probably deduce from the title, Lisa has put together a body of work inspired by, and reflecting upon her time interning with the revered magazine in New York last summer.

The project, a week long undertaking for her course in Visual Communication / Visual Culture at Bauhaus University Weimar shows a flair for the sort of rich infographic content that has been such a triumph for Businessweek since its re-branding in 2010. The quality of Lisa's design is evident throughout her portfolio as is this experience's influence on her current direction.

One of the questions that often lands on the desk here is »How do you work out if an internship is worthwhile or not?« Seeing Lisa quantify and express her various learning experiences in this slickly produced project is therefore a refreshingly different approach, and an informative one at that. On the off-chance that she hadn't enjoyed her time with Businessweek (she did), then producing this in review would have single-handedly saved the placement from being a waste of time.

We're big fans of Lisa's uncompromising immersion into the magazine and the manner in which she has documented it. It wouldn't come as any surprise were Businessweek to come knocking when she graduates later this year. Any design studio or publication that do manage to snare her will have a rising star on their hands.«



»Hi Lisa,  
My name is Ricard  
and I am a designer  
from Barcelona.  
I just wanna say hello  
and how I really like all  
your works. It's pretty  
amazing everything you  
do. And I also envy you,  
for your Bloomberg B.  
internship. It might be an  
enormous experience!  
and this is it :) «

»You started following my tumblr. I look at  
your thesis. I'm interested in your project  
and what your intentions with the project  
are as a whole are...«

(All sincere questions, not really snooping  
for anything)  
Is it to create a new magazine?  
Reinvent the current model of a publication?  
New magazine with different content focus?  
Test out different styles and their effectiveness? ...«

by David Chathas, California Institute of  
the Arts

»an add on/afterthought piece of  
advice >> just try be careful with how  
much of your work you put on the internet  
while you are studying/startng out. Once something is in the internet  
it is very hard to make it disappear,  
so things you put on the internet  
now will probably still be wandering  
around associated to your name in  
10 years. Studying is a time to be  
more in a safe environment where  
you can make as many mistakes as  
you want. Being a good designer just  
takes time and practice, it is a natural  
progression of improvement, the more  
you improve the less you will like your  
older work. I am always very relieved  
that I didn't have a website when  
I studied, there are very few things  
I made then that I would feel ok about  
people seeing now. But even then  
there is still a lot of work I did when  
starting out that I wish now I never put  
on the net. If you want feedback for  
work via the way of the internet then  
I would suggest seriously considering  
not using your real name.«

by Nell May, New Zealand

@lisacrost  
»Congrats  
Lisa – great  
presentation!«  
by @serendip-  
ite\_CH

»Ich bin Keno und habe mich gerade an verschiedenen  
Universitäten für gestalterische/künstlerische Studien-  
fächer beworben (ja, auch in Weimar :D). Im Moment laufen  
ja gerade die Eignungsprüfungen und im Rahmen einer  
Hausaufgabe möchte ich ein Magazin zu einem vorgege-  
benen Thema machen.  
The Design Magazine Project habe ich gefunden, als ich  
nach Inspiration gesucht habe und es ist mir echt eine Hilfe.  
Ich finde das Projekt sehr interessant, abgesehen davon  
dass das Design natürlich sehr cool ist. :) «  
Jetzt schon einmal vielen Dank dafür! :) «

as good as your work – just because you didn't push, but the other designer did. If they don't know you, they can't publish you. I learned: There's no harm in letting the world know that you can do nice designs, too. And the worst case is....that they don't publish you. And nobody ever knows that you tried. I asked Novum magazine to publish my Internship documentation, and never ever came an answer back. But I asked IDPure, and now my first dotview magazine has a spread in their magazine. In addition, I wrote Alec Dudson from Intern Magazine, who even posted an article about my internship documentation on their website ↗p132 (I've never been called »a rising star« and of course it's music to my ears. This really made my day back then!). Two months later, Alec asked me to design a spread for his magazine.

Get rewarded  
with conversa-  
tions

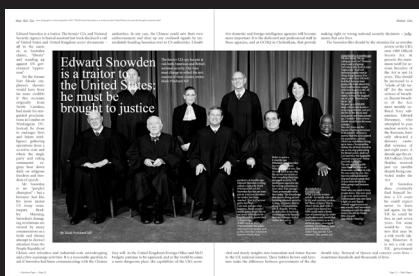
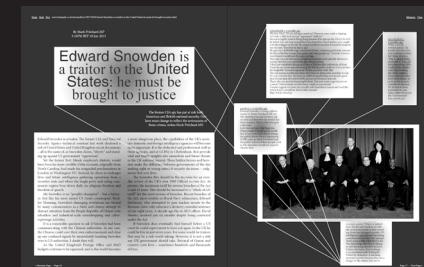
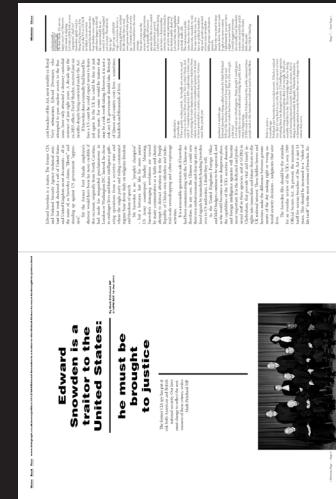
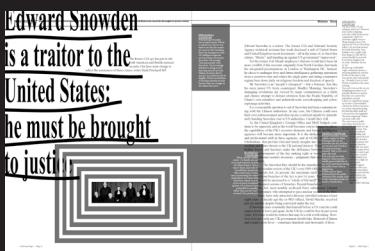
Bringing my work out there also let to get invited as a speaker at Facing Pages, an independent magazine conference in Arnhem, the Netherlands. That's why I'm bringing my work out there: In the end, I don't want attention; I want the conversation. That's the nicest part. When people come and talk to you about your work and you respond and talk about their work and you get some new insights out of the conversation. I was fortunate enough to get this often during my Master's Thesis process. Especially Jacopo Atzori from Milano and David Chathas from California gave me some great perspectives on my own work (and I hope, I did the same on theirs).

In the next chapter, the tour begins: I will give excerpts from my Blog to demonstrate my process and will analyse the feedback I got from all these nice persons.

## 5.1 What and How I designed – dotview #3a

5.1.1 dotview #3a – The Process

5.1.2 dotview #3a – The Feedback



## 5 What and How I designed

### 5.1.1 dotview #3a – The Process

[Wed, 15 Jan 2014 21:34] Today I did some design options, based on the spread that can be found in my second dotview issue (it's at the top of all the designs here) → Fig.1. First I tried a »Zeit Magazin« approach: A lot of white space, distinctive headline (see my Magazine topology from 3 days ago). Then I did two »trashy« and maybe 032c-like option – which was fun, although I'm always not sure if I even like this kind of style. I also tried an approach with the big picture in the middle, which I found more appealing than I thought I would. The white font on the photo worked better than I expected.

After designing so many packed magazines, I often feel that I need more »highlights« on my spreads and that they are too »boring« without them. But of course I'm enjoying »empty« magazines like Zeit Magazin or Brand Eins. I used to design very minimalist, so maybe I just need to rediscover that. Well, sometimes, I guess, design works like art: You just need to know when you're finished.

[Mon, 20 Jan 2014 19:41] In the last three days I was looking for people. Until now I have only 80 of them, but I'm proud of finding every single one: Editorial Designer and Students, Editorial Design Professors, Magazine Editors and Insiders of the Editorial Design scene.

Why do I need these people? I want to ask people how they find my magazine and hope to get very helpful answers. I'm trying to find a good mix of quantity and quality: The one excellent opinion about my magazine is as important for my process as the hundreds of same »Well, yeah, it's OK« – feedbacks. So I want both: The crowd and the expert. I want your opinion (as in »you guys«) and your opinion (as in »you, sir«).

[Sun, 26 Jan 2014 20:11] I'm getting ready to move from Berlin to Weimar – my beloved small city of studying, home town of the Bauhaus, somewhere in the nowhere of Germany; where I haven't lived for 18 months.

Fig.2 → 05 Feb 2014  
Thinking about Making Money Online



Fig.3 → 06 Feb 2014

[Thu, 30 Jan 2014 17:28] Yesterday was a moment of epiphany when I thought about my magazine: Away with the articles. Radical simplifying is the way to go. What about trying to get the next issue full with just non-journalistic user-generated content: comments to articles, blog posts, Wikipedia articles etc.?

[Mon, 03 Feb 2014 21:53] Today is my first day in Weimar; so the first thing I did was going to the library for three hours and having a look at classic books about grids and editorial design. Did I mention that I'm not feeling as comfortable with grids as I feel I should be? Today made me think: »Grids are do-able.« And that's good. Also, I'm looking forward to do the math behind the grid; playing with numbers is always something I enjoy.

It was there in the library when I had the over-due idea to extend my analysis of the structure of magazines with the magazine I already designed. Because of course, I had some thoughts about the organisation of articles when I designed the first and second issue of »dotview« – but I wonder: How good is this magazine really when it comes to page structure? Well, I'm proud to say that it has more contrast (in terms of long and short articles) than the Fluter magazine...but there is still room to improve things. I feel like the contrast is too sharp: I have these four very long articles in the middle and a long, boring tail towards the end. I also have barely big images or some other kind of break in my long articles – that's something I need to improve, too.

[Thu, 06 Feb 2014 18:03] A few days/week ago, I had a conflict; somewhere mentioned in one of these long posts: I didn't know if I should design three completely different magazines regarding the style – or if I should be consequent with only one style. I answered this question with deciding for the first option: To be diverse; to try different styles.

Now I dared to consider another possibility: To bring more than one style in a magazine. What I'll (maybe) try to establish, is a brand identity which language IS the bi-style. To be clear: That's two styles in ONE magazine.

[Mon, 10 Feb 2014 21:59] Exactly one month ago I started this blog with the words: »And it starts.« Today is another start: The official one →Fig.5. My Master's Thesis Working Period



Fig.4 → 07 Feb 2014  
Reading Designing News



Fig.5 → 10 Feb 2014  
The official start of my Master's Thesis

(or however you can call that) started today. I have exactly 18 weeks from now one to...change the world. Or at least to do something nice that I'll like at the end.

And I have four weeks to produce a magazine about money on the web → Fig.2. I dug some crazy stories about money-making out of the web in the last couple of days and can't wait to actual put them into a form.

[Tue, 11 Feb 2014 23:22] Today was a good and productive day (DeskTime Manager tells me that I was at my desk 11,5h; 9h of them productive). I made the decision for a typeface – the very classic Miller; not so much can go wrong with something like this – and afterwards started to lay out a grid.

During my library visits in the last few days I became fan of Karl Gerstner's grid for the magazine CAPITAL, but I saw a problem with the fact that it's only a square grid. So I found this tutorial for designing a »Complex Grid«, that »stretches« Gerstner's grid. After working through this tutorial and adjusting it to my »design task«, I finally found myself with the grid that I show here: → Fig.6 12 columns and 12 rows, which can be used in a very (maybe too?) flexible way.

I also found very interesting that I already have a communication problem with the first web article I want to visualize: The story about a dealer on the Silk Road (in the dark, dark web). I have the problem that all my stories are very strong; about topics that already provoke a lot of associations in the readers' mind. So when I say »drugs«, what to you think: Of the dirty side of meeting in back alleys? Of the white and clinical side of the pills and their production? Or of the rainbow color psychedelic side of the effects of (some) drugs? And first and foremost: Which side should I communicate? Is it better to decide and communicate something clear and consequent, or should I design a compromise? Should I even go for something so obvious? Or is it better to bring images of beautiful landscapes of the real Silk Road – to set a contrast (as N. suggested)? I noticed that it's maybe sometimes easier to communicate something unknown for the reader; to introduce associations instead of reacting to them.

[Fri, 14 Feb 2014 18:42] Sooo...these are maybe the first spreads that I actually like from this magazine: Two of three double pages about Bitcoins. I just like using only three colors.

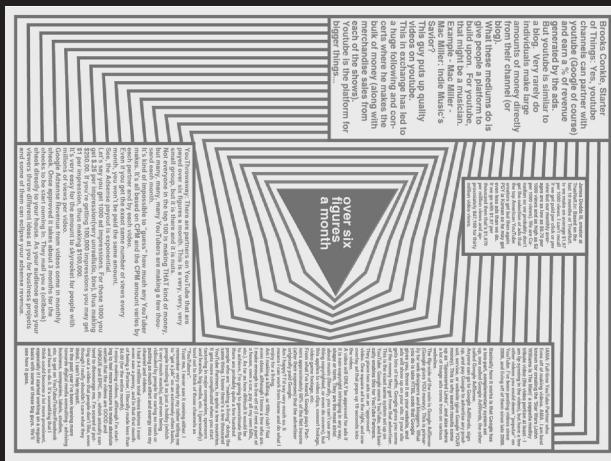
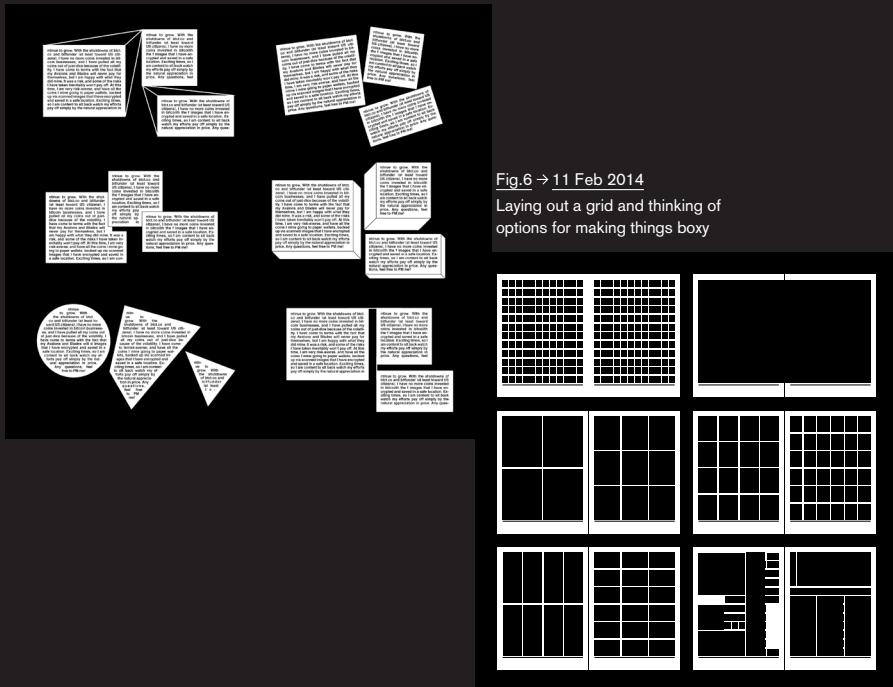


Fig.7 → 20 Feb 2014  
Page that's not in the final version

It's so...clean. And you can do a lot, surprisingly. Maybe there was a reason that the original two dotview issues were designed in only black, blue and paper white.

[Fri, 21 Feb 2014 22:39] So it's porn spread time. As I mentioned in the last post, it's hard work for me. I have the same problem I had while working on the drug spreads (»there are too many ideas in everyone's head about drugs«). But this time, it comes with a second problem that wasn't a problem for the drugs: You actually don't want to show anything serious obvious while doing a story about porn.

So I thought a LOT about this. As you can see, I'll probably go with the butcher. Yesterday already I had the idea of showing meat, but I wanted to show raw beef and chicken meat very close-up in a collage. Then I wanted to build a dollar bill out of meat (since it's about earning money with porn). Then I wanted to show the YouPorn video frame, but with old paintings of nude women and men in it (because, you know, it's art). Or Greek sculptures. Then I wanted to work with the censor bar in the YouPorn video frames, but without the rest...but that didn't make so much sense. So I came back to the idea of meat and put one big beef piece on one page and a dollar bill on the next one. And then I thought: »Hmmm....trading meat for money...I think I know this concept...butcher it is!« (I probably thought it in German, though.)

[Fri, 21 Feb 2014 22:39] My four best friends in Weimar and I planned something called ...Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse«, which is a meetup of us and anyone who's interested in sharing their work and getting feedback. So I organised a room and a projector and our first meeting happened yesterday. We all prepared presentations for it, and it was a full success.

[Thu, 27 Feb 2014 19:22] This is a crazy info graphic →Fig.8: It doesn't say so much, actually, except »Google spent a lot of money on tech startups.« In addition, this graphic is not very consequent in their usage of typo. So – it's not a good graphic. But somehow I like the look of it, and somehow it fits in the craziness of the magazine so far.

How did I do it? Everything started with drafts. Since I learned from my first video screen recording that I should

## List of mergers and acquisitions by Google

Pie chart in the background: How many companies Google bought in each segment  
Yellow color in the pie chart segment  
Segment that's named after a company Google bought for the most  
Box in the centre: Random facts about the most interesting mergers and acquisitions

Google is a computer software and a web search engine company that has been acquiring, on average, more than one company per week since 2010. The table below is an incomplete list of new entities with which Google has merged or acquired.

list of acquisition listings, with each acquisition listing being identified by the date of its entry, unless otherwise specified. The acquisition listing is provided by Google and is subject to change at any time. The price in each acquisition listing is listed in US dollars because the majority of acquisitions in the United States are priced in US dollars. If the price in an acquisition is unlisted, then it is listed as "N/A". The service that is derived from the service that is derived from the acquired company is known, then it is also listed here.

Google has acquired over 100 companies, with its largest acquisition being the purchase of Motorola Mobility, a mobile device manufacturing company based in Chicago. The vast majority of firms acquired by Google are based in the United States, and, in turn, most of these are based in California or around San Francisco. To date, Google has divested itself of three major units: Frommers, which was sold back to Arthur Frommer; Doubleclick, which

Fig. 8 → 27 Feb 2014

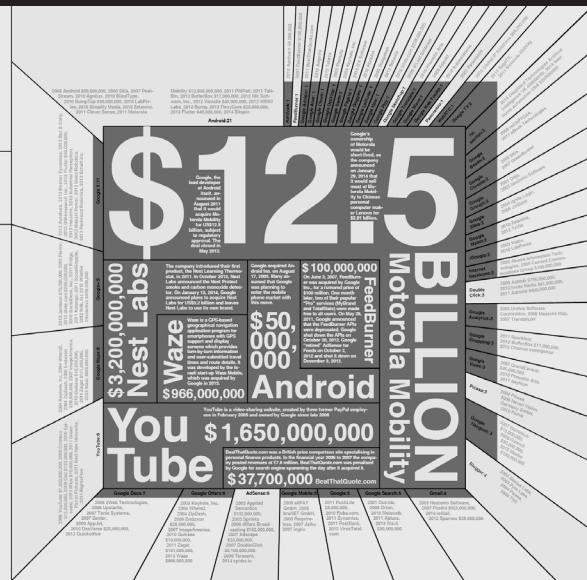


Fig.8 → 27 Feb 2014

Google Merger information graphic



Fig.9 → 04 Mar 2014

Being in Munich for the Quo Vadis,  
Editorial Design? conference

have the first raw concept before going into the details, I really wanted to think this time about the broad image first. As one can notice, I didn't use any of the sketched concepts – although some of them would have worked perfectly.

I took the data from Wikipedia, put it into Excel and then wanted to get an overview over the »statements« of the numbers with the Tableau Public software (which I highly recommend). I soon noticed that neither Excel nor Tableau Public translated the dates in the correct order (suddenly, I had start-ups which were bought by Google in 1905). So I put everything into Google Fusion Tables, and this worked perfectly. I then copied everything back to Excel.

In the meantime I had decided to create a pie chart with all the Google divisions, and I thought this would be the easy part: I put the numbers into Adobe Illustrator and clicked »create pie chart«. Voilà, I thought. It wasn't voilà at all – but unfortunately I noticed very late that Illustrator didn't render the numbers right. A lot of the pie »slices« which represented the number »1« were slightly bigger than other parts with the number »1«. I didn't even know that this was possible: That Illustrator could be wrong. »That's weird«, I thought, and tried to fix it with changing the pie chart size, changing the stroke etc...nothing helped. So I let Excel do the work (meaning the pie chart), brought the result into Illustrator to get it ready for InDesign and then, finally, had a perfect pie chart ready for my spread.

The rest was a lot of detail work; and the result is one of my favourite pages in the magazine. I even brought the Google colors into the spread (a little bit pastel, but still).

[Tue, 04 Mar 2014 23:14] Wow, this was a long weekend. I went to the Editorial Design Conference in Munich →Fig.9 called »qved – Quo vadis Editorial Design?«. I took the train to Munich last Friday in the morning and took the car back at noon yesterday. Actually, the conference »only« lasted three days, but I had the spontaneous honour to visit Mirko Borsche in his bureau on Monday.

