

KOMPLIZEN REPORT 4/16/14

Topic: KOMPLIZEN workshops, SUPERMARKT Berlin, April 6th 2014

Author: Krystian Woznicki

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Motto

What happens when expert cultures on the quest for new inspiration leave their ivory towers? Or when people thrown into crisis situations need each other to survive? Or when users on the internet discover a common cause? What potentially occurs in such moments could be called "collaboration among strangers". People not only realize that they can find a common language but that they also are able to develop ideas and projects together. Since this is the *light bulb moment* of many Berliner Gazette events "collaboration among strangers" has become our general motto. This motto is also expressed in KOMPLIZEN. The German title of this event means accomplices.

Theme

The theme of our April 6th event KOMPLIZEN focused on emancipatory approaches to two seemingly impenetrable systems: economy and media (web of connections and web of ideas (journalism, etc.)). It is in economy and media where power is predominantly accumulated and where a dramatic imbalance of power is experienced, also due to a lack of general education with regard to those fields. This is why our event put economy and media on the agenda.

Problem

Although there is an abundance of wealth in almost all sectors of industrialized societies, a certain sense of poverty and powerlessness is spreading. The so called 99% who provide the basis for an expanding accumulation of capital are facing precarization rather than adequate remuneration. Potentially all of them are sources of (politically) relevant stories, since on the Internet "everybody can broadcast". Yet, rather than those who are supposed to pay attention (peers or those to be enlightend), it is the surveillance apparatus who listens to the "silent majority" voicing up.

Approach

How about bringing people from a variety of fields and social spheres together? We call this "community building". And what about initiating processes of exchange, learning and collaboration? We call this "tool building" – be the tools technical, political or cognitive. In fact at KOMPLIZEN we blended both: community building and tool building.

Structure

The April 6th event KOMPLIZEN was structured in five parallel tracks (10 am – 4 pm). The first two tracks were dealing with the media question (regarding the web as the dominant media in which all other media converge). Track 3 and 4 had an economic focus, while the last track (#5) blended those two spheres, building bridges between initiatives with an economic and a media focus.

Track #1: The post-Snowden web: How should it be built?

Track #2: Networking journalism: Self-organization is necessary!

Track #3: Creatives on the payroll: How about basic income?

Track #4: Library with future: Open knowledge for all?

Track #5: Movements without political representatives. Still!

From 5 p.m. there was a presentation of preliminary results including a debate open to the public.

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Program

Track #1: The post-Snowden web: How should it be built?

The Snowden disclosures have raised a central question: In order for us as a society to remain “healthy”, do we need to rebuild the Internet? If so, how should it be built? This workshop used a “whole society” approach directed towards a gathering of specific attendees: web theoreticians, hackers, and non-technical activists. The non-technical activists were invited to look into existing and targeted solutions, as well as to share their problems and issues with the hackers.

Track #2: Networking journalism: Self-organization is necessary!

Scandalizing and irrelevant journalism receives much too much attention. Important topics receive little or no lasting publicity. The pluralization of the media landscape that was fostered by the Internet has not stopped this undesirable development. Instead strictly confidential algorithms create an “economy of the most favorite”. How can that be counteracted? How can journalism become networked in a more sensible manner? The workshop invited activists, bloggers, journalists, and programmers to consider these questions together. The motto: We cannot leave the most important things to the decision makers in the media and IT corporations!

Track #3: Creatives on the payroll: How about basic income?

Creativity is the most significant factor for productivity in an economy that is increasingly marked by the immaterial creation of value. But what does such an economy give back to the creative minds behind it? Could an unconditional basic income be the answer to the digital copyright crisis and mean the ‘democratization of creativity’? The workshop approached these questions with an interdisciplinary group of participants.

Track #4: Library with future: Open knowledge for all?

Free knowledge and free culture—using the example of a public, digital, and thus globally accessible library, one can see that these universal demands have not yet been established throughout the world. A major obstacle is privatization and the economic regime known as copyright industry. In order to create an exemplary case of “free knowledge” and “free culture,” the following questions were addressed in the workshop: How could such a library be realized? What would it look like and how would it be set up? What economic conditions must be created? The workshop brought together scientists, activists, creatives, artists, and the keepers of cultural heritage (librarians, etc.).

Track #5: Movements without political representatives. Still!

