
Designerly Knowledge and Knowledgable Designs: IxD Styles as Intermediary Forms of Knowing

Martin Murer
Verena Fuchsberger
Manfred Tscheligi
Center for Human-Computer
Interaction
Christian Doppler Laboratory
for “Contextual Interfaces”
University of Salzburg, Austria
firstname.lastname@sbg.ac.at

Styles

Knowledge generation, articulation, and preservation is essential, but difficult in Interaction Design. In order to emphasize *design* in designerly ways of knowing, we propose IxD styles as a way of articulating such knowledge. Up to now, styles have been discussed in HCI and Interaction Design mainly as interaction styles, indicating “[. . .] ways the user can communicate or otherwise interact with the computer system.” [4]. This is what Gross and colleagues refer to as general style, indicating that artifacts follow conventions [2]. For instance, regarding touch-styles, Gross et al. consider styles as means to organize, articulate and interpret decisions in creative processes. [2]

In more general terms, styles may be considered “a manner of doing something” ¹. One interpretation of this definition are individual styles [2], i.e., proposing that one interaction designer has her/his own style. Thereby, design styles are “[. . .] a set of different repeated microdecisions, each made the same way whenever it arises, even though the context may be different.” [1] However, apart from this individualistic definition, the *manner of doing something* may also characterize a

¹One definition of style according to the Oxford dictionary (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/style?searchDictCode=all)

broader phenomenon of repeated design decisions that emerge through current technologies, IxD practices, methods, techniques, etc. In disciplines, such as architecture, styles frame specific interdependent form-giving practices, processes and techniques, materials used, and resulting appearances (forms) of buildings. This framing, one particular style provides, organises a interlinked set of knowledge. It preserves this knowledge and makes it an accessible, distinguishable and generative tool for both design theory and practice. Furthermore, styles are not exclusive; they may inform and influence neighbouring disciplines and meander between practice and theory. For instance, the deconstructionist style in architecture informed a respective style in graphic design, which finally resulted in an activity of critical form-giving [3]. Thus, it may be beneficial for IxD to think about styles as designerly ways of knowing as well.

Styles in IxD: Open to Debate

In order to inspire the discussion about ways of knowing in IxD, we propose to discuss whether and what styles contribute to generate and preserve IxD knowledge, resulting in the following set of questions (not an exclusive list, but starting points for discussion):

- Are distinguished styles existing in IxD? Is there a need for styles in IxD?
- If styles emerge through practice, what might theory learn from them? What kind of intermediary knowledge can be provided through IxD styles? How do styles relate to strong concepts, annotated portfolios, etc.?
- How can we support the articulation of styles? How is a particular style framed (who should do that, when should that happen)? How can a IxD style be

framed in a manner that is transparent across disciplines and epistemologies?

- How do we get rid of “graphic design styles” in IxD styles? How can we articulate IxD styles in contrast to existing graphical styles?
- Do we have / need both, general and individual styles? And if yes, how to distinguish between them?

Styles may help to frame knowledge and especially designerly ways of knowing, and the workshop would provide a great opportunity to discuss the implications that arise when articulating IxD styles.

Acknowledgements

The financial support by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and the National Foundation for Research, Technology and Development is gratefully acknowledged (Christian Doppler Laboratory for “Contextual Interfaces”).

References

- [1] Brooks Jr, F. P. *The design of design: Essays from a computer scientist*. Pearson Education, 2010.
- [2] Gross, S., Bardzell, J., and Bardzell, S. Touch style: Creativity in tangible experience design. In *Proc. Creativity & Cognition '13*, ACM (2013), 281–290.
- [3] Lupton, E., and Miller, J. A. Deconstruction and graphic design: history meets theory. *Visible language* 28 (1994), 346–346.
- [4] Soegaard, M. Interaction styles. In *The Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction, 2nd Ed*. The Interaction Design Foundation, Aarhus, Denmark, 2014.