The conference itself was ...nice and brought some good inspiration for my current and especially for my next magazine. But I had to notice again that German is just not the perfect language for small talk. In three days, I spoke to less people

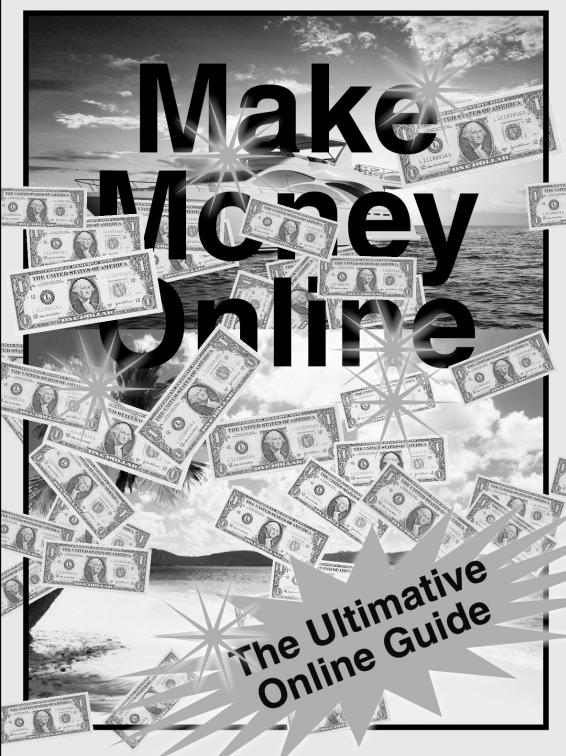


Fig.10 → 05 Mar 2014  
Designing covers for the  
»new media« part

**MONEY**

- = Paper and coinage that can be used to exchange for goods and services. More of it equals power and chicks.
- = The root of all evil.
- = The biggest reason for stress in most marriages and the number one cause of divorce in the United States.
- = the reason paris hilton is famous
- = A tool used to get what you want, when you want it
- = The only thing very hardly ever refused by anyone.
- = a gift card to everywhere
- = What I don't have.
- = the only thing that matters in the world.

than on one day at the Modern Magazine Design Conference in London last October.

But I did speak to great people like Mike Meiré, Jeremy Leslie and of course Mirko Borsche. I also bought two COLORS magazines (the News and Market issue), a magazine full with images (I always forget the name...but I will mention it in a few days or weeks) and almost, almost the PORT. I like the PORT design...I just didn't like the last issue so much; so I will wait.

It's actually the first time that I spend money on expensive magazines (the full-of-images-mag costs 17 Euro). The most expensive magazine issues I bought so far were the ones by Monocle. I don't have a problem spending 50 Euro on big Gestalten books, but...more than 8 Euro for a magazine is a critical price. The difference: When I'm purchasing a book, I know I get the whole thing. The full package. There is nothing at it that I don't buy when I buy a book, because the book is everything there is. A magazine is different: When I buy one issue, I only get a part of the story. It's like buying only one table leg instead of the whole table. Or only an episode of a TV series instead of a movie.

That's how the buying process feels for me – but of course, one issue of a magazine can feel like a complete work, too. And especially with COLORS I think that's very true.

[Wed, 05 Mar 2014 09:21] Today I learned something important: A lot of work doesn't mean that the end result is a good one.

[Wed, 05 Mar 2014 21:40] I finished the main part of the magazine...five days before the deadline for the whole magazine. Today at least was a super productive day, and my reward was to print out all the spreads and composing them to a nice structure. I'm amazed by how one topic leads to the next: I'm going from Bitcoins to the Silkroad (where Bitcoins are used); and from Porn to a Brothel in an Online Game to Online Games themselves.

In the next four days (from tomorrow, Thursday, to Sunday) I'm going to put together the front and back newspaper part (blue in my page plan); and of course I'll need at least one day to go over the whole text again and make final typo changes.

Fig.11 → 05 Mar 2014  
Page plan for the magazine

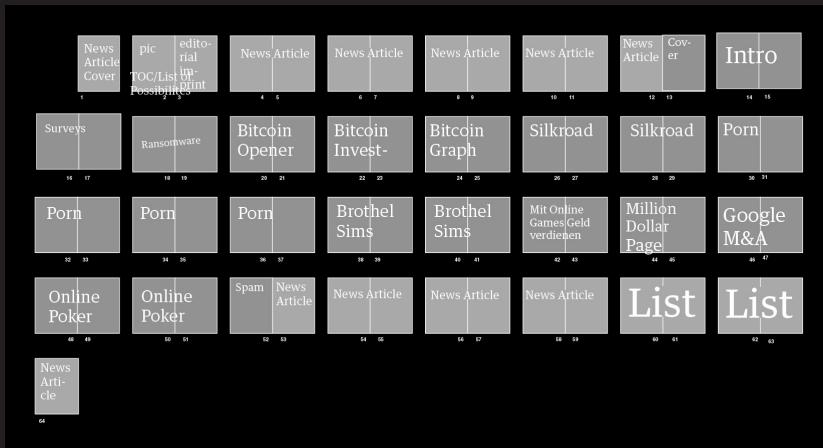


Fig.12 → 06 Mar 2014  
Working on the »old media« part (=newspaper part)

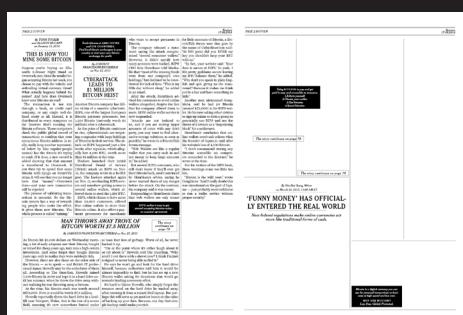


Fig.13 → 08 Mar 2014  
The final cover



[Wed, 05 Mar 2014 21:57] I design a flow chart today – because I like them, I've never done them before and they're working nicely as a table of content.

The cover itself need still refinement →Fig.10. I did some versions that looked trashy, some that looked 70s-guide-like, and some that looked boring.

[Thu, 06 Mar 2014 22:33] Today my computer disappointed me: I was happily working in InDesign while suddenly it crashed. I restarted it – and couldn't use my keyboard. Not one key of it. I plugged in an external keyboard and it was working just fine; I guess it's a hardware problem. I still have my warranty, so it's no financial issue – it's just kind of problematic that I have to go without my computer for at least two weeks in the middle of my master's thesis. But I'm glad that the university has excellent computers, too, which I can use day and night (I'm typing this on one at this moment).

And today I started with designing the newspaper spreads! It's actually more time-consuming than I thought. →Fig.12

What I haven't done so far is the cover (and for the back). I have a sketchy idea of it, but not sure if it's working. (I'm a little bit nervous regarding this.) The plan now is to finish this and the newspaper spreads until Saturday afternoon and then get started with the detail work. Long weekend ahead.

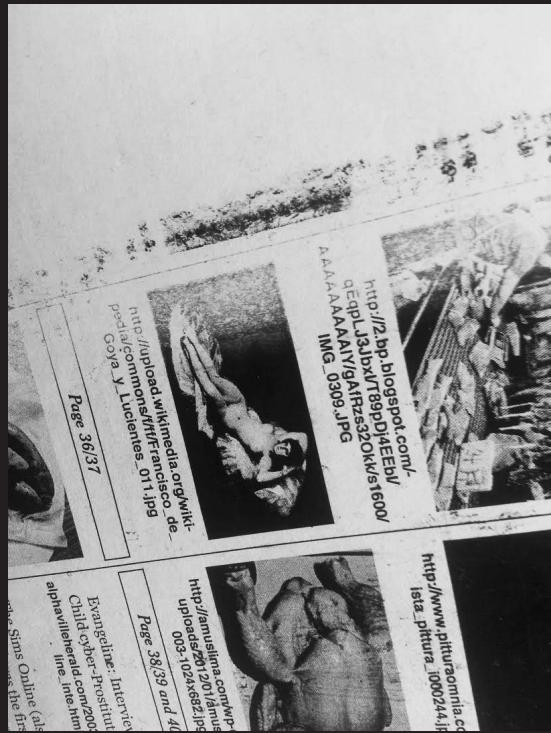
[Fri, 07 Mar 2014 23:22] Countdown: Two days left. It's going in the right direction.

[Sat, 08 Mar 2014 12:04] THAT'S IT. That's the cover →Fig.13. And you know what? I like it.

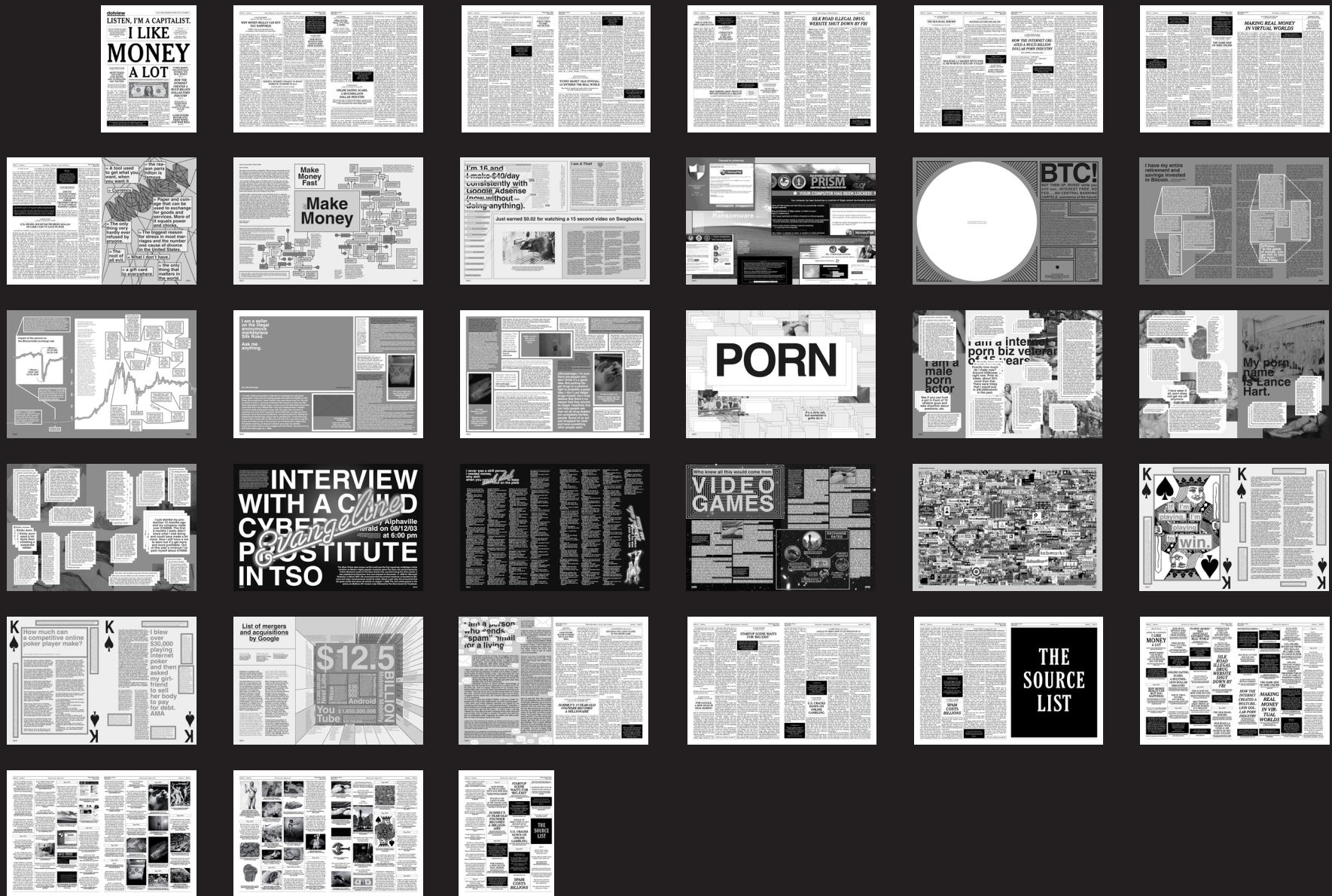
[Mon, 10 Mar 2014 17:15] It's done. The first magazine in this Master's Thesis, the third issue of dotview, is completed after four weeks.

The last three days started exhausting, but I think designing the cover of the whole thing really was a break-through. Afterwards everything was flowing fine. And I actually had some motivation left to change a few spread styles again, like the drug story (looks so much better now!).

[Mon, 10 Mar 2014 17:31] Printing Day! Did I ever mentioned that I don't like printing? Things can go terribly wrong there – it's just not as safe as the good old digital world. And it takes SO. MUCH. TIME.



she Sims Online (als  
Evangeline: Interview  
Child cyber-Prostitut  
Child cyber-Herald.com/200  
line.htm  
aphervilleherald.htm



Sample pages of dotview #3a

On the following pages I will show some pages of the dotview magazine, issue #3a, in its original size. These are only sample pages. A collection has been made to show the diversity of the magazine.

## Feedback on dotview #3a – Aspects

White area = positive mention  
 Black area = negative mention  
 Size of Circle = Number of mentions



10  
Information  
Graphics



6  
Typography



5  
Cover



5  
Content



5  
Different Formats



4  
Layout



4  
Newspaper  
Part



4  
Source Part



3  
Images



2  
Colors



2  
I'm Enthusiastic  
about the Project



2  
General Flow



1  
Boxes



0  
Understandable



0  
White Space



0  
Readability

### Negative

As mentioned before → p25, it was possible to get a very detailed feedback on the first dotview magazine because of its little number of pages and its poster-like, diverse design: People had strong opinions about certain pages. This wasn't the case in the next two issues, because they were far more consequent and therefore homogenous.

The negative aspects people I asked mentioned were the readability and missing white space as well as the understandability of the concept and the whole structure. Especially the latter ones were mentioned quite often, by almost half of the people who gave detailed feedback. It was called »unreadable« (three times), »shouting« and »massive«. One comment by designer Ella Zheng from Singapore was especially interesting: »There is so much information crammed together that I just browse through rather than read everything.« This supports my hypothesis that complex design triggers a fast reading style, while minimalism can put you in a relaxed-reading-mentality. Hyojung Julia Seo from Canada backs this up with her statement: »It makes me want to flip through it.«

The lacking understandability of the magazine and its structure was also mentioned by a lot of questionees. Six people called it »confusing«; two said it's »chaotic«. This is probably due to the magazine's very diverse style. Mattijs de Wit from the Netherlands said it looks »like 5 different magazines«; a lot of people were missing consistency in the layout and some disliked the general flow of the magazine.

Regarding the pages, my questionees disliked the page about Ransomware (p18/19) and the illustration of the porn stories (p32–35). The critique for the first one was that it looks like advertisement, while people bothered at the latter one that the illustration of meat and butcher is too negative for a porn story.

### Neutral

A point people couldn't decide on was the »old media« part in form of a newspaper. Four people were criticising that it's not a magazine anymore and that it's not inviting to read, the

Feedback on dotview #3a – What they say

## »Too much disco.«

Professor at Bauhaus University

»Seems like it will have too much noise-information in it rather than just the important things. still kind of attractive though«  
Anonymous, from the field of design

Luddy Bruneau-Rosso, Norway

## »Maximalistic.«

»Das find ich auch kacke«  
(about p42, the story about  
Video Games)  
Teacher at Bauhaus  
University

»A lot of experimental space probably because you are not in the real need of delivering a proper magazine rather than learning. Good thing.«  
Jacopo Atzori, Italy

»Comichaft aber erwachsen, auf stylische, hübsche Weise überfüllt, das Design sieht durchdacht aus, worauf man schließen möchte, dass es die Inhalte (obwohl es sehr viele scheinen) auch sind und sich das Lesen daher sicherlich lohnt«  
Anonymous, from the field of Communication / Media / Social

»Digital folklore in a user-friendly style.«  
Professor at Bauhaus University

# »Super cool. Hat Eier! Viel Text! Viel Illu danach. Kracht übelst. Wir wollens.«

Thomas Kronbichler & The Institute of Friends

»American mad men era style (well dressed men, whiskey at work... :D)«  
Anonymous, from the field of design

»Der Versuch eine schwere Thematik mit einem wirren Design auszustatten, verwirrt mich mehr als dass er mich anzieht.«  
Student at Bauhaus University

## »It hurts my eyes.«

Bauhaus University student

## »Stressful in-your-face tabloid.«

Anonymous, from the field of IT / Logic

# »Magazine looks very good, congratulations. I really enjoyed it.«

Edgar Bak, Poland

»At first it looks like a newspaper and in the middle like 5 different magazines. Watch yourself that you don't put all your ideas into one piece of design, you've got a whole career in front of you ;) «  
Mattijis de Wit, Netherlands

»It looks like: Try to make it bad, but with a wink.«  
Professor at Bauhaus University

»The best project is magazine number 1. It is diverse, composition of bold typography and pages of monotonous blocks of text is very intriguing. Bold type brings reader's attention. Number 1 is definitely the best.«  
Ryszard Bienert, Poland

»Not nice – boring. There you sat down, thought you want to do something nice, and then you thought: Shit! And then you left it in the magazine nevertheless.«  
(about p48, the Poker story)  
My father

»There is so much information cramped together that I just browse through rather than read everything. After a while, it gets a little boring.«  
Ella Zheng, Singapore

»Nicht schön – langweilig. Da sahst du da, wolltest irgendwas machen, und dann dachtest du: Scheiße. Und dann hast du es trotzdem dringelassen.«  
(about p48, the Poker story)  
My father

»I sometimes didn't like that there were just 2 or 3 colors on one page, it doesn't seem natural.«  
Anonymous (from the field of Natural Sciences)

»Features: these are good, nice job Lisa. I love the giant collage of pop-up ads/logos, google mergers is fantastic, Ransomware spread is great.«  
Evan Applegate, Bloomberg Businessweek, New York

»It makes me want to flip through it quickly to see what other ways the pages have been laid out.«  
Hyojung Julia Seo, Canada

## »Some sensation of horror vacui.«

Ricard

»This is a good magazine if you're looking for something that keeps you occupied for a couple of days.«  
Anonymous, from the field of Natural Sciences

# »I wouldn't be buying it, I'd just want to know what it was shouting about.«

Rachel Maria Taylor, Another Escape, United Kingdom

## Feedback on dotview #3a – Pages



p1: The most people liked the cover, but said it wouldn't work for them in a magazine store.



p18/19: This page about ransomware was the worst rated page in the magazine.



p46/49: The whole Poker story didn't get any mentions. It seemed like people had no opinion about it.



p56/57: The second spread who got the highest rating in the magazine.

White area = positive mention  
Black area = negative mention  
Grey area = People who had no opinion about this page

## Feedback on dotview #3a – Aspects

### Positive adjectives

#### eyecatching (3)

appealing, attractive, brave, classy, colors that sell, cool, creative, dynamic, entertaining, exciting, fancy, fresh, fun, funny, good, informative (2), interesting, interesting, mature, organised (2), kind of attractive, strong, stylish (2), thoughtful, very nice!

### Neutral adjectives

#### modern (4 mentions)

50s and 60s, 80s, abstract, american (2), american Diner, bold (5), busy (2), colorful (2), comic-like (3), contemporary, crowded, dense, diverse (2), experimental (2), exploding, expressionistic, flashy, fragmented (2), funky, heterogenous, hysterical, magazine-like, Marvel Comic like, maximalistic, monochromatic, retro (2), spacy, trashig, old school style, organised (2)

### Negative adjectives

#### confusing (6)

aggressive (4), attention-craving, chaotic (3), cluttered, in-your-face, loud (4), massive, too computer designed, messy, nervous, overflow, overloaded (5), slightly over the top, stressful, uninviting, unprofessional, unreadable (3), unstructured, weird (2)

### Positive

other four people liked the contrast to the »new media« part and how it's part of the concept.

The best aspects of the first magazine were the information graphics, the typography (especially the use of Helvetica), the content and the use of different formats. The opinions regarding the cover were interesting: A lot of people said they like it, but a few mentioned it negatively nevertheless, because they said it's not working as a cover: It wouldn't get their attention in a magazine store.

Some of my questionees also liked that the whole magazine is bold and eyecatching. Designer Ryszard Bienert from Poland said: »Bold typo brings reader's attention. Number 1 is definitely the best.« Here we can see the difference between information and communication that Francesco Franchi explained in his book »Designing News« → p101. People who liked this magazine tended to see the emotional, attention-needing side of a magazine more than its necessary to transfer information. Other things that were mentioned positively are the apparently obvious fun I had while designing, the source part in the end of the magazine (it seems like people like lists) and the layout in general.

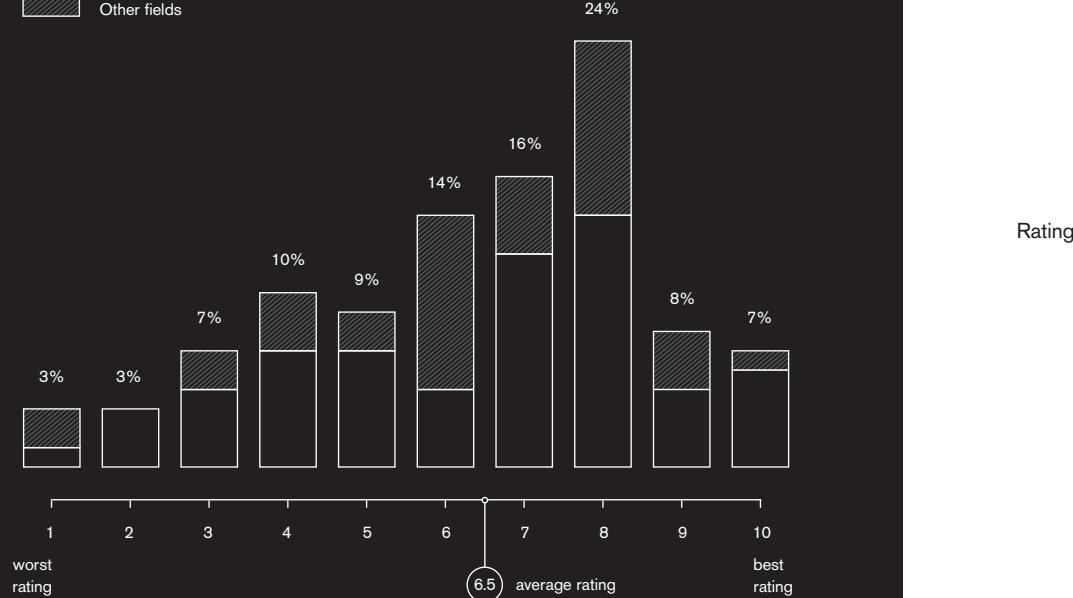
When looking at the pages, my questionees liked the opener to the Bitcoin story and the opener to the source part the most: I think it's not an coincidence that these both pages were the ones with the most space that wasn't occupied by text. For the reader, such pages meant relaxing breaks in between a lot of information.

