

„Interacting in Public Space – how New Media influence our behavior in Public Space“

Nowadays there is one trend that is broadly discussed in public: „New Media Revolution“. Depending on who deals with the topic there are a couple of other terms used that usually refer to the same or similar phenomena: „Social Media Revolution“ (e.g., Samuel 2012), „Information Technology Revolution“ (e.g., Castells 2010; Forester 1990) and „Digital Revolution“ (e.g., Tapscott 1996). But Lev Manovitch has explained, that the substantial change that transformed technology and affected society rapidly since the 1960s was the trend of digitization (cf. Manovitch 2001, p.25).

Since some writers, such as the sociologist Manuel Castells, understand the transformation of public space as the expression of change in society (e.g., Castells 1994), this raises the question of how digitization has changed public space. We can easily answer that some substantial changes became visible in urban spaces within the last 20 years: Media facades render public spaces as marketing arenas projecting moving images onto huge screens, thereby increasing the volatile atmosphere and uniforming the experiences in public spaces all over the world. Invisible networks support people with information and media content on the go in many public and private spaces.

I agree with many writers and researchers (e.g., Kluitenberg 2006; Sassen 2006) in the point that this also leads to a shift in human behavior in the public sphere. Some of those consequences such as the presence of surveillance systems have been discussed broadly in public. We also see people checking Emails and Twitter or getting directions from map applications onto their smartphones at any time and any place.

The spatial consequences of New Media are not yet taken into account in research properly, which is the reason why this master thesis focuses on the topic. Therefore this work will concentrate in the first part on establishing a theoretical framework that can be used to understand the ongoing changes in media and public space. Therefore I explore the interrelationship between technology, media, society, and public space. The second part focuses on practical issues. By reflecting on different New Media (surveillance, media facades, mobile media and interactive New Media art installations) I show how public spaces change through the use of New Media. Therefore I use case studies (literature review) and analyze artistic projects from their online video documentations. The main goal of this thesis to explore the subtle influences New Media have on public spaces.