Currently, there are numerous activist movements that pull their energy and drive for change directly from the grassroots basis. These movements are decentralized and non-hierarchical, and they have in common that they are ready to get mixed up in “politics”. This workshop pulled together various action groups (for issues like freelance rights, apprentice rights, etc.) and looks for common interests. The central questions are: How can these initiatives get involved in the official political playing field without losing their independence? What is the situation of the grassroots involvement and participation? What kind of processes are necessary to render a small niche group into a true alternative for many people?

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Process

More than 100 participants came together from a variety of countries including Syria, Japan, Great Britain, Croatia, France and Germany, from fields as different as journalism, art, programming, activism, business, science and institutions (especially libraries). The day started with an open brunch and informal introductions, which was followed by an official welcome announcement to the entire group of participants setting the goal and expectations horizon. Then the participants gathered in the space dedicated to the track, that they had registered for. The sessions were started by the moderators (see for their details at the very bottom "Credits -> Moderators"). After a round of introductions and brief impulse speeches, a discussion of the problem and a collective elaboration of possible solutions followed. From there on each track proceeded in a self-organized manner using a variety of approaches. While for example track 2 created quickly break out groups in order to facilitate concentrated communication processes leading to pragmatic project development, track 3 remained all day within the big group arranging one input speech after the other with subsequent discussions. In the end of the day all groups came together in an open space setting (see the two images on the previous page). Brief reports from each group about their findings set the basis for a discussion.

Documentation

The documentation team consisted of five people (see for their details at the very bottom "Credits -> Documentation"). Each of them joined one of the five tracks respectively and documented their processes in an etherpad. Those protocols were complemented by notes on flipcharts. In addition to that a photographer took pictures and uploaded them to a flickr album.

Results

The results of KOMPLIZEN were documented in text based protocols and photographs. Mailinglists were opened for each respective event track, for the groups to have a discrete space for further exchanges and discussions. An additional motivation to elaborate on the results was announced by the organisers through an open invitation to all groups to come together again and to pursue their processes within the larger context of the 14th annual conference of Berliner Gazette that will take place between November 13-15th.

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Lessons: The five tracks

Lessons Track #1:

While the makers of recently developed web tools including kinko.me, trustner.com, peer.do and mailpile.is presented their projects, it became clear that one of the biggest challenges is to find a common, universal basis for net security: as artists and activists from Syria argued, the priorities in their region with regard to that issue are different from what similar actors care about in Europe. In short: While the participants agreed that it is desirable to develop secure standards that are set on a meta level, they realized that those are not only a technical issue, but that they also depend on cultural parameters, regional use-case scenarios and a variety of political factors.

Lessons Track #2:

While the initiators of journalism projects including jplusplus.org, Hostwriter.org, netzpiloten.de, Hypothes.is, indymedia.org and CitizenKino discussed the question of how to optimize the impact of their work, it became clear that we need to move beyond the "Google analytics"-challenge. To have impact we need to get involved in a new way with 1) existing social problems (e.g. their complexity) and with 2) potential 'readers'. Therefore we should rethink the design of values and practises when creating, presenting and distributing journalism. For example: Instead of insisting on objectivity, journalism should be more transparent. Instead of complaining about the death of print, journalism must discover new platforms of communication incl. gatherings in offline spaces.

Lessons Track #3:

„Everyone was born creative.“ This was the consensus of the group. Yet, digitalization and automation on the one hand and too many well educated people who work or want to work creatively on the other hand, make it increasingly difficult for people to find paid work in creative fields. Even when they can find a job, it is hard to live a decent life due to spreading precarization. The group discussed "basic income" as a solution to this problem and it learned that such a policy could be fruitful: basic income could make people independent, help them to feel safe; basic income even could stimulate creativity. However, and this was the major concern of the group, this can only work, if rendered without sanctions/penalties (like in Germany's Hartz reforms).

Lessons Track #4:

Representatives of conventional libraries including the ICI-Berlin, Zuse-Institute and Stadtbibliothek Wolfsburg discussed their issues with representatives of initiatives like memoryoftheworld.org, libreas.eu and wikimedia.de. It became clear that libraries, despite their focus on their collections, are also looking forward to collaborations, in order to establish e.g. one universal library combining archives from institutions as well as from initiatives and grassroots actors alike. While there was a consensus among the participants, that this approach is seminal, it remained unclear how to establish values and practises for such a collaboration, e.g. how to make the materials not only accessible but also preserve them for the future – can we find a method for long-term access?