The average rating of this magazine was with 6.5 points the best rating of all three magazines. The highest peak is at 8 points – it seems like the perfect rating to say »I like it, but it's not the best magazine I've ever seen« for a lot of people.

Percentage of Ratings

- Graphic Designer
- Other fields

92 questionees



## 5.2 What and How I designed – dotview #3b

5.2.1 dotview #3b – The Process

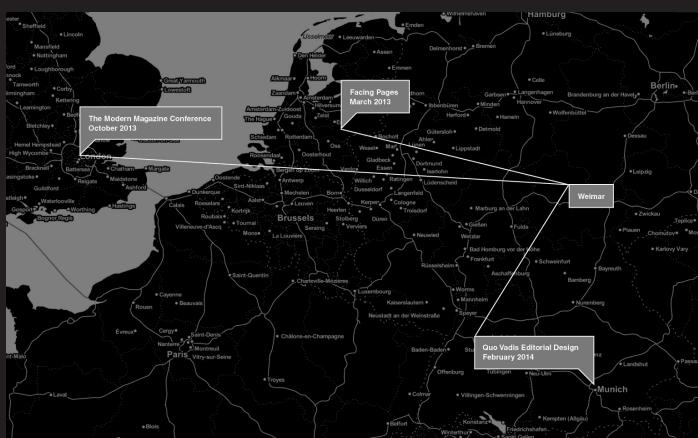
5.2.2 dotview #3b – The Feedback



Fig.1 → 17 Mar 2014  
First drafts for the minimalist issue



Fig.2 → 18 Mar 2014  
Magazine Design conferences I've been so far



## 5 What and How I designed

### 5.2.1 dotview #3b – The Process

[Mon, 17 Mar 2014 19:03] Today the four weeks for designing the second magazine (out of three) officially started. What one can see at the top are thoughts about the layout of this issue. The next magazine will be minimalist.

And that's NOT easy when you come from filling every inch of the page, as I did in the last magazine. One can see me struggling on the layouts I did in the last few hours →Fig.1. But I really like some of them! I like the »magazine in a magazine« idea, and the »color background for the content part« layout.

[Tue, 18 Mar 2014 15:35] YEAH. I'm super excited to announce that I'll be a speaker at the Facing Pages conference in Arnhem at the 28/29th of March. Super excited indeed!

How did that come? Because I like the work they do at O.K. Parking and because of their Facing Pages Independent Magazine conference, I wrote William van Giessen as part of my attempt to get feedback for my magazine. And he wrote back that he likes my project and wants me as a speaker. Facing Pages will be my first big talk (and I can't wait to prepare the slides for it), and it'll be my third big magazine design conference in the last six months →Fig.2. The first one – the Modern Magazine Conference in London, organised by the great Jeremy Leslie – was the highlight of my exchange semester in Oxford. Quo vadis Editorial Design, hold in Munich two weeks ago, was a good sequel. And now I'm really looking forward to Facing Pages! It'll be GREAT, I tell you.

[Wed, 19 Mar 2014 12:04] What I've learned today: It's super hard to be dynamic and flexible and exciting with your designs and at the same time minimalist – but it's do-able as a normal graphic designer. However, it's even harder to be minimalist AND original and innovative. Of course, you can be innovative with your layout (the composition of your elements), but who will notice? I'm always looking at nice ways to position elements, but often even I don't notice while I'm reading



Fig.3 → 19 Mar 2014  
Composition: Just a magic trick?



a magazine. I notice the elements themselves, sure. The colors. The extraordinary beautiful typefaces used. I notice if there is a very consequent rule applied to the whole layout; like »have a rectangle at the top with links to other pages.« But I don't pay so much attention to what's going on on every single page composition-wise; what the Designer at the specific moment of laying out the text thought.

This has consequences. I think I'm not so bad in the composition of elements on a spread. In fact, I think that's what I can do best in terms of graphic design → Fig.3. But today it occurred to me: It doesn't matter. It's a nice magic trick, nothing more. What matters are, and that's my hypothesis today, IDEAS or FACTS. And that was the problem with my last magazine (one of the problems): To much composition, too little ideas or facts.

What do I mean with facts? I mean Information Graphics. I basically had the choice: Do I want to try taking pictures, dealing with pictures, choosing pictures – although I'm just not good at it? Or do I want to embrace my not-so-bad skills in creating information graphics? I decided for the latter one. Not only because it's easier for me, and it will look better in the end, and I will have more fun doing it – but also because the topic (I remind you: It's money) just WANTS information graphics. And not pictures of money bills. And even more money bills.

[Thu, 20 Mar 2014 22:06] The last two days were excellent. After I wrote my last post, I left for Berlin; and after I arrived in Berlin, I went to »do you read me!«; THE magazine store in Berlin. I wanted to buy the PORT magazine, but the new issue wasn't out yet – well, I bought the old one nevertheless. The next thing that happened was a talk from my both bosses at my last two internships: Richard Turley, Creative Director of the Bloomberg Businessweek and Sven Ehmann, Creative Director of the Gestalten publisher, met in the Gestalten Space in Berlin and invited the public. That was amazing. Richard hold a really good talk (about his past projects as well), and Sven asked smart questions. I also enjoyed talking to Richard shortly in private – the Modern Magazine Conference in London was the last time I saw him.

After the talk I felt super honoured to have some dinner with



Fig.4 → 20 Mar 2014  
Enjoying Berlin

Fig.5 → 20 Mar 2014  
Minimalism needs continuity

all these smart people. And Kati Krause drew a group picture of us →Fig.4 that I really like.

[Thu, 20 Mar 2014 22:57] Ladies and Gentlemen, I proudly present: The results of my third day of working my second magazine. Well, third »half-of-a-day« day of actually designing in InDesign →Fig.5.

I had a few ideas that I want to elaborate on: Minimalism needs continuity and consequence. While browsing through the magazines at »do you read me?« yesterday, I noticed that the most minimal magazines have their content at the same place on every page. That's no option for me (because I have the most fun while moving elements around), but it's perfect for a good compromise. The left side of the page will always be fixed: In this part, the »old media« is represented (you remember, like in the newspaper part in the last magazine). If you put all pages below each other, it's like scrolling through an article. Hm, maybe I should consider putting all the spread in a leporello. Oh no, wait, that's what I did in my Bachelor's Thesis and it was almost impossible to get it printed.

On the rest of the page (on the right side), the user-generated content is happening. Here it's also time for the information graphics. This space is treated more freely. I think that will be the most challenging part of the magazine: To find a good compromise between innovation on each page and at the same not to overwhelm the reader with an always new layout.

In my last magazine, it was hard to understand what one was actually reading. The purpose was confusion (to a degree where it was frustrating). This time, the purpose is clarity and readability. Last time I wanted the reader to get overwhelmed; this time I want him to read every single piece of text. To achieve this, I made my sources clear (among others); every image will have a caption and the author of each text piece will be clarified.

The typefaces...yeeeeah. It's the Quadraat and the Akzidenz Grotesk, and I know, they don't fit together so well. My type obsessed friend suggested the Baskerville for the Akzidenz, but I rather change the sans-serif typeface instead of the Quadraat. I really, really like the dark ductus of the Quadraat. And the Italic, oh my god, have you seen the Italic?

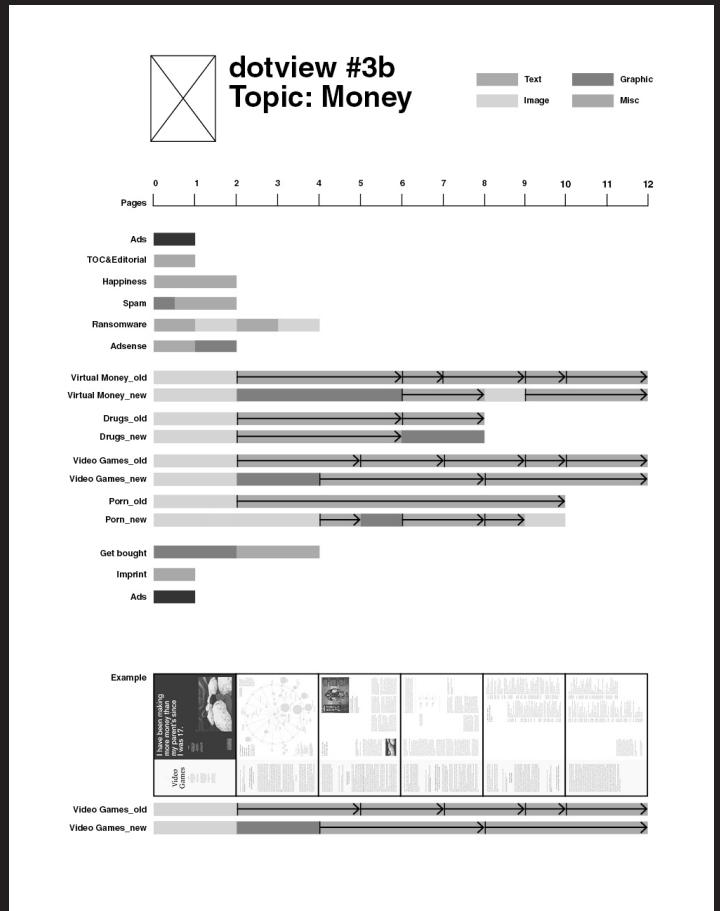
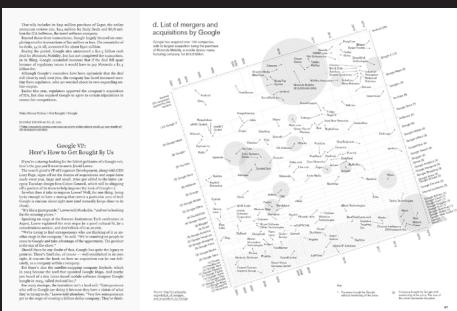
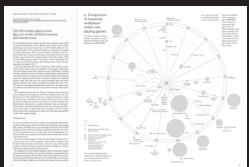


Fig.6 → 23 Mar 2014  
The structure of dotview  
#3b (draft)

Fig.7 → 24 Mar 2014  
Sometimes it's good to  
cut information

Fig.8 → 21 Mar 2014  
My »reward« info graphic



[Fri, 21 Mar 2014 22:22] I haven't decided yet about type and margin details for the whole magazine, but I thought I »reward« myself for the last days with doing an info graphic. So this morning I jumped out of my bed in anticipation (you know, theoretically) and was really looking forward to it.

I soon encountered two old problems; the a) date inconsistency and b) the English-German-Comma-And-Point-Dilemma. The first one (like »month-day-year« and »year, month, the day«) is often annoying, but it's easy to solve with some cell formatting, cell splitting and automatic deleting of certain letters in a bulk of cells (or does anyone have better trick for this?). But the English-German-Comma-And-Point-Dilemma was really tricky today. The problem is that spreadsheet programs in German thinks that 4,500 means 4.5, because the function of comma and point are exactly the opposite in the German language. After this not-so-easy part I had a lot of fun with lines. I really like the radar look now →Fig.8.

[Sun, 23 Mar 2014 15:25] Here one can see the structure I have so far →Fig.6: The magazine starts light with short articles. Then the first »article bulk« starts; let's call them...sections. I will have four sections (or five, including the »Get bought« part – not decided yet). All sections start with an opener. At the left side are the old-media articles, on the right side the user-generated content – but the two »streams« are not synchronized entirely, so that a old-media article can end while the user-generated content goes on. (I tried to visualize this principle with the thumbs at the bottom.)

[Mon, 24 Mar 2014 21:53] Oh wow. And I thought the last info graphic was clustered. Important lesson learned today: Sometimes it's good to cut information →Fig.7.

But I really like the concept of this info graphic: You can see a) when Google bought b) which company it bought c) for which product Google bought the company d) since when this product exists e) how much money Google spend on the company f) how many companies Google acquired for each product and g) how many companies Google bought in each year. And you can see each of these information VISUALLY. See, the time line IS the bar of a stacked bar chart in which each »year length« represents the number of companies acquired.



Fig.9 → 31 Mar 2014

Me, explaining things at Facing Pages

[Mon, 31 Mar 2014 00:02] So! Facing Pages. I'm back. And boy, what a ride. I take three facts home from these four days (two conference days):

1. Facing Pages is great: It's just a very well organized conference (only by three people! William van Giessen, Joost van der Steen and Tanja Koning. And lots of nice volunteers). Why? Well, first of all, it's in a great small city – Arnhem in the Netherlands – which I really enjoyed: You're always meeting other conference attendees and you have short walks between hotel and symposium, exhibition space and party. The exhibition space! It's so great to be able to see the magazines the speakers are talking about. I enjoyed this in London at the last Modern Magazine conference and in Munich at the last Quo vadis Editorial Design. But the range of magazines at Facing Pages were just HUGE: You couldn't possibly have a look at every magazine in detail, it was just too much. That was amazing. You rediscovered old magazines and got to know a lot of new ones. The book store above the exhibition was also really good, and I bought five magazines (which is, looking at the magazine prices, a lot).

Also surprisingly well worked the theme of »Activism« at the first day and »Escapism« at the second. And maybe the most important aspect of each conference: I enjoyed almost every talk of every single speaker. It was a really good mix!

And last, but definitely not least: The people. There are only 200 people attending the conference, so it's really intimate and you soon know more or less every second face.

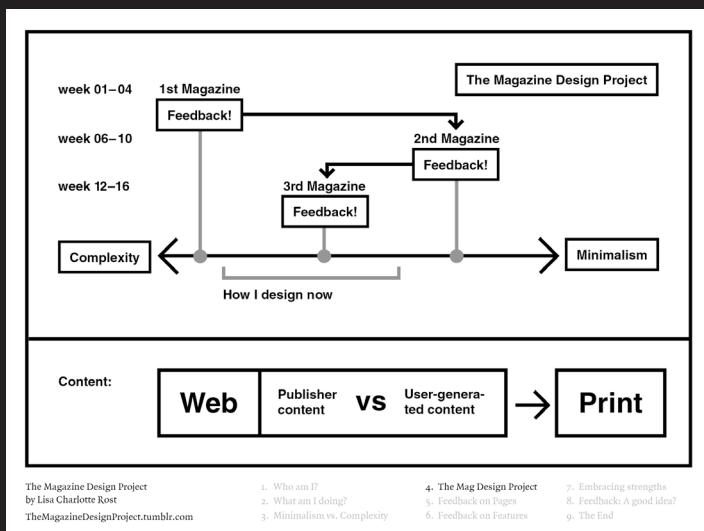
2. It's great to be a speaker: It was my first time being a speaker (you remember? I was asking William van Giessen for feedback for my magazine. And he was like: »We like your project! Wanna speak?«, and I: »Totally!«) ...so I was nervous. Not as much as I expected. Still nervous, though. But I think the presentation itself went ok-ish → Fig.9 → Fig.10.

And I really enjoyed everything around it! It's so great when everything is taken care of; Joost, Tanja and William did a great job with this. You only book your train, and you're arriving and there is a hotel waiting for you, and you don't have to book your conference tickets and you don't have to buy a lunch etc...it's just so luxurious. I felt very privileged in the last four days; and very honoured to be able to speak.



Fig.10 → 31 Mar 2014

Two slides from my presentation



3. Magazines are great: Conferences are fantastic for getting new inspiration. The biggest effect: All the magazines around me reminded me to be really minimalist with the next issue. More than ever; and definitely more than with my last draft. I think it was also good for me that most of the people talking were editors (of minimalist magazines). So it was all about the content; just the content laid out in two or three columns, just a photo next to it – that's it. And I can't get reminded enough that a magazine is about the content. Seriously, remind me as often as possible.

[Mon, 31 Mar 2014 22:46] Today I worked on the third graphic. It's actually an anti-graphic; it's not so much a graphic, but a table with little trend charts in the beginning and little percentage-stacked bars in the middle. I can't deny that the story about cancer research in the last PORT impressed me a lot: They just put a spreadsheet with hundreds of numbers on a whole page. I didn't read it (which isn't a good sign, of course), but it communicated: »We really care and we don't want to skip these numbers just because we can't present them as a fancy graphic. We think that our readers are intelligent and that they will care, too – so we print the numbers.«

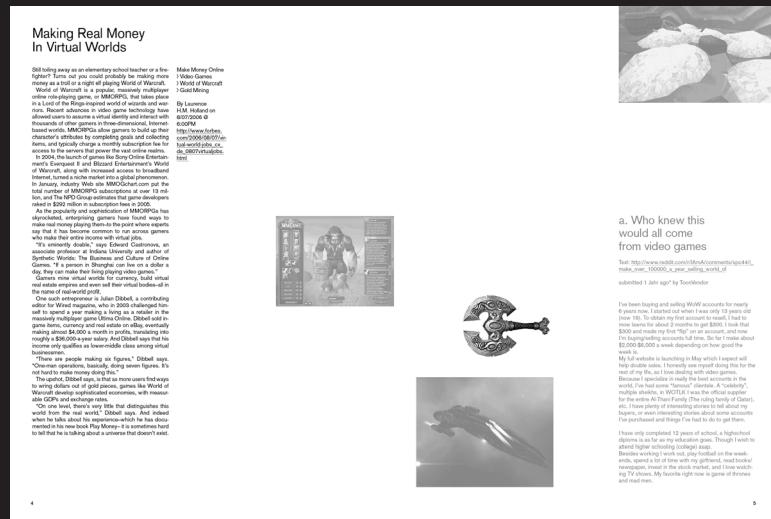
Tomorrow, by the way, everything will change. The semester break at my university is over. I've never had on, because I HAD to start my master's thesis in February. But with all the students floating back to Weimar, the lonely nights in the Mac Pool here at the university will be over. The building will be packed again, with seminars and projects; and the hordes of tourist groups will get competition in student crowds occupying the meadows in the Goethe Park. Because of a sense of tradition I will attend the project presentation tomorrow morning, where every professor is explaining what they have planned for the students to do in the next three months. Summer semester, bring it on.

[Tue, 01 Apr 2014 19:01] Today was a good day. It started with me finding excellent data about porn search terms on the Data Insight blog of PornHub and merging this data together so that I can start to create a graphic out of it.

My highlight today was a consultation with my supervisor M. – he said, the version I was working on in the last few days looks »like a science book«, a little bit dull and not minimalist

Fig.11 → 01 Apr 2014

Difference between old (top) and new (bottom) version



enough. And that I should look at swiss designers. And this feedback was PERFECT. It helped so much! I'm glad I went to him for a critique DURING my process, and not with the final magazine. He basically said: Change everything. And that's exactly what I needed to hear. So my next magazine won't look like everything you've seen so far here, but like this: One typeface on most pages (because that's more minimalist). More white space. Less colors → Fig.11.

[Wed, 02 Apr 2014 23:52] In my attempt to create the most minimalist graphics ever, I designed maps of the U.S. to explore WHY people are searching for specific terms on Porn-Hub. So when they are more college students in a state – are people looking more for college-related porn? Turns out: Yes, they do. The same for Asian and black people. Tomorrow I will do another map for lesbian-related content, but I'm afraid I won't find such a nice correlation as I did with ethnicity and college enrolment today.

Also today: The Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse, part 3! This morning I skimmed John Maedas »Laws of Simplicity« (again) (to get inspired for my minimalist magazine) and in my AGAK-presentation this afternoon I transferred these laws on magazine design and tried to find specific examples for these laws. Was working well. And I got nice ideas and motivational words from my friends, which is...you know, always great.

[Fri, 04 Apr 2014 22:43] Today was a good day. Yesterday was a good day, too. I've been working on the consequences of my consultation with my supervisor M., and I really like the result. I feel like I'm on the right path to a good magazine – but well, let's see when this feeling switches to »OMG what have I done? It all looks so ugly!« again.

These are the ideas so far:

- The chapter opener will be...red rectangles. And small table of contents. Their main purpose is to make the reader aware that a new chapter starts; that there is something that separates the part that lies before this page from the part that is beyond it. So I thought, a big, red, »ATTENTION«-screaming-but-still-minimalist-rectangle is the way to go.
- I found a idea for the illustration of porn that I reeeeeeee like (3rd image here): I'm showing the faces of the porn

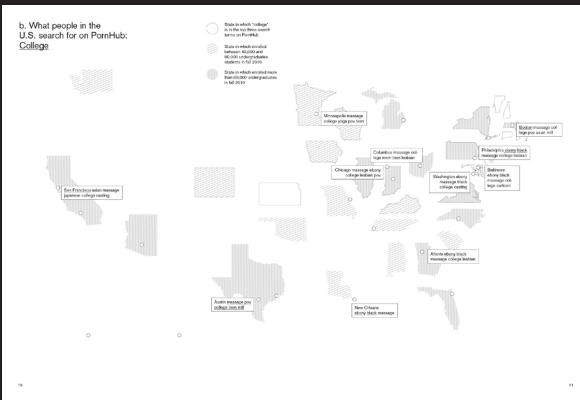


Fig.12 → 05 Apr 2014  
Working with the new design



stars while they're having sex, but without the rest of the image. But I'm showing the borders of the images, so the reader will hopefully imagine how the picture continues.

- Not a great idea, but just stunning: The Eve Online images! I found screenshots of this online game in surprisingly good resolution. Fantastic. I will show images of the great battle that cost 200,000 US Dollar, in a »photo« series of ten pages.
- Info graphics [Fig.12!](#)? Remember when I said that I want to have »at least 5 or 6 graphics in the magazine«? I already filled eight spreads with graphics, and I haven't even touched the Bitcoin story so far. I'm looking forward to create even more minimalist maps, lines and rectangles as well as pie and bar charts for the magazine. Yeah!

