

Introduction

In the editorial introduction to this special issue of *Design Issues*, Thomas Susanka and Olaf Kramer suggest that, in democracies based on citizen engagement, trust in science is a critical factor in good decision-making. This is particularly important where, for example, our collective responses to environmental change or a global pandemic will determine the future survival of our species—among others. In peer-to-peer communication (i.e., from scientist to scientist) there will be an implicit acceptance and professional interrogation of the underlying truths in all forms of scientific data. However, when the channels of communication lead from scientists to citizens this becomes a more complex and unstable process—especially concerning social or political issues where a primary objective is to stimulate preferred decisions and their subsequent courses of action. Here, the process is not one of neutral data transmission but of persuasive communication through visual information. However, in a world of “fake news” and unjustified scepticism of scientific advice, the role of science in helping to craft important public policies has been badly devalued in the eyes of citizens. Consequently, this special issue, *Knowledge Design – Visual Rhetoric in Science Communication*, is a timely intervention at a critical moment in our social and political circumstances. The authors of this special issue set out to investigate a number of rhetorical strategies in the sphere of persuasive communication. Not least of these being the ability of a communicator to establish the authority and credibility needed for the message to be widely held in trust. Here the traditionally unquestioned authority of science, to let the supposed facts speak for themselves, is complemented by a new faith in the communicator’s authenticity and believability. Indeed, in a world of data saturation we must at times stop to wonder who and what we can trust to make well-informed decisions about our future circumstances. Given that all data are susceptible to manipulation and misinformation, the positioning of visual rhetoric as a trusted broker in the communication of grounded scientific advice, to a wide reach of citizens, is an important intervention in the current social and political climate that we must negotiate.

This special issue also contains three book reviews. The first, *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need (Information Policy)* by Sasha Costanza-Chock, presents original scholarship on “biased systems” and “structures-of-oppression” that, because they saturate technology-design, have become deeply embedded in our social and economic infrastructures. In these conditions, marginalized people or communities are highly susceptible to exploitation, often being subjected to various forms of bias. The manifestation of a design justice framework, as discussed by Costanza-Chock, must, by needs, involve appropriate technologies and unbiased decision-making systems, that will gradually shift the systemic benefits from people or groups holding power-positions to the disadvantaged communities. Followed by *Cloud Ethics: Algorithms and the Attributes of Ourselves and Others*, its author, Louise Amoore, debates the ethical use and development of artificial intelligence. Generally, this has been shaped by the ideal of transparency as a means of looking inside the algorithmic black box to hold the system accountable. But, for Amoore, being responsible in an age of algorithmic governmentality means doing the exact opposite: “staying with the trouble” of illegibility of agents (both human and algorithmic) and accepting uncertainty as the very condition for ethico-political relations. When asked what cloud ethics translated into law would look like, Amoore—a professor of political geography—replied that “it would be a crowded court in the sense that my approach multiplies the possible sites of intervention and responsibility.” This image of a crowded court is the one to keep in mind when considering the implications of Amoore’s ethics of doubt and uncertainty for the practice of artificial intelligence design. The final review is *Scandinavian Design and the United States 1890-1980* edited by Bobbye Tigerman and Monica Obniski. The simplicity, quality, and wholesomeness of Scandinavian design were much admired in the United States, as this book—the catalogue for the exhibition “Scandinavian Design and the United States 1890-1980”—demonstrates. The Scandinavia referred to here, incidentally, includes both Finland and Iceland (which was part of Denmark at the beginning of the period covered) and an interesting inclusion, given its strength in the field of ceramics. The strength of this book is not so much an identification of Scandinavian design, nor its contextualization in European design, but a close examination of how and why a design movement makes its way from one culture to another. These different paths are explored in the sections under the

broader headings of Migration and Heritage, Selling the Scandinavian Dream, Design for Diplomacy, Teachers and Students, Travel Abroad, and Design for Social Change. A particular point of discussion is the Scandinavian contribution to the United Nations building and the creation of identity through the opportunity to build national pavilions and display Scandinavian goods at trade and world fairs. To a much lesser extent, the influence of American design on Scandinavia is considered, but the emphasis is on the flow in the opposite direction.

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