Lessons Track #5:

Bringing together representatives of 1) rights movements (like the Berlin Internship Justice and the Freelance Rights Movement), 2) independent journals (like die tageszeitung and Utopie. Magazin für Sinn und Verstand), 3) observers/initiators of alternative economic systems and 4) hacking experts, the group as a whole questioned the necessity of political representation for emerging social formations. The group agreed that prior to institutionalization (via a political representation) the movements should explore common synergies and find a holistic goal, that binds their energies and scales their efforts onto a different, more influential level.

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Lessons: The day as a whole

To bring very different people and very disparate interest groups together can cause disorder and confusion. And indeed: The "confrontations" on April 6th at KOMPLIZEN proved to be quite confusing on many levels, however most of the time in a constructive way. As a 20-year-old coder from the North of Great Britain said: "the confusion brought important things to my attention." The most important lesson from this experience is: Everybody, including the organisers, should be tolerant towards confusion. So the challenge for the organisers is to develop a master plan that allows for situations that are impossible to plan. Yet, this is not just about spontaneity. It's also and foremost about having the right moderation methods at hand when everyone else is lost. An integral part of those moderation methods is to respond as direct as possible to the needs of participants while working out the thread(s) of the day. Particularly during the closing discussion at the end of the day the moderation did not consistently manage to establish a sustainable balance between the "needs of participants" and the "thread(s) of the day". This was clearly not easily but certainly very important to accomplish. So this is something that we need to improve on in the future if using such a structure and setting.

The global surveillance disclosures (2013ff) were often cited in the closing discussion as symptoms of our current situation: an alarming imbalance of power in society has been made visible by Edward Snowden's NSA-/GSHQ-leaks. Against this backdrop our relationship towards both systems (that is: media and economy) has been analysed in the discussion. The common problems of all participants as well as their common interests with regard to that became evident. Facing such a severe crisis in our societies, even the most disparate actors tend to solidarize and therefore it is not so surprising that the *light bulb moment* ("oh, we're in this together") occurred. The decisive question now is: what are the consequences?

A seasoned coordinator of the oldest hacker space in Berlin remarked that "the event functioned well as a socializing platform". This achievement is not to be downplayed at all. However, looking at the theme/problem that brought people together and looking at the potential of creativity and knowledge that their gathering brought to light, it goes without saying that there is more to the event than just being a "socializing platform". Sure, "making people leave their comfort zone" is important (as a former OpenNews fellow praised another Berliner Gazette event). Yet, isn't it quite obvious, that bringing people together is only the start for bringing skills and resources together, that is: for joining forces and starting exchanges and collaborations? The many ideas that emerged within the event show that there is a basis for future collaboration.

At this moment it is too early to judge, whether KOMPLIZEN can be a catalyser for the different groups to pursue their work. For now the lesson of the event is, that the organisers should be ready to deal with the surplus energies of the event constructively. It is helpful to have a concept that goes beyond the mere logistics of running an event smoothly. So we had. Now, having set a basis for potentially ongoing collaboration by providing a rich documentation, open collaborative documents and open mailinglists, the organisers will have to see whether their concept proves successful on the long run or whether there are some things that can be improved.

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Open Feedback

If you have any feedback that you feel has not yet been considered in the evaluation of the event, please let us know! If you have an ideas that we should consider in upcoming events, just drop us a line. In any case, we welcome constructive criticism and proposals for the processes of our concerns to develop in a dynamic fashion.

To structure possible feedback, here some hints of what we are interested in:

- * responses to the April 6th event: criticism, praise, impressions, requests.
- * suggestions for the group work to continue, using e.g. the respective mailinglists and smaller informal gatherings in the near future or other platforms which we have not yet thought about.
- * proposals for our 14th annual conference taking place between November 13-15th
- * things we overlooked

You may direct your input to the respective mailinglist. Please check the "Resources" section at the bottom for the details. If you were a guest or participant of KOMPLIZEN you may use without registration the email addresses listed for each group in order to share your input. If you come across this project just now and would like to join, you need to register first at the respective mailinglist website.

If your feedback or request is of rather general concern, please mail us to: info@berlinergazette.de



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E-Book Launch

As part of the event, we launched KOMPLIZEN – an E-book, edited by Magdalena Taube and Krystian Woznicki, containing over 25 essays by international experts on the production of culture and knowledge in the course of a "collaboration among strangers".

The book is available in German only.

For info please go to: <http://irights-media.de/publikationen/komplizen>



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Ressources

Track #1: The post-Snowden web: How should it be built?