[Sat, 05 Apr 2014 22:39] Good day, again! In the last three days I designing my way through almost the entire magazine (not the details, though; and there are still URLs to the sources that want to be brought on the pages).

I'm still incredible happy with everything. Everything flows, it feels like easy work with a lot of success moments (»Oooh, Lisa, look at the nice looking graphic you just designed in the last 10 minutes!«). It's so much easier than magazine numero uno. (And it looks better.) When I have moment that are filled with doubts and unsolvable-looking problems, then it's because of the photo illustrations. How do you illustrate a story about Bitcoins? HOW?? I decided to go with stock market pictures from Andrew Gursky. Not the best solution, but well. I like his photos.

[Mon, 07 Apr 2014 20:51] I'm in Berlin since noon, I don't have an own laptop with my files and InDesign and I have NOTHING urgent to do. So I did a short bike tour to the Flughafensee (»Airport Lake«, it's super close to the airport Tegel in the north of Berlin. And it's nice to sit down there and read some stories in the Apartamento issue one bought two weeks ago at Facing Pages), I watched series, I played the piano a little bit. I can't wait to go back to Weimar and my daily schedule.

Fig.13 → 11 Apr 2014

Working on the Table Of Contents  
(bottom: final version)

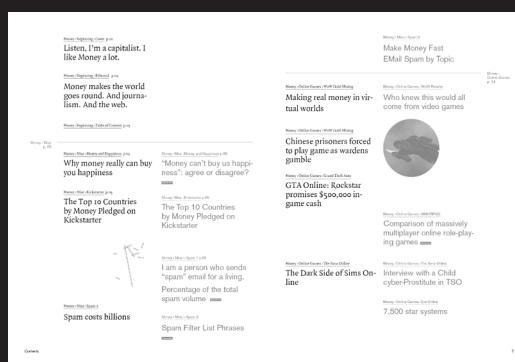
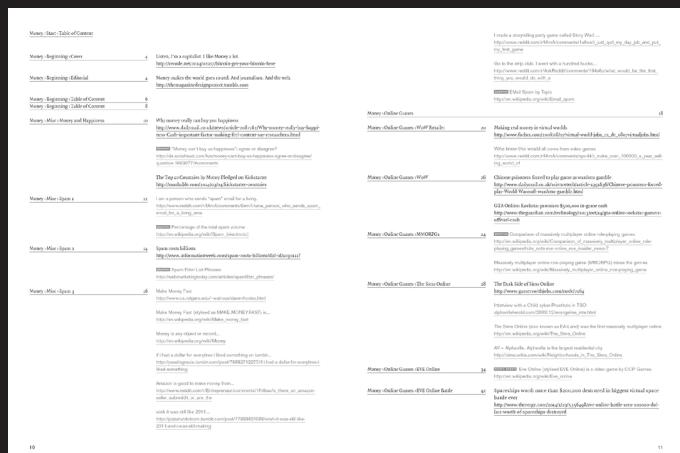


Fig.14 → 11 Apr 2014  
Editorial and Design: One supervisor for each aspect



[Wed, 09 Apr 2014 14:55] Yesterday I got a reeeeally good critique from my second supervisor for the Master's project (A.). It's actually working as I wanted it to be: I have one supervisor who doesn't look at the content so much, but who's really good in judging and helping with the design. And A. is perfect in asking the right questions about the content and if the elements on the page are making sense →Fig.14.

And if the reader understands everything. He basically reminded me that minimalism is nice, but must be in service for the content. For example, he pointed out that the headline of the articles catches the eye less than the breadcrumb navigation – but in the end, the headline will convince or not convince the reader to start reading this particular article. (And to give the reader an incentive to read is exactly what I want). So it makes more sense to emphasize the headline and not the navigation.

In addition, A. asked a lot of questions that made me aware that the magazine is still confusing in its content. That must change. I need to ask for each element on each page: It is clear why this element is there? Does it make sense? It is clear if and what this element belongs to? We remember: »Simplicity is about subtracting the obvious, and adding the meaningful.« To sum it up: It was a pleasure and really helpful to have somebody looking on this magazine in an intelligent way.

[Wed, 09 Apr 2014 23:00] That's how it looks now, after I tried to integrate the feedback from my supervisor A.

[Thu, 10 Apr 2014 22:41] Today I prepared another presentation, in which I investigated this »minimalism« thing a little bit more (I will write about this tomorrow). And then I started detail work. And improved the layout of some spreads. And....I started thinking about the table of content.

[Fri, 11 Apr 2014 21:58] Today was...not the most productive day ever. I started with detail work, which never feels super productive (because you can't see bold results). But I also thought about the table of content, and I came to the conclusion that I'm fine with having it on more than one page – IF I'm giving a summary of the TOC →Fig.13. That something goes terribly wrong when your summary of the content needs a summary: I guess that's obvious. Well, I can live with this idea.

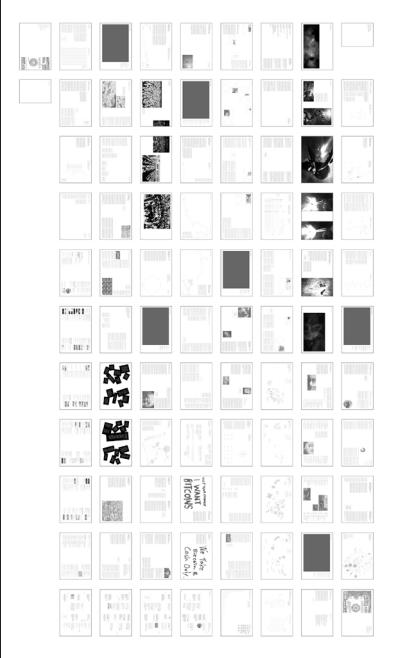


Fig.15 → 17 Apr 2014  
Full page plan

Fig.16 → 17 Apr 2014  
Off to London



[Sat, 12 Apr 2014 23:01] Remember when I said that I've done the last graphic for this magazine yesterday? Well, I did another one just a few minutes ago. One big point of critique for my last magazine was the not understandable concept. And indeed, it is complicated. So I designed a graphic for the beginning of the magazine, that uses a data about the kind of sources for this magazine as an explanation, how it works. I hope that's enough – I'll see in my next round of feedback, I guess.

Tomorrow! It's the last day in the process of designing the second magazine. Meaning: I have a deadline, tomorrow at midnight. To be honest, I thought about extending the deadline – I just travelled too much in the last weeks, without working. But well, I think the magazine as it is right now is good enough to get printed. And I like getting stuff done till deadlines...it would feel like cheating if I would extend it.

By the way, tomorrow midnight is also another important date: Half of my Master's Thesis time passed already! Nine weeks are over, and I have still nine weeks to go till the 16th of June.

[Sun, 13 Apr 2014 23:36] It's done! The second version of the third dotview magazine is OUT (well, if I would sell it, it would be out...somehow...so it just lays lazy on my computer, waiting for me to send it around the world for feedback).

[Thu, 17 Apr 2014 17:50] What a week. Damn, the last three days were stressful. Now, for the first time this week, I feel relaxed. Like I have time. That feels good.

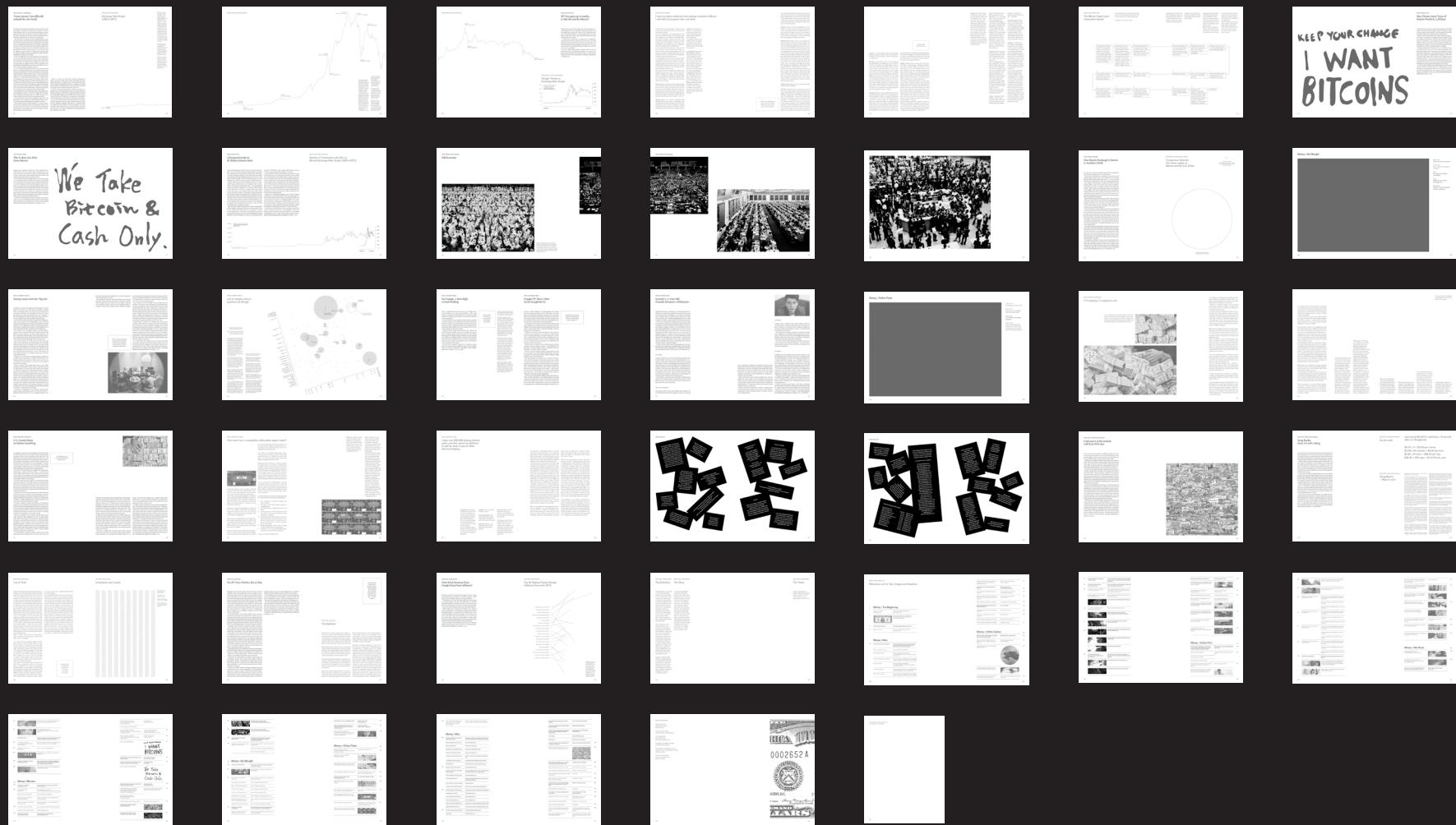
[Thu, 17 Apr 2014 22:29] That's it! That's the magazine →Fig.15.

[Mon, 21 Apr 2014 20:31] Soo....it's holiday time. I'm off to London →Fig.16! (That's the Trafalgar Square on the picture, btw.) I'll see/write you in a week, maybe Sunday, maybe Monday. Have a nice week (and don't forget my survey)!

Page plan of dotview #3b (1st part)



Page plan of dotview #3b (2nd part)

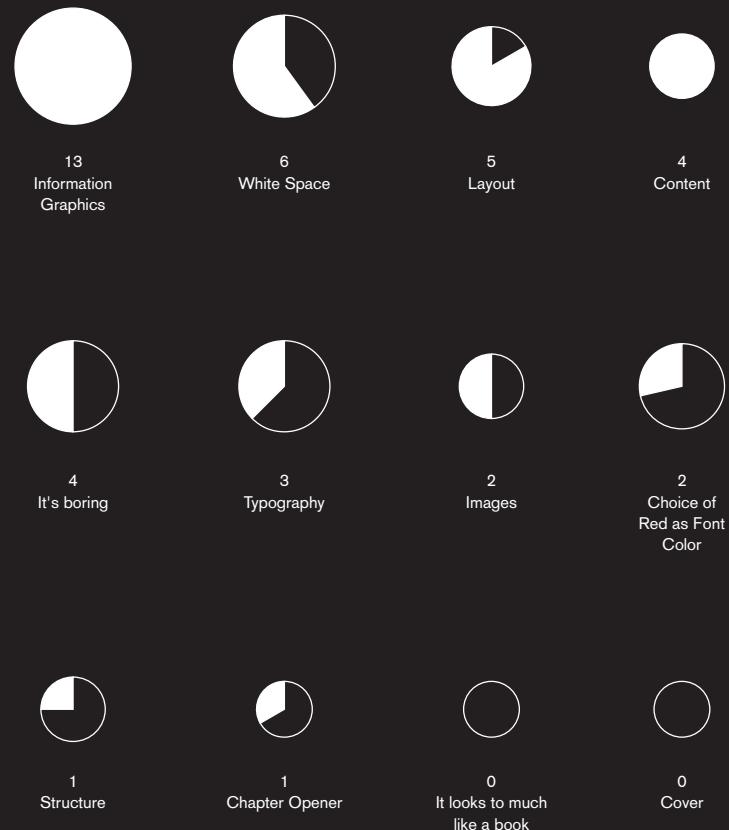


Sample pages of dotview #3b

On the following pages I will show some pages of the dotview magazine, issue #3b, in its original size. These are only sample pages. A collection has been made to show the diversity of the magazine.

## Feedback on dotview #3b – Aspects

White area = positive mention  
 Black area = negative mention  
 Size of Circle = Number of mentions



## 5 What and How I designed

### 5.2.2 dotview #3b – The Feedback

From the first feedback I got the message that my information graphics are likeable – so for the second issue, I emphasized them more. The result was an even better rating regarding the graphics. Nobody mentioned them in a negative way: All my questionees either ignored them or agreed that the graphics are good.

White Space  
or not?

The biggest (imaginary) dispute between my questionees was the question if the much white space and the minimalist style in my magazine is a good or bad thing. For some, the magazine was still chaotic and the layouts were too diverse; others called it »underdesigned«, »not-layouted« and »boring« (8 mentions). I guess this opinion was enforced in having the direct comparison with the first and last magazine. My theory is that the opinion that the magazine is too dull would have been not so strong when showing only this magazine without the other ones.

Surprising to me, the intention to find white space good or bad was often the same, as a quote shows from Evan Applegate, Senior Graphics Editor at Bloomberg Businessweek in New York: »Why do mags exist? To tell a reader something through writing/photography/illustration/combinations thereof. They don't exist as outlets for the wacky ideas of graphic designers. A designer's incentive to be different as hell and thus stand out from every other indesign jockey is in direct competition with the reader's interest, which is to ingest the information. BIG ASS whitespace just flags to me that this copy must be hella bad if the designer is doing everything they can to make it look interesting.«

A lot of people see white space as a way to make elements more important and precious; to upgrade them. The designer of magazines like CEREAL or Another Escape would argue that they want to put their great content in the best-looking environment. For designers like Evan Applegate, white space means exactly the opposite: It downgrades content. Applegate is used to newspapers and magazines like The New York

»White space is king«  
Paul Sych, Professor  
at York University  
Toronto, Canada

»Der fehlende Text  
und viele Weißraum  
erinnern mich an die  
Tipps meiner Profes-  
soren: Bloß keine  
Fehler machen«  
Thomas Kronbichler  
& The Institute of  
Friends

»A bit too minimalist  
for my taste«  
Steven Watson,  
StackMagazines,  
United Kingdom

»I am not sure I  
would read it, but  
maybe purchase it  
as a design refer-  
ence.«  
Matthew Holroyd,  
United Kingdom

»I haven't no-  
ticed a good  
aspect. Red is  
such a vicious  
colour. Seems  
quite chaotic.«  
Anonymous, from the field of Communication / Media / Social

»Too quiet.«

Zara Kim, South Korea

»I do think you  
have been to  
generous with  
the space.«

Torgeir Hjetland, Work in Progress, Norway

»Reminded me of many  
German magazines  
I admire that can seem  
a little 'textbook-y' to  
folks from the UK, US or  
Australia but also have a  
lit of interesting 'quirks'.«  
Michael Bojkowski,  
Australia

»Minimalist clear whites-  
pacey hipster graphical«  
Anonymous, from the field  
of IT / Logic

»G-R-E-A-T  
infographic work.«  
Anonymous, from the field of information design

»Shift-alt-cmd-c«  
Anonymous, from the  
field of Communication /  
Media / Social

»The red rectangles  
are the hammer in the  
face« (about the chapter  
opener)  
Professor at Bauhaus  
University

»Zu viele verschiedene  
Layout – wirkt nicht  
einheitlich und bisschen  
verstörend für das Auge.  
Man weiß nicht, wo man  
zuerst hinschauen soll  
bei manchen Seiten.  
Manche Seiten sind  
nicht selbsterklärend.  
Teilweise zu viel weiß zu  
sehen.«  
Anonymous, from the  
field of Communication /  
Media / Social

»The layout are cleaner  
now but they all look  
similar.«  
Ella Zheng, Singapore

»In my opinion this issue  
have lost some sponta-  
neity, and consequently  
the singular soul you  
gave to the last issue.  
You keep it in the fantas-  
tic infographics, but not  
in the general visual ef-  
fect. It's, some way, not  
so visually attractive.«  
Anonymous, from the  
field of Communication /  
Media / Social

»Outer margins seems  
too close to the edge of  
the page. This creates an  
illusion that there is more  
text to read than there ac-  
tually is. The empty space  
in the center of the layout  
creates the illusion that  
the magazine is very wide  
like a newspaper. This  
enlarged illusion makes it  
seem like the text is heavy  
and a hard read.  
The layouts are balanced  
really well, as if the bod-  
ies of text and informa-  
tion graphics are images  
hanging in a gallery.«  
Hyojung Julia Seo,  
Canada

»Dieser Entwurf  
ist der beste von  
allen dreien –  
denn er besticht  
durch ein klar-  
eres Design  
und den Mut  
zum Weißraum.«  
Student at the Bauhaus University

»boooooOOOOOOOO  
Feels like I'm in a high-  
end magazine shop  
holding this and it's on  
90-lb paper and I flip it  
over and the price says  
£15/€20/\$22: I like look-  
ing at it, but I hate read-  
ing it.« Evan Applegate, Bloomberg Businessweek, New York

»Loved it and I felt like  
reading it.« Floor Koop, Netherlands

»There are a lot of  
information in it, but  
not overwhelming the  
reader.«  
Sara Lorensene,  
Australia

»Trying hard to have not  
layouted layout«  
Anonymous, from the  
design field

»Magazine two looks  
very dry, more like a us-  
ers manual or an annual  
report than something I  
would want to read for  
leisure.«  
Angus MacPherson,  
Little White Lies, United  
Kingdom

»Dislike pages similar  
to p153, the rest of  
the design looks really  
clean and simplistic.  
Personally I don't like  
things that aren't on a  
right angle.«  
Rachel Maria Taylor,  
Another Escape, United  
Kingdom

## Feedback on dotview #3b – Aspects

### Positive adjectives

**balanced**  
**informative**  
**professional** (2)

concise, consistent, creative, elegant, harmonic, interesting, inviting, lovely, nice, not overwhelming, reddish cool, to the point, trustworthy, readable

### Neutral adjectives

**clean**  
**clear** (both 8 mentions)

calm, catalog-like, classical, corporate, experimental, high-class, light, mainstream-stylish, minimal (7), modern (2), monochromous, neutral, organised (2), puristic, red (3), reduced (2), simple (6), sorted, statistic, straight, structured (2), swiss (4), technical, white (4), zurückgenommen,

### Negative adjectives

**boring** (8 mentions)

chaotic (2), clinical, cold (2), dry, dull, empty (4), flat, monotonous, soapy, sober (2), soulless, too divers, too quiet, weak, greasy, randomly organized, disjointed

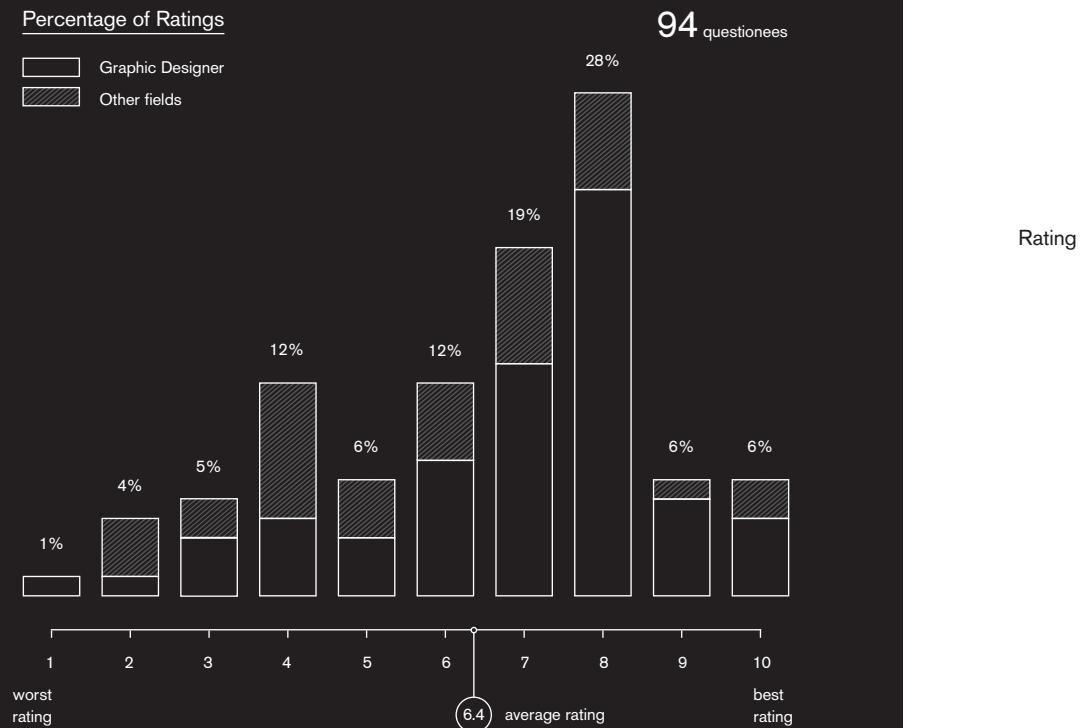
Times, Time, Wall Street Journal or Bloomberg Businessweek itself – and they don't have a lot of white space. So to make content look important and worth reading, he (and I'm sure a lot of other people too) would design it similar to these publications.

Another point of disagreement between my questionees was the use of typography. For some I used too many fonts (they didn't understand the concept of using two); others thought I should use much more. In addition, a lot of people asked me to ditch red as a type color – because the readability suffers and/or because they just don't like the color red.

Two exclusively negatively mentioned aspects were the cover and the book-like appearance. People wished for more appealing elements on the cover and said that it does not draw their attention.

### Percentage of Ratings

Graphic Designer  
Other fields



Only in the survey for dotview #3b I asked my questionees of which other design object my magazines reminds them of. Three people said it looks like an annual report (this feeling is mirrored by mentioned adjectives like »cold«, »clinical« or »flat«), two thought it looks like an art book or like the magazine Brand Eins [≥p46](#). One person said it reminds her of the swiss national flag – which I of course take as a compliment.

The average rating of this magazine was 6.4. We see a huge peak at eight points: More than a quarter of my questionees rated it with this grade. However, only 12% thought that this magazine is worth more than eight points; that's less percent than with the first magazine.

## 5.3 What and How I designed – dotview #3c

5.3.1 dotview #3c – The Process

5.3.2 dotview #3c – The Feedback

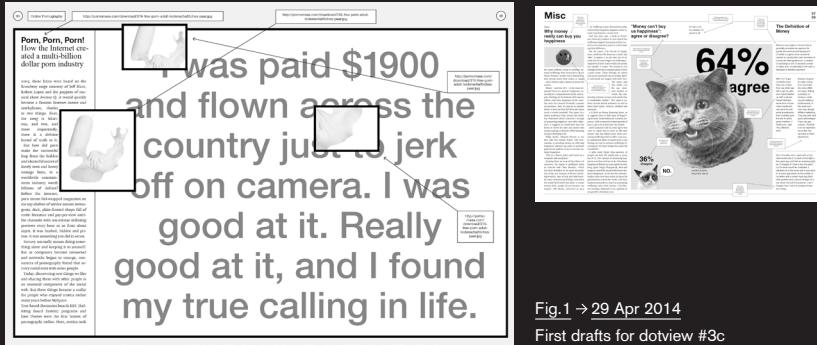


Fig.1 → 29 Apr 2014

First drafts for dotview #3c

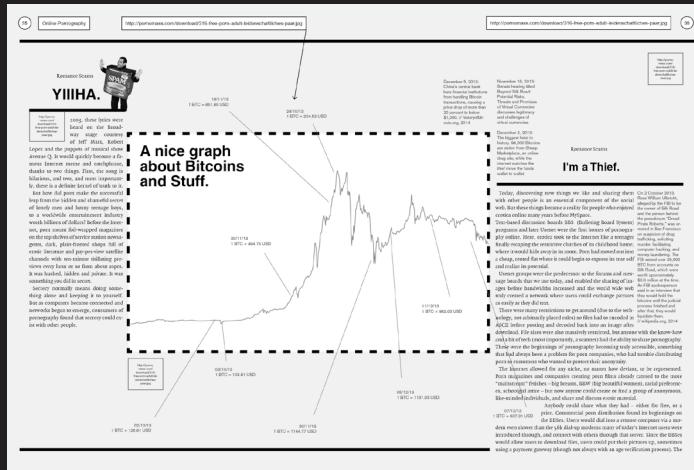


Fig.2 → 29 Apr 2014  
Drop-Down Menu

## 5 What and How I designed

### 5.3.1 dotview #3c – The Process

[Mon, 28 Apr 2014 19:05] I'm back from London – and I'm glad that I'm back (of COURSE, London is amazing. But Weimar is amazing, too. Or I just like sitting here and working too much). Anyway... I'm back on the start: The third and last and third and last and really LAST magazine in my Master's Thesis needs to get designed in the next four weeks.

[Tue, 29 Apr 2014 22:37] Today was a medium good day. I came up with lines and big chapter titles → Fig.1 and an alternative dropdown menu as titles. And I came up with boxes in which I paste the URL → Fig.2.

[Fri, 02 May 2014 23:33] Wednesday was another »Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse« (Task Force Graduation Class). I showed my last magazines to my friends and got good feedback on it (»good« in terms of »helpful«).

And today was the first day since London on which I've worked as motivated and concentrated and successful as before London. I don't know, but I just wasn't so motivated in the last days. Well, seems like this changed. I worked on the Bitcoin chart (suuuper understandable now!) and brought some magazine-like-in-every-issue-repeatable elements in the beginning of the magazine.

[Sat, 03 May 2014 23:26] Man, I'm always coming back to using just one color. Well, now I'm using two: Internet-Link-IK-Blue for the text and other stuff, and one other color for each chapter (to separate them). (I'm not sure if I will keep this concept, I came up with this just today.)

As you can maybe see, I simplified the grid. Now it's just one broad and one narrow column – but more fun will happen in this grid, I hope.

But, yeah, today was a good day and it seems like I'm almost done with the porn story. (Thank god, now you won't have more porn pictures in your Tumblr stream. Well, at least not because of my blog.)



Fig.3 → 06 May 2014  
My first attempt ever to design pictograms

Fig.4 → 06 May 2014  
Chapter Opener & draft  
for a porn spread



[Mon, 05 May 2014 23:15] First info graphic for the current issue! About Eve Online and the losses in the big last battle. I feel like it's the most »commercial« graphic I've done so far; with all the background-knocked-out photos etc. It's nice that it looks somehow appealing from far away, and then you come closer and it looks like there is a lot you can discover on this page.

[Tue, 06 May 2014 20:32] The morning started productive with one of my first attempts ever to design pictograms. I want one for every chapter, so you can see the icons for Silk Road, Online Poker, Online Porn, Online Games, Bitcoins and Getting Bought (M&A) →Fig.3.

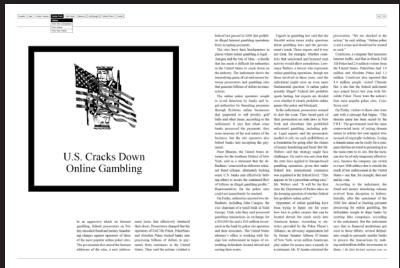
In the afternoon I started to think about the chapter opener, and I'm actually quite satisfied with the result →Fig.4.

I also settled on the typefaces today. I thought from the beginning about taking Arial and Times New Roman, in order to really pay tribute to the web (and especially its early days). However, it was not only today that I thought about sizes and line heights. Now I decided for a quite big type...meaning, I will have more pages and more images. Let's see where this is going. I also had an as-always-nice consultation with my supervisor M. – he gave me good feedback to my second magazines and some helpful ideas about the layout of the third one.

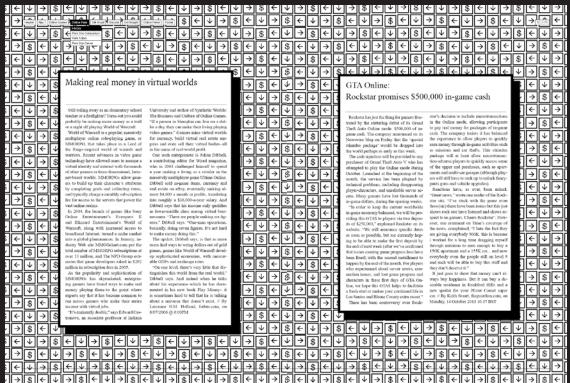
[Wed, 07 May 2014 22:56] After going to the library today, I thought about balance and contrast again, and that I should have a clear difference between »boring pages« and »bold pages« in the magazine. I actually thought about combining both on the same page (and I will, to a certain degree), but letting a minimalist page following a complex and clustered one can have something very powerful in my eyes.

So I had an unsuccessful attempt to design these minimalist pages →Fig.5. I want them to be look even more »the same«, even more »basic«, even more a contrast to the other pages. I have the problem, though, that I actually want them to be still rooted in their chapters; unmistakably. That was the idea behind the icon pattern in the background in the second draft. However, that's not minimalist. Hm.

[Fri, 09 May 2014 21:48] In every long self-initiated project there is a point where you think »Damn. This project sucks.



**Fig.5 → 07 May 2014**  
Drafts for »old media« content



**Fig.6 → 09 May 2014**  
A shift in thinking

I don't know what I'm doing. Or why I'm doing this. Why on earth did I ever come up with this shitty idea?"

Well, I'm not there. Actually, I like my project A LOT. Best Master's Thesis ever! But yesterday I felt like I'm so deep in magazine design, constantly thinking about it, that I'm more far away from it than ever. I felt that I don't know what's good and bad anymore; that I can't trust my own taste or my own thoughts in the design process.

And suddenly I felt time pressure. Not for my third magazine – I still have two weeks and I think it has some nice pages so far – but for my documentation. After designing the third magazine, I have two more weeks to put everything in a documentation, and then one more week to print it. So in total, five weeks are left till the big day called DEADLINE. Are two weeks enough for writing a documentation? Yesterday night there was a moment when I thought »OMG NO! Totally bad planning!« But then I came back to my friend »Worst case.« Thinking of him always calms down; a very reliable friend indeed. And the worst case doesn't look so bad in my eyes. So, yeah. Everything is still fine!

Why did I think of this especially yesterday? Well, I guess because I was so totally, totally unproductive. From 2 pm to 5.30 pm I visited an university course hold by Patrick Martin and Tobias Dahl. Each of the students had to present one magazine. The choice was often great (Apartmento, Kinfolk and The Weekender were amongst them), and I really enjoyed the in-depth analyses of grid, typeface – and structure! That's why I was there, actually. The both tutors sent their students a link to my blog as an example for the structural analysis of magazines. What an honour! I got more than 80 page views just from these students. And in the end, Patrick and Tobias gave me a helpful feedback for my first two magazines.

And what you can see there on the top, is a shift in thinking. In the last days I saw a huge problem in the length of my articles. I'd like to highlight some articles, but they all have about the same length. And especially in the Bitcoin Part there are six articles that annoyed me because of their sameness. But today I began to see them as single part in themselves; as series of essays. So I create a bigger (highlighted!) part with putting all these articles together. Man, some things just sound obvious, but it tooks a long time to get the idea.

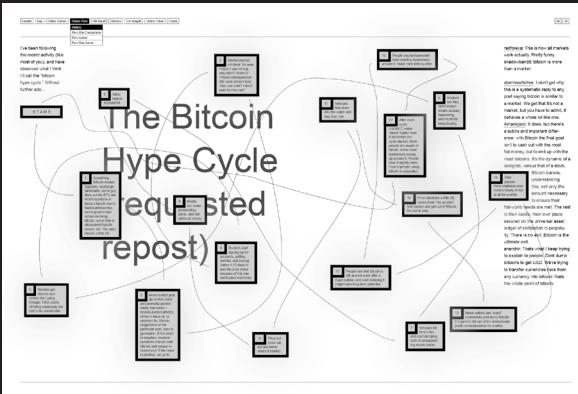


Fig.7 → 16 May 2014  
Not fitting together

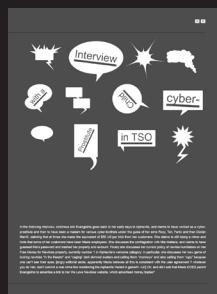
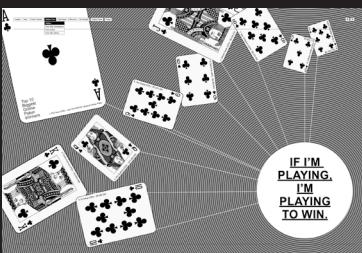


Fig.8 → 13 May 2014  
Different ideas for the  
Cyber-Prostitute Story



[Mon, 12 May 2014 23:09] I finished the Bitcoin chapter (which is one of the longest, so that's GOOD). However, I think that my third magazine is still too divers. It feels like a series of posters, again.

[Tue, 13 May 2014 23:30] Sometimes, thinking can help; and today was the perfect day to do so.

I drew a big page plan with all the double pages I have and thought a lot about »diversity vs. sameness«, as explained yesterday. The result? I'm designing the old-media content in the same style as I designed the Bitcoins articles: I'll google certain words from the articles and put appearing images from the search on the page. Meaning, I »Google-image« my article illustrations.

[Fri, 16 May 2014 09:42] I left the Macpool, my current home and paradise-like work place earlier in the night during the last days because it's really flowing these days. I feel like I have all current and future tasks under control, which is a nice feeling.

On Wednesday, we came together as the Arbeitsgruppe Abschlussklasse again (task force graduation class), and I prepared a presentation on the categorization between Information (=Ratio) and Communication (=Emotion) in relation with my old axis between minimalism vs. complexity. Really liked this idea. Man, I just like visual models so much.

[Fri, 16 May 2014 22:33] I proudly present two double pages I designed today. See how they don't fit together – at all? Beautiful, isn't it? → Fig.7?

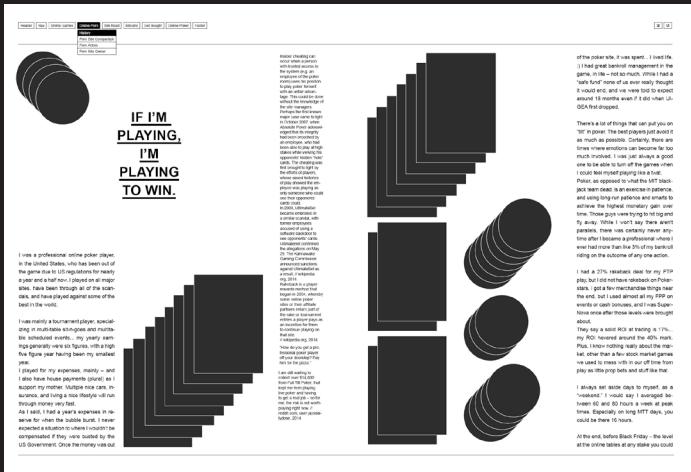
You know what: I'm actually super happy about it. A few years ago I thought of a structure, a type face, a grid – let's just say: a system – and then I stayed in it. I couldn't break out. And so every one of my designs was dull and boring. Every page was the same.

So that's book design, right? Why didn't I just stay in book design; designing each page beautifully, but boring?

Two reasons, my friends! First of all, I don't like details so much, but the overall layout and composition of a page. (Maybe you've noticed.) And that's more important in magazine design than in book design. Secondly, precisely because I like

Fig.9 → 19 May 2014

Inspiration through the  
Bauhaus Museum



to stay in my system, I liked the challenge to break out. Actually, I felt pretty early in my university life that I needed to break out more.

So I did. And on the axis between »too much system« and »too much breaking out«, I'm moving slowly but steadily towards »too much breaking out« – yep, TOO much towards ... too much. Meaning, I should pretty quickly move backwards. Meaning, I should do this in the next week; because the next week is my last week working on this magazine.

By the way: You see this graph on the top right page? It looks so simple, but it took me at least one hour to pull it together. The idea behind it: On the Bitcoin coin there you can see the material – 7.5 grams silver – and the value – 0.1 Bitcoins – of the coin. And I wanted a graphic that compares these two values; exactly these two. So I took the Kilo price for silver and the Bitcoin price and did some math.

[Mon, 19 May 2014 23:19] Wow, this weekend was long! In a positive way. I've read my first fictional book for a long time (I do read. But only nonfiction, actually), meaning I did something for my emotional education – and meaning, I stayed up till 2.30 am because it was so freaking exciting.

On Sunday, we also went to the Bauhaus Museum here in Weimar; that's a very small museum (one room), but still inspirational. I was surprised how much I actually like the Bauhaus style. I always thought: »Bauhaus style – yeah, that's good old stuff.« But yesterday I thought: »Bauhaus style – that's really good old stuff!« I was surprised to see a lot of (imho) unbalanced compositions in the images of especially the Bauhaus students, but I got a lot of inspirations from the architectural ideas. And I really enjoyed the »Pädagogisches Skizzenbuch« sketches by Paul Klee (I fell in love with them a few years ago in an excellent Paul Klee exhibition in Berlin, and it was great to get reminded of them). And I saw that Itten did something similar, and another Bauhaus professor as well: They build models with combining mathematical / geometrical concepts and visual views. And have I mentioned that I love models? I love models.

So I came back from this weekend and sat down at my computer to put all the visual inspiration, processed by my brain, on the screen (and later on the mag page). And I like the result →[Fig. 9](#)! You can see the Online Poker story. I think the

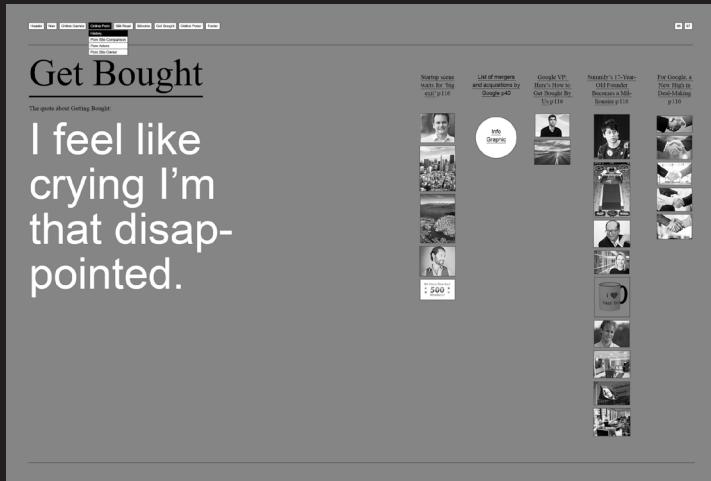


Fig.10 → 20 May 2014  
Draft for the chapter opener



Fig.11 → 22 May 2014  
Ads with Cats

contrast to the other, »old-media« pages works nicely with a visual language like this.

[Tue, 20 May 2014 22:35] Good day, again. I was working on the Google Mergers graphic the whole morning and half of the afternoon, but now I like the result quite a lot. I also touched and roughly »redesigned« almost every page, so that they are more consistent now (more »sameness«). And I changed quite a lot in the structure of the magazine, removed some ad pages, stretched an info graphic etc. Yeah, I'm feeling I'm going in the right direction.

[Wed, 21 May 2014 22:33] Good day, again. Quite excellent, actually, especially in the last hour. This morning I designed all the »misc« pages in the end and beginning of the magazine (yes, they'll have a blue background); in the afternoon I reduced the colors in my magazine to peppermint green, white, black and IK blue (+ the colors of the photos).

[Thu, 22 May 2014 22:37] Good day today, again. This morning I built the ads, which are cat portraits → Fig.11. There are different ad pages; for example a »Ads with Space Cats« page or a »Ads with Cats with Mustaches.« Not sure if the ads are on the right point on the axis between »not distracting too much« and »look like they are not fitting to the content of the magazine«, but I guess I won't touch them again. There are actually veeeery close to the beautiful (self-build) ads in the Offscreen magazine.

After lunch I started thinking about the cover. Which was a demotivating experience: I feel like I can't design good covers. Hm. The feedback from the two last magazines were always: »The cover is not appealing enough«, and I totally agree – but to design an appealing cover is really challenging! Although I should be glad: In the last time I always had the weird thought: »Man, magazine design is so hard; I should do poster design instead. This seems like an interesting field.« And finally, I have it: A poster-like design challenge; perfect! Well. Seems like posters are not designed easily after all. Also, BIG CHANGE: I will give every »new-media-online-community-story« a thick (5pt) black border → Fig.12. And I will use this black line pretty often on the page.

This has three advantages: I finally have the »boldness« I wanted, so the page looks more like the first magazine now. IMO

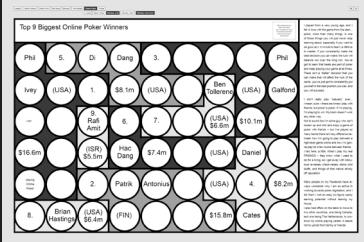
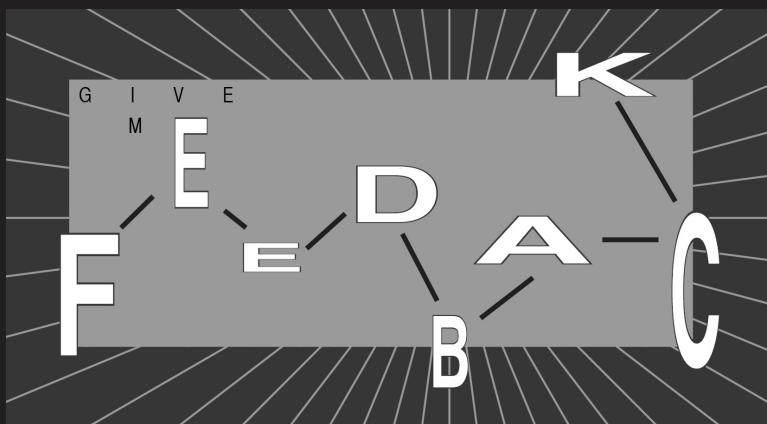


Fig.12 → 22 May 2014  
Thick borders, thick  
borders everywhere

Fig.13 → 23 May 2014  
Rich awesomeness in  
a TOC

Fig.14 → 26 May 2014  
Image that I used on Social  
Media to ask for feedback



the pages look better; I can move boxes to create nice compositions: exactly what I like. And most importantly: The pages have the kind of »sameness« now that I've always wanted.