Etherpad: <https://etherpad.mozilla.org/TQHLn7AWPI>

Mailinglist: https://ml06.ispgateway.de/mailman/admin/future-web_berlinergazette.de

Mail to: [future-web\(at\)berlinergazette.de](mailto:future-web(at)berlinergazette.de)

Track #2: Networking journalism: Self-organization is necessary!

Etherpad: <https://etherpad.mozilla.org/T8uC1pN5EH>

Mailinglist: https://ml06.ispgateway.de/mailman/listinfo/journo-coder_berlinergazette.de

Mail to: [journo-coder\(at\)berlinergazette.de](mailto:journo-coder(at)berlinergazette.de)

Track #3: Creatives on the payroll: How about basic income?

Etherpad: <https://etherpad.mozilla.org/Komplizen3>

Mailinglist: https://ml06.ispgateway.de/mailman/listinfo/creative-rights_berlinergazette.de

Mail to: [creative-rights\(at\)berlinergazette.de](mailto:creative-rights(at)berlinergazette.de)

Track #4: Library with future: Open knowledge for all?

Etherpad: <https://etherpad.mozilla.org/iJ6H4m8ISn>

Mailinglist: https://ml06.ispgateway.de/mailman/listinfo/open-cultures_berlinergazette.de

Mail to: [open-cultures\(at\)berlinergazette.de](mailto:open-cultures(at)berlinergazette.de)

Track #5: Movements without political representatives. Still!

Etherpad: <https://etherpad.mozilla.org/HnUwGMhmtP>

Mailinglist: https://ml06.ispgateway.de/mailman/listinfo/new-moves_berlinergazette.de

Mail to: [new-moves\(at\)berlinergazette.de](mailto:new-moves(at)berlinergazette.de)

Photos by Andi Weiland

Flickr album: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/berlinergazette/sets/72157643543656705/>

Credits: Andi Weiland/berlinergazette.de cc by nc

E-Book (German only)

Online reading tool: <http://irights-media.de/webbooks/komplizen/>

General info & shopping option: <http://irights-media.de/publikationen/komplizen>

Link to this report in PDF format:

http://berlinergazette.de/wp-content/uploads/KOMPLIZEN_Report_41614.pdf

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Credits

KOMPLIZEN was curated and organised by berlinergazette.de and funded by the Culture Programme of the European Union with support by Rosa-Luxemburg-Foundation and Knight-Mozilla OpenNews and in collaboration with Supermarkt, iRights.Media, social impact lab and transcript. This event is part of the initiative "Aesthetic Education Expanded": a project curated by berlinergazette.de, Kuda, Kontrapunkt, Mi2 and Mute – funded with support by the Culture Programme of the European Union. Other projects realised by Berliner Gazette within this context include the conferences "Digital Backyards" (2012) and "Complicity" (2013) as well as the workshops "bottom-up & open" (2013) and "Whatever happened to journalism?" (2013).

Venue

SUPERMARKT | Brunnenstr. 66 | 13355 Berlin | <http://supermarkt-berlin.net>

Moderation

Sabrina Apitz (berlinergazette.de), Ilja Braun (Carta.info), Valie Djordjevic (iRights.info), Leonie Geiger (berlinergazette.de), Ela Kagel (Supermarkt), Michael Krömer (Think Fabrik), Sandra Mamitzsch (Digitale Gesellschaft), Chris Piallat (berlinergazette.de), Pit Schultz (reboot.fm), Magdalena Taube (berlinergazette.de), Krystian Woznicki (berlinergazette.de).

Documentation

Tatiana Abarzua (berlinergazette.de), Annika Bunse (berlinergazette.de), Julia Müller (berlinergazette.de), Adriana Radu (berlinergazette.de), Lilian Masuhr (leidmedien.de), Andi Weiland (berlinergazette.de).

Coordination

Susann Hochstein (berlinergazette.de), Florian Kosak (berlinergazette.de).

Curator

Krystian Woznicki (berlinergazette.de)

Funded by



Culture



Knight-Mozilla
OpenNews



About the initiator

How can the internet be used to foster a thinking „outside of the box“? How can it bring people together across boundaries? Those questions lead Berliner Gazette to analyze groundbreaking features of the Internet and to test them in practice. Against this backdrop the nonprofit and nonpartisan association of journalists, researchers, artists and programmers weaves its social networks – offline and online, locally and globally. In 1999 we began to publish berlinergazette.de in German under a Creative Commons-License – gathering from all over the world more than 1.000 contributors who focus for us on contemporary culture: from major debates to forgotten issues. For fifteen years now we also organize conferences, seminars and edit books.

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