The contra site; I had to adjust the grid a little bit, so now on every page fits less text and I have to move everything. But yeah, three days left! (And I'm really, reaaaaally looking forward to start with the documentation next week; I can't wait!)

I have to say, the last days were quite relaxed. It's warm in Weimar, it's almost 30 degree and the students are enjoying the first days of summer. I even started watching TED talks while working. Which I really enjoy, especially for the work for which you don't have to think so much (»tidying up«).

[Fri, 23 May 2014 22:39] My super-innovative-and-therefore-not-really-useable Table of Contents → Fig.13. I'm a little bit afraid that it doesn't motivate to read. BUT it features a graphic of rich awesomeness. And that's all what counts.

[Sat, 24 May 2014 23:12] Tomorrow is the day (aka »Deadline«). And I feel like I have a weird order of doing things. I already finalized some pages (typo & margins), but haven't even designed other ones. Like the one at the top, and especially the »Bitcoin Hype Circle« graphic. But still, I did a lot of detail work today and I'm doing well. I think I'm gonna sleep in tomorrow. Yeah.

[Mon, 26 May 2014 22:26] It's done. I kind of proudly present: The third and last edition of dotview issue 3 (aka issue 3c). I already started designing the documentation / theory part for the Master's Thesis today. I really like this part. It will basically be a ordered compilation of the thoughts I had while writing this blog; enriched with some special extra information and thoughts. YEAH.

Page plan of dotview #3c (1st part)



Page plan of dotview #3c (2nd part)

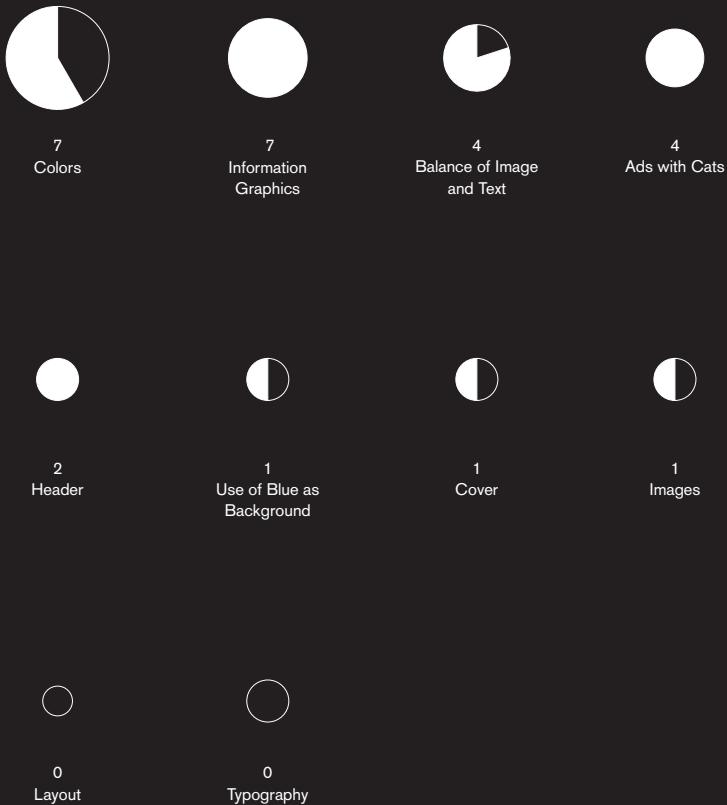


Sample pages of dotview #3c

On the following pages I will show some pages of the dotview magazine, issue #3c, in its original size. These are only sample pages. A collection has been made to show the diversity of the magazine.

## Feedback on dotview #3b – Aspects

White area = positive mention  
 Black area = negative mention  
 Size of Circle = Number of mentions



### Neutral

## 5 What and How I designed

### 5.3.2 dotview #3c – The Process

This time, the big dispute was about the colors. Mint green and blue – is this a reasonable combination? A lot of questionees reminded them of natural or medical science, text-books and the 80s/90s (in a negative way: the adjective »old-school« was the negative adjective that was mentioned the most), others really liked the colors. The question if a blue front of the book is do-able, was also tied.

Because of the 80s/90s look, the cats and some other minor elements, more people than with the two magazines before got reminded of an »Internet« style – which was something they didn't exactly like or dislike, but faced neutrally. For example, a profesor at my university immediately regognized the reference to the web and thought that this is »almost made to well for the Internet style«. Others in this (imaginative) conversation agreed and gave me the advice to exaggerate it even more; to make the intention of showing the Internet clearer.

### Positive

Positive mentions got the Information Graphics, although they were only 4 spreads in the whole magazine and they were very diverse. But again, no negative points were expressed about the graphics.

Some people also liked the cats (»I loved the cats! Oh my gosh! They were ace!« said Michael Bojkowski) and two noticed and appreciated the concept of the header.

### Readability

If this magazine is better readable or less was also not a question with an unanimously answer for my questionees. Some saw dotview #3b as the most well-balanced magazine of the three ones and therefore more interesting for the reader. Design student Hyojung Julia Seo said: »Since the gap between the loudest and quietest layout is not as great as the first magazine, I would prefer to read this one. It makes it easier to read one story to the next.« and designer Torgeir Hjetland from the Norway bureau »Work in Progress« mentioned that the »lay out function as a hole, even with various types of illustra-

## Feedback on dotview #3c – What they say

»That's almost made to well for the internet style«  
Professor at Bauhaus University

**»Supi!!! Dies spricht meine visuellen Sinne in Vollstern an!!! Klar, übersichtlich, leicht zu Handhaben, modern.«**

Anonymous, from the field of Communication / Media / Social

**»Tumblr trash paired with Harvard scientific style«**

Anonymous, from another Design discipline

»Hat die Ästhetik von einer wissenschaftlichen Internetseite; ich kann damit nichts anfangen. Die Bilder sehen falsch aus und passen nicht zum Thema.«  
Professor at Bauhaus University

»It looks a lot like the Internet«  
Student of Bauhaus University

»Nice colours in number three. Has the most intriguing design, a nice balance of text and image, multiple entry points, interesting looking charts and graphs and a naked women!«  
Angus MacPherson, Little White Lies, United Kingdom

»Maritimer informatiker paint whatever style. Man fragt sich, was dich dazu geritten hat. Denn scheinbar kannst du ja auch anders (2tes Magazin) und dann kommt hier das blaue Magazinmonster angerollt. Zerfetzte und gestreckte Bilder, auf jeder Seite ein anderes Design und blaue Wellenmusterbilder.... warum?«  
Student at Bauhaus University

»I can't explain why I didn't like the 3rd one.«  
Anonymous, from the field of Graphic Design

»There is a variety of layouts and that's great because that will not make me flip through the book. I will read the content. But some of the layouts aren't working, I am glad you went experimental but some of them need to be fine tuned.  
It reminds me of a business magazine but more interesting to read.«  
Ella Zheng, Singapore

»Nummer drei finde ich sehr anstrengend, obwohl der Satz noch gut lesbar aussieht: layout wirkt zugeknallt und eingengend (Rahmen), stellenweise auch bewusst provokativ, auf jedenfall wie etwas, durch das man sich quälen müsste wie durch ein Steuerformular, wenn man sich für den Inhalt interessiert.«  
Anonymous, from the field of Graphic Design

»I don't see where the priorities are. I'm annoyed when it's this much.«  
Professor at Bauhaus University

**»Looks like an existing format, not a pilot.«**

Anonymous, from the field of Law / Economics / Business

**»Vielleicht müsste #3 dazu stehen, aus den übeln 80ern und 90ern zu kommen, und so mit Falco-Charme schreien: Ich bin der Geilste!«**

Thomas Kronbichler & The Institute of Friends, Italy

»Since the gap between the loudest and quietest layout is not as great as the first magazine, I would prefer to read this one. It makes it easier to read one story to the next.

Also, this is personal but the cover reminds me of old design books about virtual and web design. I would pick it out right away because I find it quite fun to look through old design books about design.«  
Hyojung Julia Seo, Canada

»I loved the cats! Oh my gosh! They were ace! The porn illustrations were quite shocking too—bodied with features cut out. Did you mean them to appear so strong?«  
Michael Bojkowski, Australia

»Possibly the most successful, to me. This layout functions as a hole, even with various types of illustrations. The colors go with the theme, and supports the message.«  
Torgeir Hjetland, Work in Progress, Norway

**»Besides the terrible colors no consistency.«**

Anonymous, from the field of Communication / Media / Social

»The always same colors is a negative aspect: It still looks to much like a book.«  
Student at Bauhaus University

»This new third version is for sure way better designed than the others. In a lot of aspects (from the ad to the openings, balance of white and text —i guess, judging from a monitor-- and the selection of the contents, images and graphs).«  
Jacopo Atzori, Italy

**»Looks like badly made on purpose«**

Anonymous, from the field of Communication / Media / Social

»Looks like a scientific magazine for kids.«  
Anonymous, from the field of Communication / Media / Social

## Feedback on dotview #3c – Aspects

### Positive adjectives

#### informative (4)

chaotic in a good way, clear, cool, dynamic, engaging, harmonic, original, strong, successful, super (2), surprising, unique, well-balanced, well-structured,

### Neutral adjectives

#### 90s, blue, scientific (3)

50s, 80er, 90s (3), artsy, batik, clear (2), colorful, conservative, experimental, fancy, fractured, functional, graphical, heavy, illustrated, image-heavy (2), Internet-like, medical, modern, natural-sciences-like, natural, ordered, simple (2), trendy, tidy, trippy, various, down-to-earth, ordinary, geography-book-like, structured, dark, blocky, not boring, textbook-alike

### Negative adjectives

#### old-school (3)

annoying, bad, dense, egoistic, inconsistent (2), lame, noisy, ragged, random, self-centered, somehow sick, strange, too diverse, too intense, too normal, ugly (2), unprofessional, untrustworthy,

### Rating

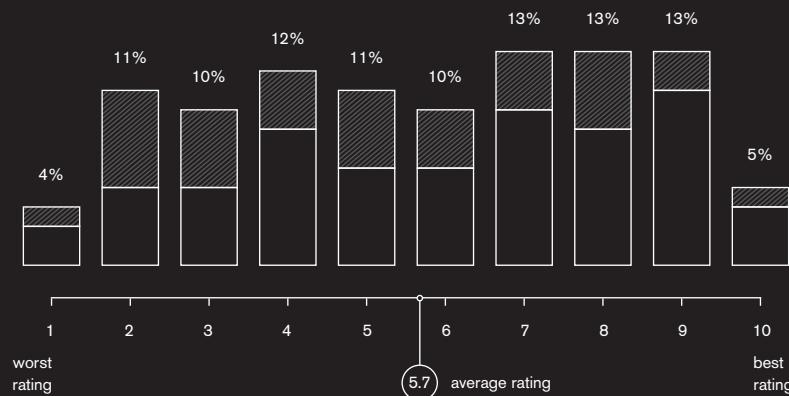
tions.« Others found this magazine to be the least readable. They couldn't see where the priorities are set in this magazine and got annoyed by the density of design.

Surprisingly, the ratings for the third magazine were very diverse. In contrast to the first two magazines there is no peak at eight points or at any other grade. Half of my questionees rated it with six or less points; and the average rating of 5.7 points is the worst of all three magazines. The extremes (1 and 10 points) are rare as always, but otherwise, the opinions were very undecided.

### Percentage of Ratings

84 questionees

Graphic Designer  
Other fields



## 6 What and How I designed – The Analysis

- 6.1 Comparison of the three Magazines
- 6.2 Analysing the Feedback

## 6.1 Comparison of the three Magazines

|                                  | Magazine 1   | Magazine 2                | Magazine 3  |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| Pages                            | 64   | 180                       | 128   |
| Typeface for »old media« content | Miller Cheltenham  | Qudraat                   | Times New Roman   |
| Design for »old media« content   | Newspaper style in the beginning and end of the magazine                           | Hold in black             | Always in the same layout; accompanied by Google Images |
| Typeface for »new media« content | Helvetica  | Akzidenz Grotesk          | Arial   |
| Design for »new media« content   | Colorful and boxy style in the middle of the magazine                              | Hold in Red               | Framed with 5pt borders in black                        |
| Main colors                      | black<br>white<br>pastel green<br>pastel yellow<br>red                             | black<br>white<br>red     | black<br>white<br>IK blue<br>mint green                 |
| Use of grids                     | Strict grid for the »old media« part, only border margins for the »new media« part | Strict grid for all pages | Two strict but different grids                          |

### Information vs. Communication

After seeing all three of the magazines, here I want to compare them shortly with some of the categorisation tools I introduced earlier. As usual, this is highly subjective.

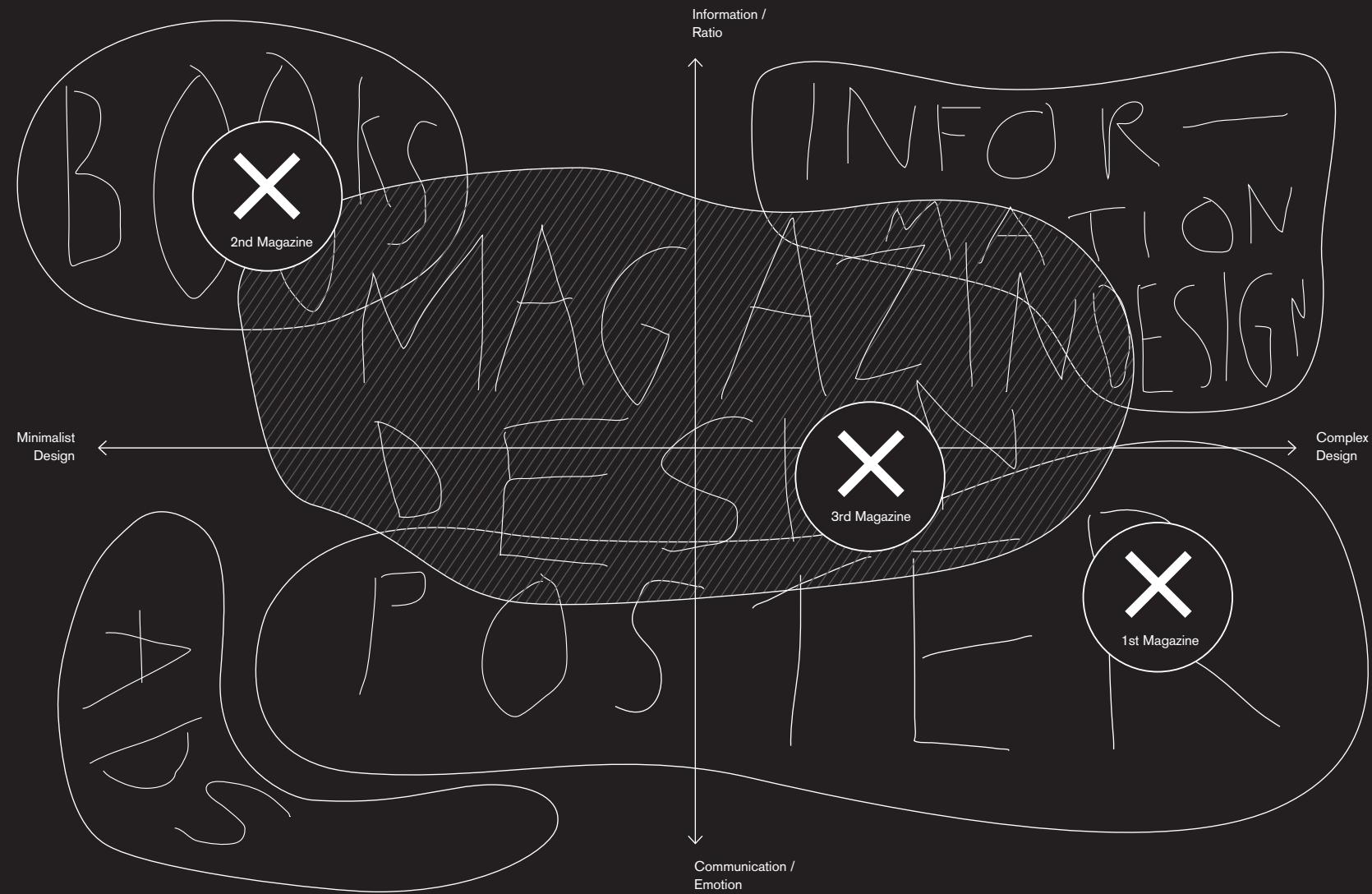
### Comparison of Stories

In the second categorisation, Francesco Franchis concept of Information vs. Communication → p101 is transferred into a model in which I sorted my magazines – and other forms of visual communication. Communication for Franchi is about getting attention. It remains vague, but highly emotional. Cover and title opener are the best example for »communicative communication« in magazine design. Information, however, is specific, understandable and readable (speaks to the ratio). It is, so to say, the pure text or the pure spreadsheet. And like always, you need to make a compromise between both. This kind of model was important for me to explain why dotview #3a and #3b don't work as a magazine so well: The first was entitled by myself often as »poster design«; the second one got the feedback that it is closer to a book than to a magazine. In this – again, subjective (I can't stress it often enough) – categorisation, the first magazine is outside of the »borders« of magazine design, the second one is on the border and the third one is within the borders. Meaning, the third come closest to what most people would call a »magazine« – although it doesn't mean that it has the best design, of course.

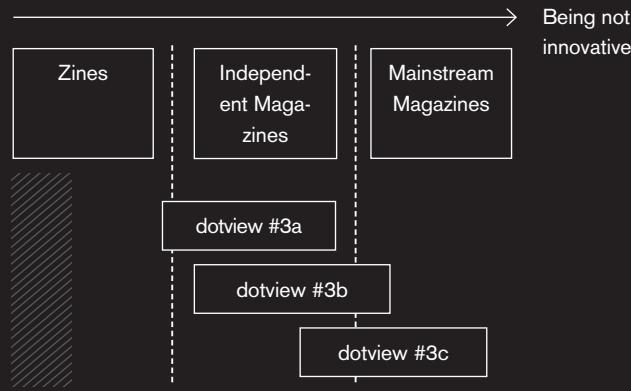
### Comparison of Stories

I'm also showing direct comparisons of the three different magazine styles applied to the same stories → p236. I hope, there the large difference between the first and third magazine gets obvious, while the third magazine wants to be somewhere in the middle of both extremes.

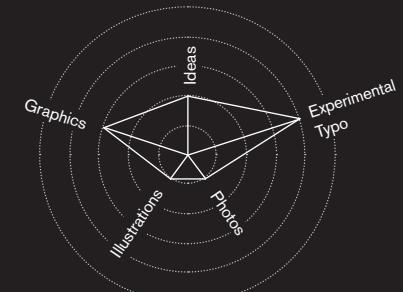
Categorisation 2: Information vs. Communication



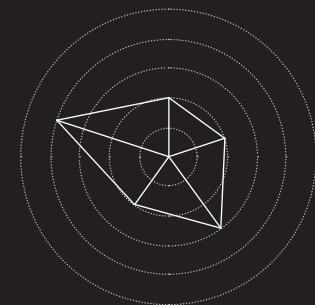
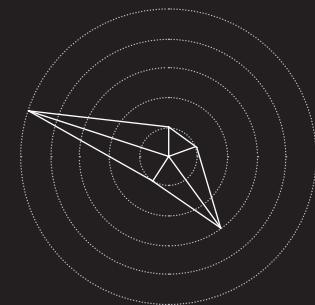
Categorisation 3:  
Focus on Magazine Elements



Categorisation 5:  
Focus on Magazine Elements



Categorisation 4:  
Complexity & Love for Experimentation



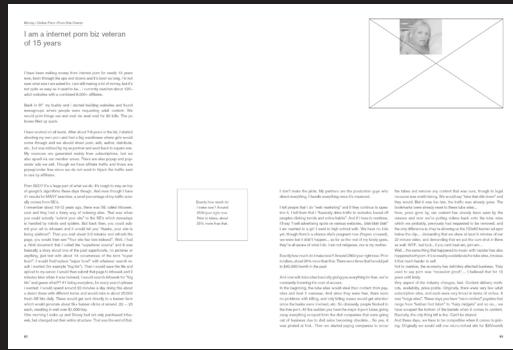
## Comparison of Stories (1st part)

I am a internet porn biz veteran of 15 years

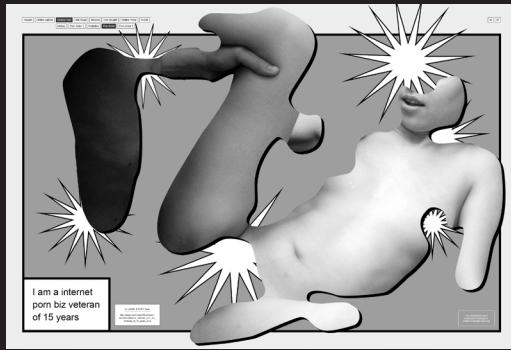
dotview #3a



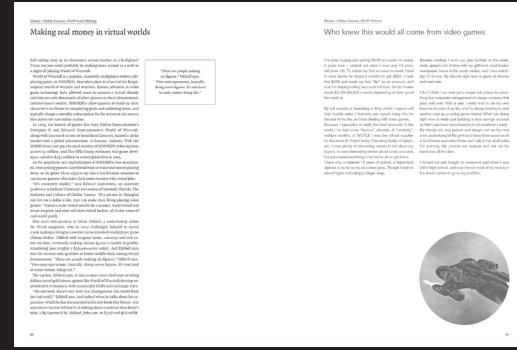
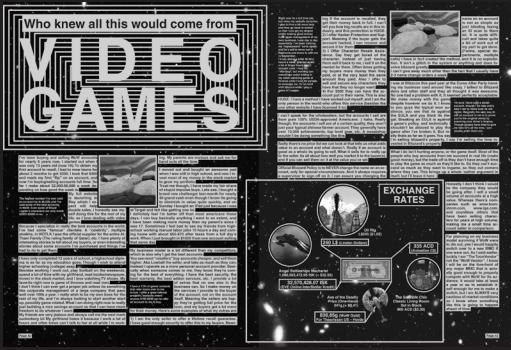
dotview #3b



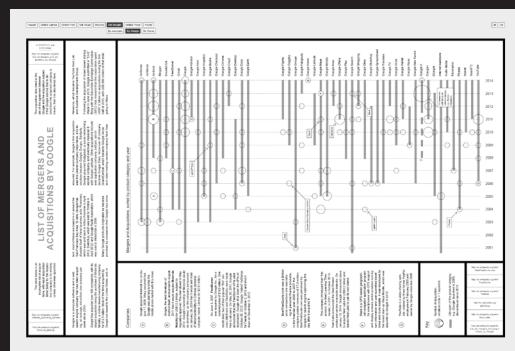
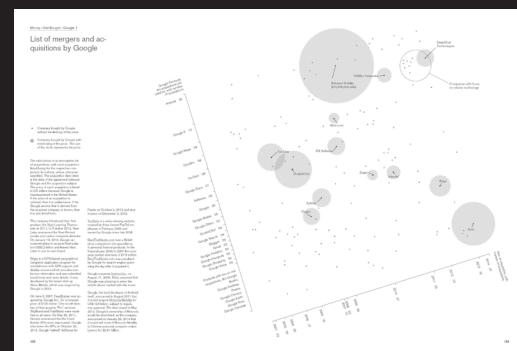
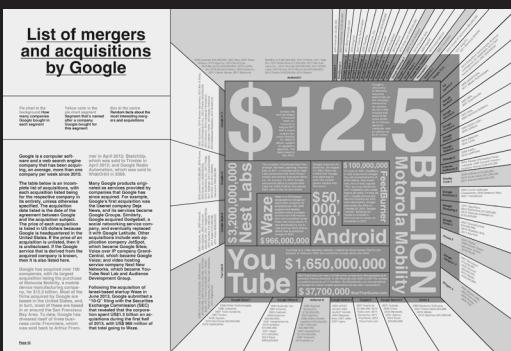
dotview #3c



Who knew all this would come from Video Games



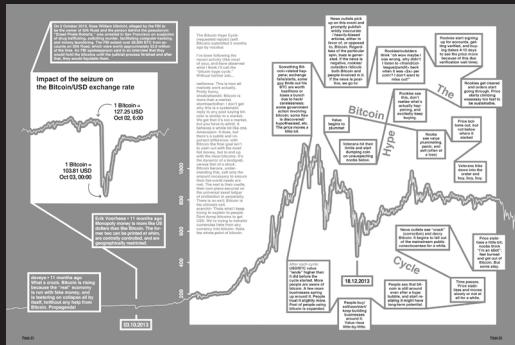
List of mergers and acquisitions by Google



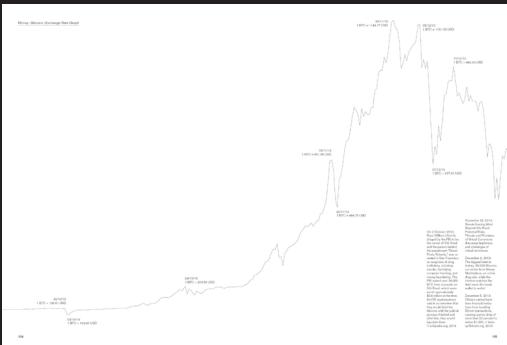
## Comparison of Stories (2nd part)

Bitcoin Exchange Rate Graph

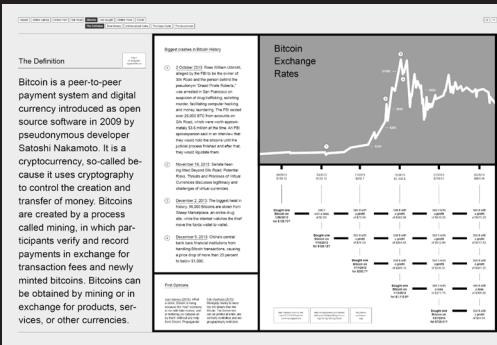
dotview #3a



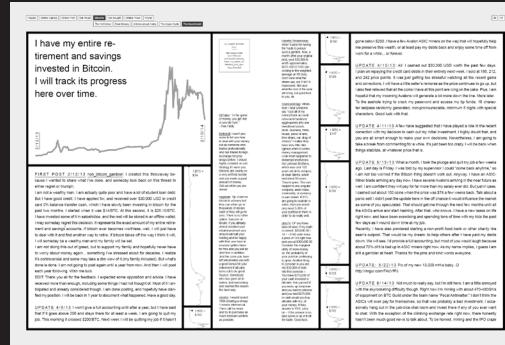
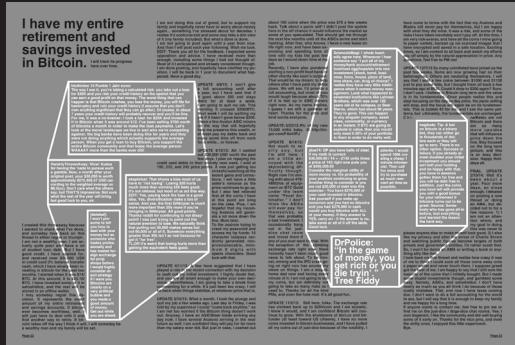
dotview #3b



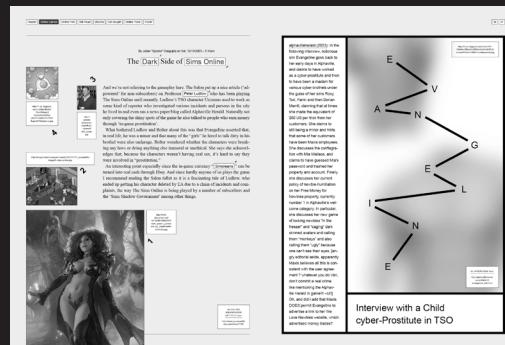
dotview #3c



I have my entire retirement and savings invested in Bitcoin



Evangeline: Interview with a Child cyber-Prostitute in TSO



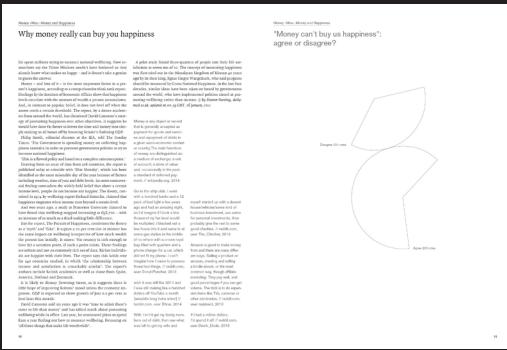
## Comparison of Stories (3rd part)

Why money really can  
buy you happiness

dotview #3a



dotview #3b



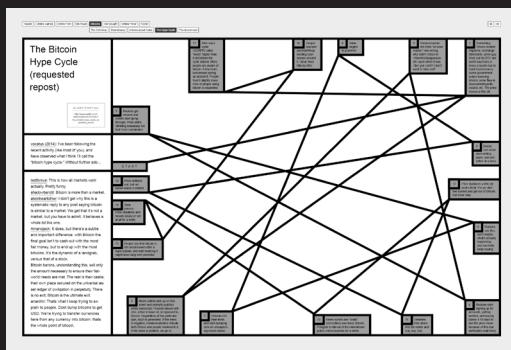
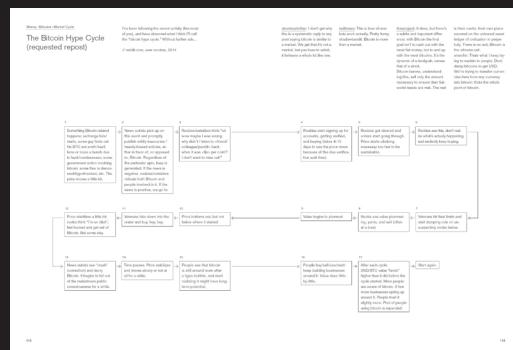
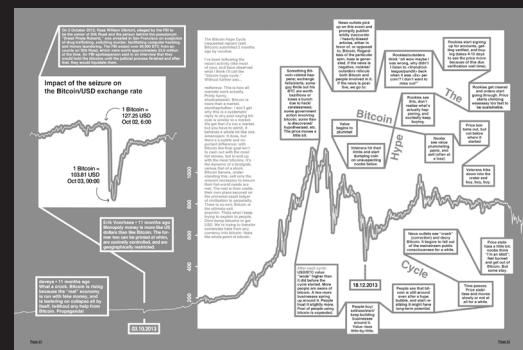
dotview #3c



Spaceships worth more than  
\$200,000 destroyed in biggest...

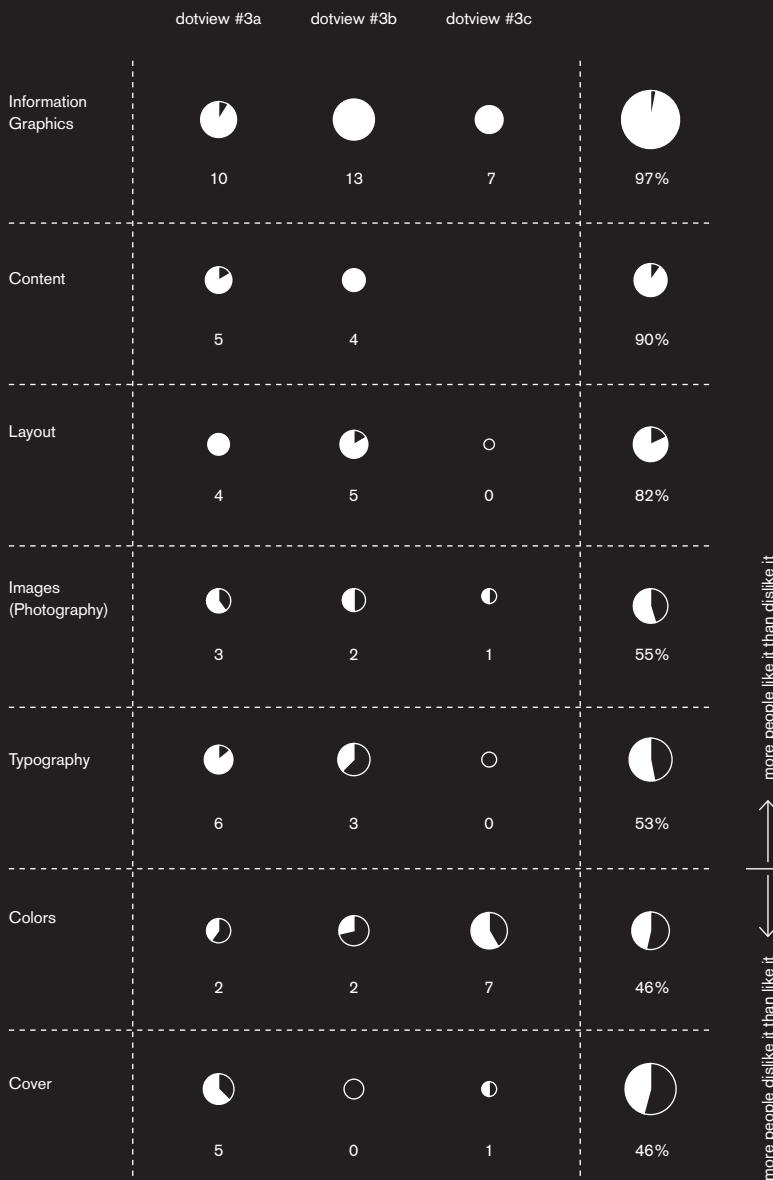


The Bitcoin Hyper Cycle  
(requested report)



## Feedback on Design Elements

White area = positive mention  
Black area = negative mention  
Size of Circle = Number of mentions



## 6 What and How I designed – The Analysis

### 6.2 Analysing the Feedback

On the following pages I will first explain the data and then try to construct a theory that explains the diversity of the feedback I got.

Among the analysis of the individual feedback my questionees gave me, the feedback about design aspects can be compared interestingly →[p242](#). When summed up, it's possible to see how many percent of my questionees talked about the different aspects of my work positively or negatively.

The best aspect of my magazines are the graphics. 97% of the people seemed to like my information graphics – and this was also the most talked about characteristic of my magazines.

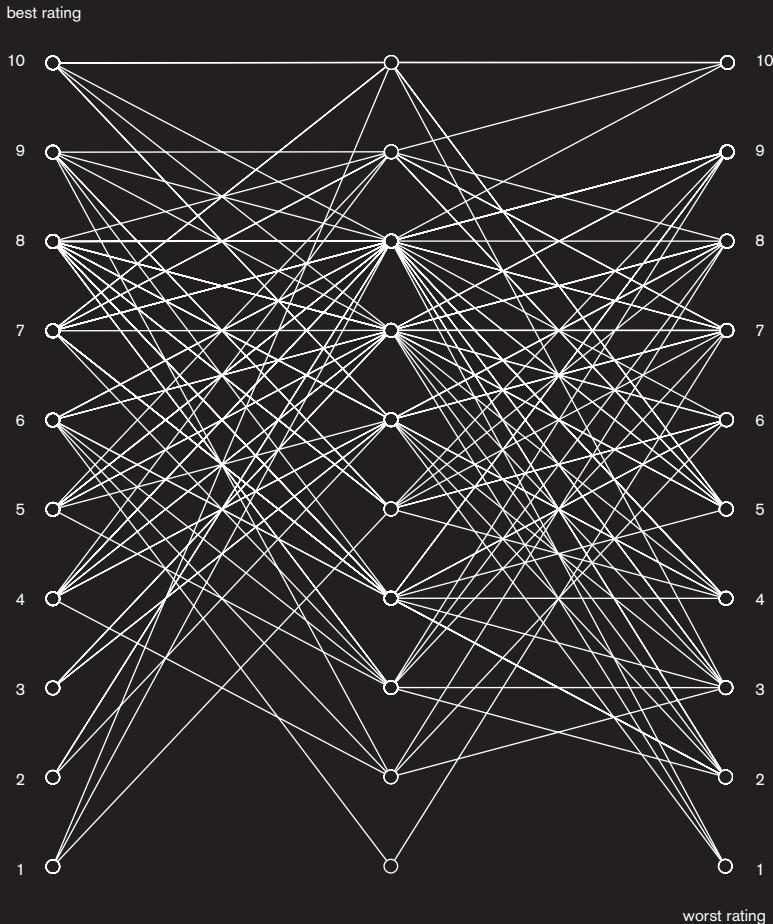
Also positively mentioned were the content of my magazines and the layout (especially in dotview #3b). My use of image material and typography, however, is with 55% and 53% positive mentions almost as often liked as disliked. Interesting enough, I seem to get worse in my use of typography. A lot of people talked about and disliked the typography in the second magazine for different reasons – but in the last magazine, the typography was not important for my questionees.

The data mirrors what I personally think about my design work. As noticeable in my blog posts, I've always had lots of fun while designing the info graphics and was excited about the content I found. Layout and composition is also a very important issue for me, so this got a lot of my attention. If I struggled during my process, then because of images, typography, colors, the cover and the structure (which isn't covered here because it's not easy to get feedback on this topic digitally).

#### Ratings

Even better comparable than the individual feedback are the ratings →[p244](#). I'm glad that I'm asked for them: Even more important than to know which magazines got how many points, I was interested in the trends: Did my questionees like the second magazine, when they like the first? If they like the second one, is it likely that they like the first more than the third – or the other way round?

## Every single Rating I got



## »Circle of Tastes«

I've figured out that they are four (well, five) (ok, six) classes my questionees can be sorted in according to the rating they gave. All these groups will be introduced in detail on the following pages. I call these groups »Circle of Tastes«, because people in this group share priorities with which they judge a design. I can't stress enough that this is not a scientific classification: This was never a goal; my survey was too inaccurate. The following classes present – like my models – a way to think, rather than an properly research paper.

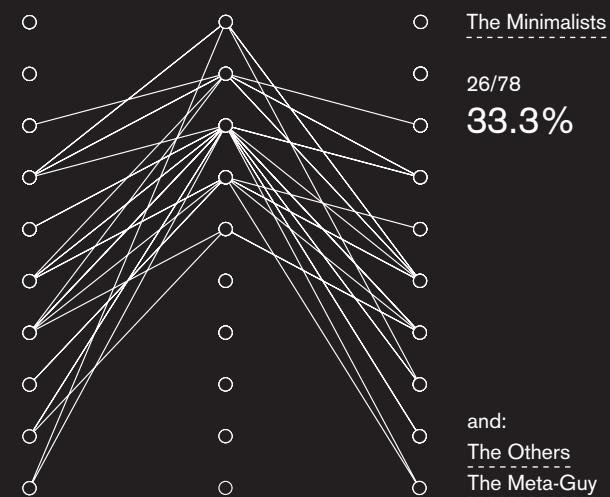
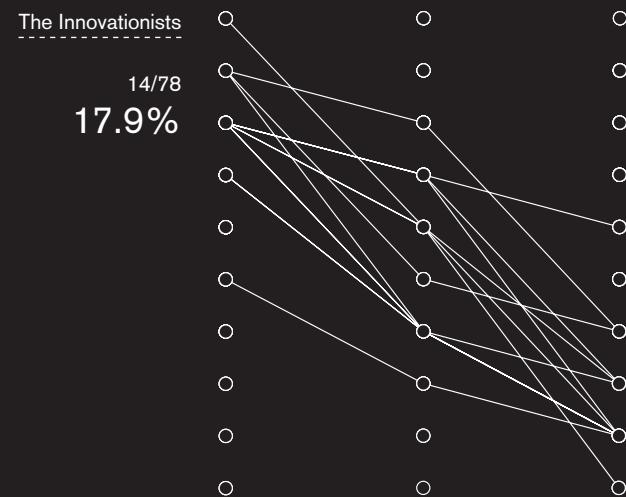
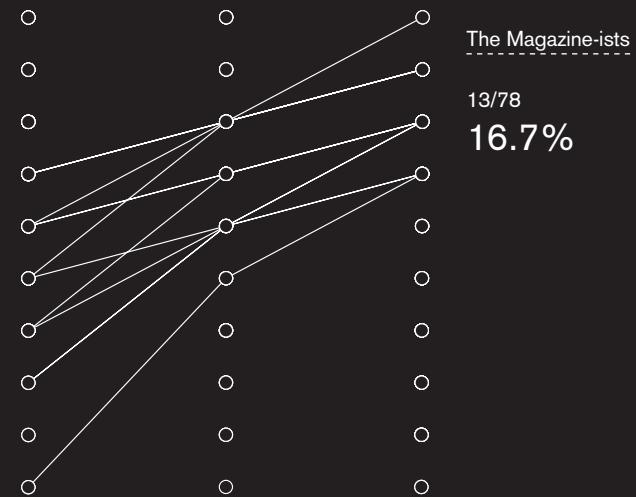
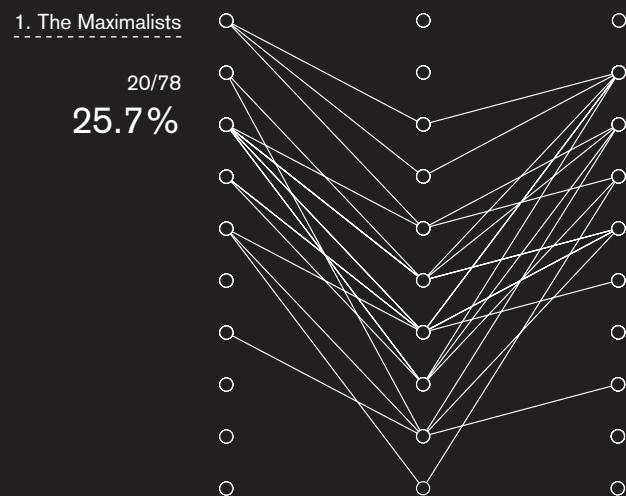
The most people – one third of all questionees – like the second magazine more than the first or third one. I call them the »Minimalists«, because the second magazine is the most minimalist one.

One quarter of the people I asked are »Maximalists«: They prefer the boldness of the first and third magazine to the simplicity of the second one. Their top-1-priority is the attention a design can create in the target audience.

Close to this group are the »Innovationists«: People who seek for innovation in design – and maybe could find this in my second magazine, but definitely not in my last one (it was called »trendlist.org-ed« by one of them).

The opposite of the »Innovationists« are the 18% of my questionees who liked the first magazine the least and the third the most. I name them »The Magazine-ists«, because their highest priority is that the design is working for its raison d'être; so for being a magazine.

The 11 people who rated at least two immediately consecutive magazines with the same points are »The Others«. And Mike Meiré gave me a sixth form of feedback, which runs under »The Meta-Guy« and gives a nice new perspective on my project.

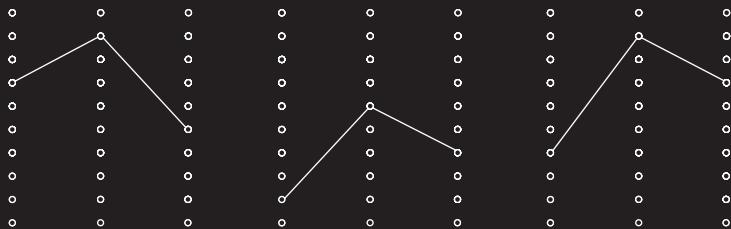


## The Minimalists

### Percentage of Representatives

26/78  
**33.3%**  
For this »Circle of Taste«, white space is one of the most important design element. There are minimalists to the core. The reading experience is what design is made for.

### Famous Representatives



Floyd Schulze  
Designer at Gestalten,  
e.g. of Turning Pages

Rachel Maria Taylor  
Editor-in-Chief  
of Another Escape

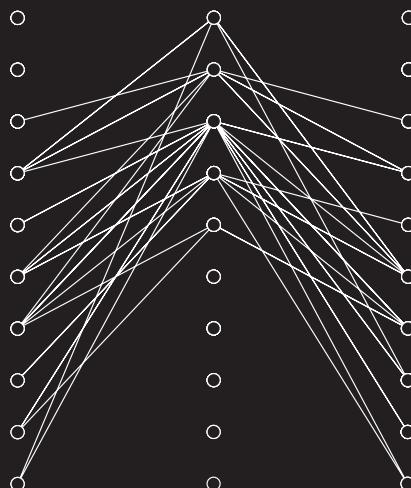
Matt Willey  
Designer of PORT,  
The Elephant, YouCanNow

### The Pro Quote:

»White space is king«  
Paul Sych, Professor at  
York University Toronto,  
Canada

### The Contra Quote:

»Magazine two looks very dry, more like a users manual or an annual report than something I would want to read for leisure.«  
Angus MacPherson,  
Little White Lies, United Kingdom



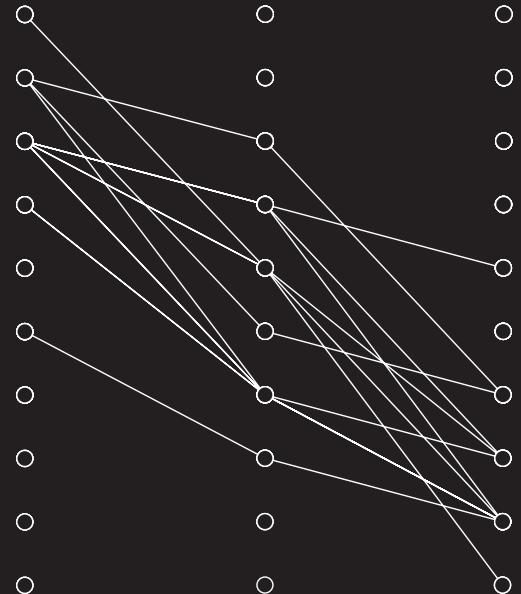
## The Innovationists

### Percentage of Representatives

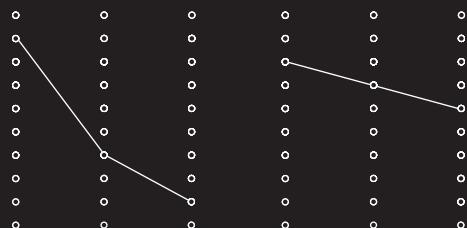
14/78  
**17.9%**

### The Pro Quote:

»Frisch, nicht grundlegend neu, aber deutlich am interessantesten. [Magazin Drei] ist mir zu normal, da bekomme ich wenig lust auf den Inhalt.«  
Sven Ehmann, Creative Director at Gestalten



### Famous Representatives



Sven Ehmann  
Creative Director  
of Gestalten

Michael Bojkowski  
Creator of linetfeed.me

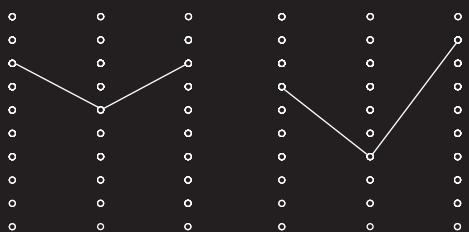
For this »Circle of Taste«, innovation in design is very important. Often, these people are Insiders in the design scene and have »seen it all.« Now they want something new.

## The Maximalists

Percentage of Representatives

20/78  
25.7%

Famous Representatives



Steven Watson  
Founder of  
StackMagazines.com

Mirko Borsche  
Designer of Zeit Magazin,  
The Germans, TUSH, etc.

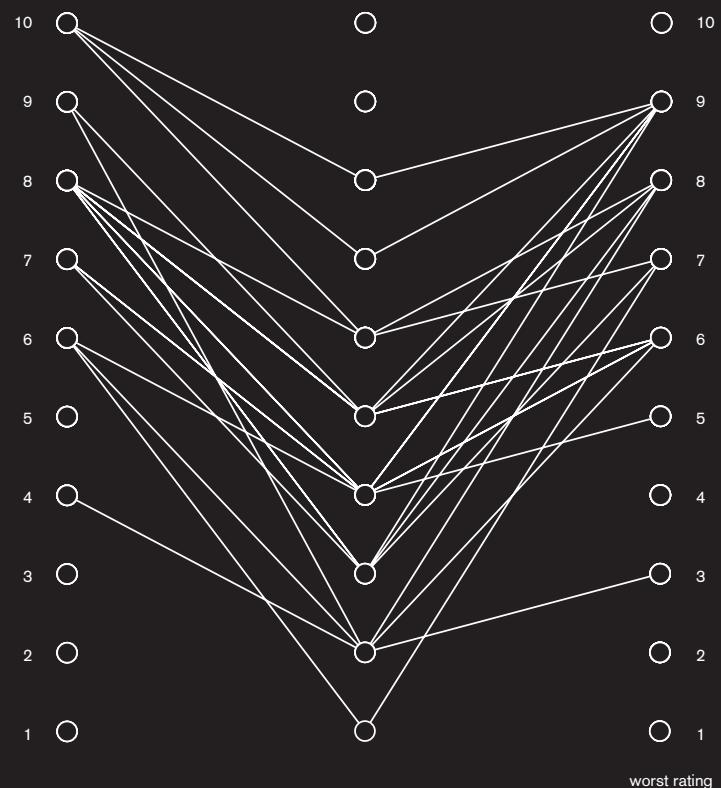
The Pro Quote:

»Composition of bold typography and pages of monotonous blocks of text is very intriguing. Bold type brings reader's attention.«  
Ryszard Bienert, Poland

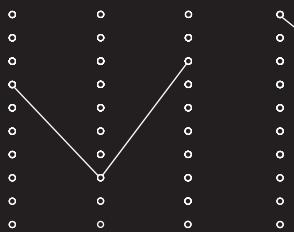
The Contra Quote:

»There is so much information cramped together that I just browse through rather than read everything. After a while, it gets a little boring.«  
Ella Zheng, Singapore

best rating



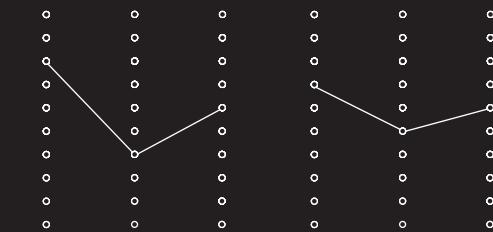
worst rating



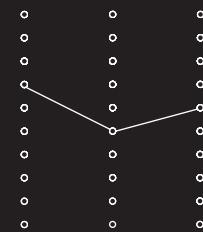
Angus MacPherson  
Designer of Little White Lies

Richard Turley  
Ex-Creative Director  
of Bloomberg Businessweek

Evan Applegate  
Senior Graphics Editor at  
Bloomberg Businessweek



Jeremy Leslie  
Founder of magculture



Patrick Waterhouse  
Editor-in-Chief of  
COLORS magazine

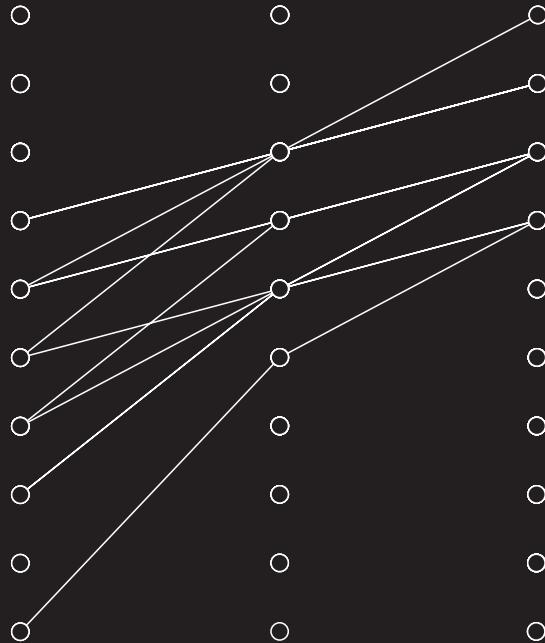
This »Circle of Taste« sees design as a way to get the reader's attention: This is far more important than the reading experience itself. They are close to the Innovationists, but are more fans of bold design.

## The Magazine-ists

Percentage of Representatives

13/78

**16.7%**



People in this »Circle of Taste« are seeing the importance of a good reading experience and the attention-driven design a magazine needs to attracts readers. The third magazine is for them the best combination of both.

**The Contra Quote:**

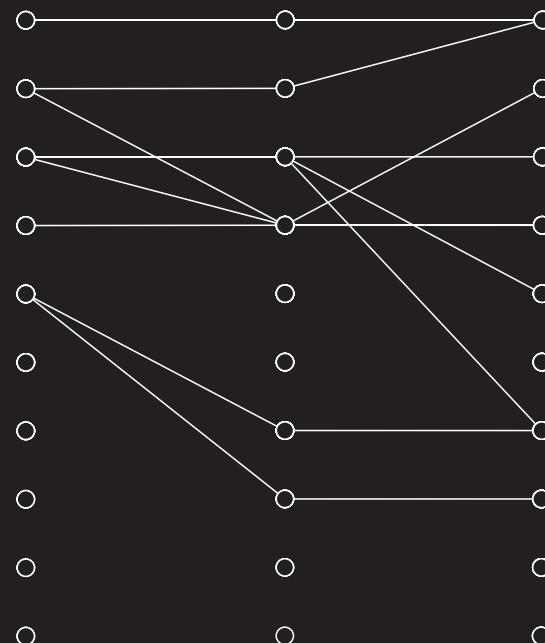
»Man fragt sich, was dich [zu Magazin Drei] geritten hat. Denn scheinbar kannst du ja auch anders (2tes Magazin) und dann kommt hier das blaue Magazinmonster angerollt.«  
Student at Bauhaus University

## The Others

Percentage of Representatives

11/78

**14.1%**



**The Pro Quote:**

»I give the second and third magazines a rating of 7. I see many fine things in both of them, just as I see things that I believe could be improved upon.«  
Alex Marashian, Editor

People in this »Circle of Taste« gave the same rating to at least two different magazines. This can have many motivations: They don't have a common reason to think so.

## The Meta-Guy

or: The special feedback from Mike Meiré

Hello Lisa,

erstmal großartig! Kompliment zu Deinem Projekt.

Die Offenheit unterschiedliche visuelle Lösungen zu einem Thema zuzulassen ist zeitgerecht. So kommen unterschiedliche Impulse, Tagesformen, Haltungen etc zusammen.

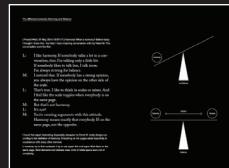
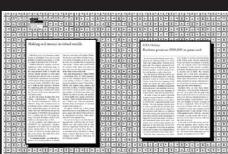
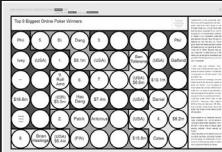
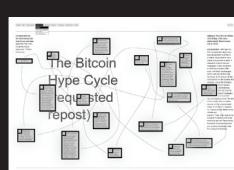
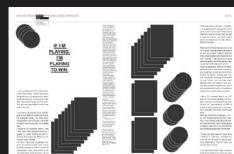
Aber.

Warum diese konzeptionelle Offenheit am Ende wieder nehmen? Warum muss es eine Skala geben? Was heißt das schon, wenn ich zB. 6 oder 7 angebe? Warum beschränkt Du Dich auf drei Versionen, warum nicht zwei oder fünf?

Worauf ich hinaus will, OPEN YOUR MIND – AND STAY TUNED! Es gibt keinen Grund die anfängliche Offenheit am Ende wieder einzuschränken. Denn dann endest Du wieder in traditionellem Verhalten, einer eindimensionalen Geschmackswahl. Magazine leben aber von unerwarteten Brüchen, die den Leser von der einen zur nächsten Seiten blättern lassen. Das Leben folgt keiner Agenda, es folgt den Energien oder dem Impuls zum nächsten Hyperlink zu hasten. Dahinter ist dann etwas anderes, darum klicken wir Menschen darauf, weil wir neugierig sind, weil wir eine innere Unruhe in uns tragen. Weil wir nicht immer linear denken, weil wir oft triebgesteuert sind. Weil MONEY wie SEX funktioniert, es triggert »zu viel« ist NIE »zu viel«.

Ich will das nicht werten, es ist halt wie es ist.

Deine visuelle Lösung für DAS EINE LAYOUT zu Deinem Magazin DOTVIEW sähe m.e. so aus:



Also, nicht »öffnen« und dann wieder »schließen«, sondern »öffnen« und die visuelle Qualität der Brüche »kuratorieren«. Das Magazin wie eine Ausstellung betrachten. Es ist alles da! Lass es zu!

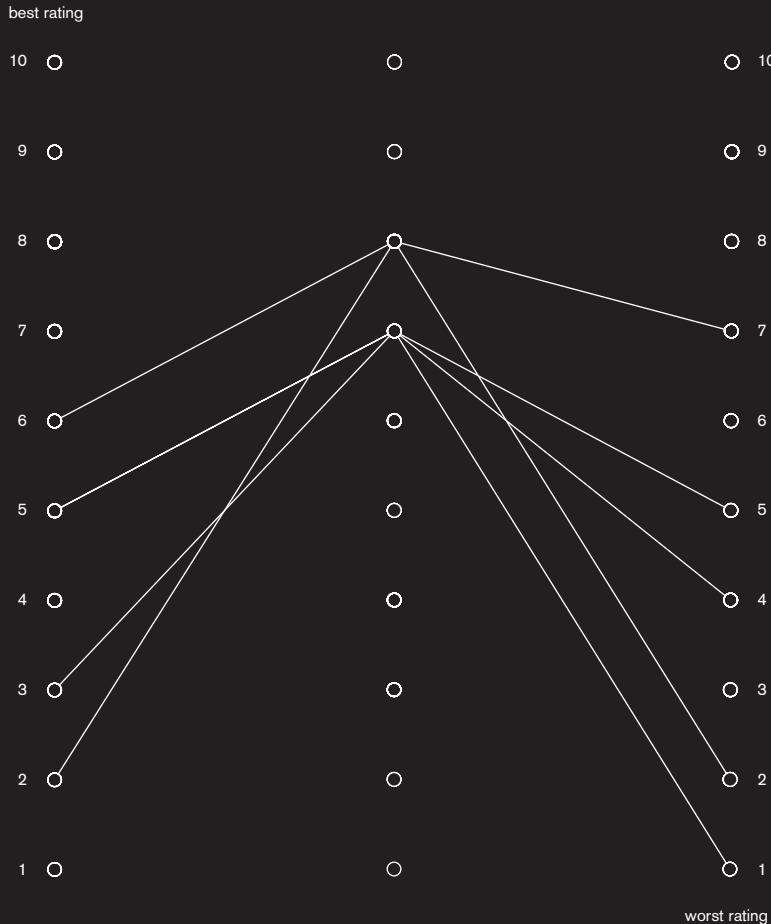
Noch eine Anmerkung:

Magazine werden durch die digitalen Kanäle kostbarer, (nur was taugt sollte auf Papier) umso wichtiger erscheint es mir dass wir als Gestalter deswegen raus aus der Corporate Schiene müssen. Magazine dürfen keine Marketingblätter sein, sie sind dann gefiltert und nicht mehr relevant. Dafür wird es dann ePapers geben mit animierten content.

Auch nicht wertend gemeint, nur beobachtend.

Liebe Grüße,  
Mike

## Feedback from Lecturer at the Bauhaus-University



»Circles  
of Tastes«  
and real  
Enviroments

Of course, not all »Circles of Tastes« are actually defined by the real-world circles or environments. But they can, as the graphic of the feedback I got from five lecturer (among them two professors) in the graphic design field at the Bauhaus-University Weimar shows [→ p256](#): They are without exception »Minimalists«. They all agreed that they second magazine was the best of all three, giving it seven to eight points. However, they weren't united regarding the first and third magazine, with ratings ranging from two to six and from one to seven points.

Of course, one important point can be the form of asking my questionees. All lecturers at my university I showed the magazines in person, so they hold it in their hands. The second magazine is the thickest one; it's printed on better paper than the other two magazines and therefore more impressive than the others ones. However, it's still interesting to see that there is no exception to their »Minimalists« niche.

Conclusion

# »Design is subjective.«

## Conclusion

My goal that I stated at the beginning of my Master's Thesis was to see what impact feedback can have on design. So what is my conclusion? What did I learn?

To my surprise, I didn't learn as much from specific feedback as from the whole experience of getting feedback itself. Of course, the detailed feedback gave me evidence where my strengths (Information Design, content, layout) and weaknesses (colors, cover) are; but I guessed this before.

However, I learned that design is subjective. That sounds too obvious to be the end statement for a Master's Thesis – but I feel I learned a great deal while understanding this principle. I learned that there can be a whole world to discover if you go to another »circle of taste« than the one you're used to. And that this new world is not more or less worth than what you're old circle taught you.

I learned that it's even more important than I thought to understand in which »circle of taste« the user of your design is. That it is for example important to understand what design objects your user is exposed to in his or her cultural environment: He or she will have maybe other ideas about how design in general works based on what he or she knows.

I understood that opinions in design are extreme; far more extreme than I thought there are. I learned to understand and appreciate these other opinions; these other designer and users outside of my »taste horizon«. I learned that, when one person or a group of people or all people in your environment tell you that your work is bad – then it's not necessarily bad. Your work is just in the wrong »Circle of Taste«.

Basically, I learned: Eventually, somebody will like it. If you want to live out your desire for hypercomplex or hyperweird or hyperprovocative design, maybe less people will like. But these »less people« will be still enough to form a reasonable »Circle of Taste«. There will be a target group.

Has my horizon been so narrow before my Master's Thesis that I didn't understand this before? I would deny this. But I didn't see the necessity of a wide range of graphic design.

Now I do; now I understand designers at the extreme poles of every axis, may it be the axis between complexity and minimalism or between conservative and experimental design. I will never ask the question again: »Who on earth will read this? Who will even like this?«

Other positive side effects of this Master's Thesis? Of course, first of all I understand magazines now way better than before and see them in a new perspective – especially regarding their structure, but also their strengths and weaknesses.

I also learned a lot about my work process: I built models which let me understand different approaches to design and used models from others to make my design process more efficient. In addition, I extended my own design library and now understand minimalism, composition and balance better than before.

Was this topic a good choice for my last student project? Yes, definitely. There wasn't a moment during the process where I felt desperated about the task I gave myself. I'm really happy about what I achieved in the last four months; I'm happy with the results from talking to other designers and potential readers and can say with conviction that I understand the field of graphic design better than before.

This Master's Thesis was heavily built on the support of the expertise (and taste!) of other designer. The following people (in alphabetical order) helped me to understand my work and the field of graphic design better:

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Angus MacPherson,<br>United Kingdom | Mattijs de Wit, The Netherlands                         |
| Anne Walterfang, Germany            | Mathias Schmitt<br>and Michael Ott, Germany             |
| Benjamin Koh Ju Ren, Singapore      | Melissa Fiebig, Germany                                 |
| Benoît Santiard, France             | Mike Meiré, Germany                                     |
| Bonnetin Clément, France            | Michael Bojkowski, Australia                            |
| Daniela Schmalfeld, Germany         | Mira Rojanasakul, United States                         |
| Edgar BĘ, Poland                    | Mirko Borsche, Germany                                  |
| Ella Zheng, Singapore               | Moshik Nadav, Israel                                    |
| Evan Applegate, United States       | Natasha Lid Bjørdalsbakke, Norway                       |
| Fabian Schneider, Germany           | Niko Mihaljevic, Croatia                                |
| Floor Koop, The Netherlands         | Patrick Waterhouse, Italy                               |
| Floyd Schulze, Germany              | Paul Sych, Canada                                       |
| Francesco Franchi, Italy            | Rachel Maria Taylor,<br>United Kingdom                  |
| Gaby Kosa, Germany                  | Ricard Marfà Castán, Spain                              |
| Hyojung Julia Seo, Canada           | Richard Turley, United States                           |
| Jacopo Atzorij, Italy               | Richarda Löser, Germany                                 |
| Jan Dittrich, Germany               | Sara Lorensene, Australia                               |
| Jay Rutherford, Germany             | Steven Watson, United Kingdom                           |
| Jefferson Paganel, France           | Sven Ehmann, Germany                                    |
| Jeremy Leslie, United Kingdom       | Thomas Kronschnabl &<br>The Institute of Friends, Italy |
| Lena Haubner, Germany               | Zara Kim, South Korea                                   |
| Ludvig Bruneau Rossow, Norway       |   |
| Matt Willey, United Kingdom         |   |

...as well as 63 other people who prefered to stay anonymous.

I am very grateful for all the help I got from these people.

Special thanks goes to my supervisors Markus Weisbeck and Alexander Marashian, who were always there for great feedback when I needed it.