

Crossmedia Campaigns in Public Spaces

On Real, Virtual and Symbolic Spaces
by Ursula Stalder | LLucerne University
of Applied Sciences and Arts

The digitisation of public space provides a wealth of new opportunities for campaign development. These lie partly in the growing significance of public space for accessing target groups but mostly in the innovative forms of customer approach made feasible by media infrastructures. Strong motifs and the intelligent use of digital technologies for storytelling are at the core of both of these areas of strategic campaign planning. The success-potential of these media is particularly evident in the way they use space – both the physical and the virtual space.

In the last ten years public space has been digitised, i.e. pervaded with new digital and networked infrastructures at ever-increasing speed and higher levels of intricacy. Ever more diverse types of media – commercial and private, stationary and mobile – have become based on these new infrastructures, a development made possible by the increasing availability of so-called pervasive media coupled with an erosion of costs of initial investments and operation.

Public space, defined as a site where the transmitter and the receiver meet at the same time, has gained significance in campaign development; this being triggered by the growing fragmentation of the media landscape and media usage along with the rising mobility of the population. Parallel to existing analogue communication media such as posters, mega posters and ambient media, digital advertising networks and formats have been developed that are being partly marketed by the same providers according to more or less the same pricing models: reach, gross contact volumes and the CPTs (cost-per-thousand contacts) based on them dominate the markets for both print and digital out-of-home media. The potential of this new media group – the connection between the positive attributes of digital media such as precise controllability, up-to-the-minute updates, interactivity and live content, with the concrete spatial (architectural and social) situatedness – however extends far beyond the reach-focused principles of classical (analogue) out-of-home media.

Their digital foundation makes these media ideal for using in public space not only to generate a passive (non-

interventionist) reception by the viewer, but also because they particularly enable an active (engaging, manipulative, interactive) participation of the user. The creation process with respect to the storytelling unfolds along a dual spatiality: the space captured by media technology (the physical, material space where the communication carrier is positioned) and the space that this technology opens up in the realm of perception (the narrative space created by the design and configuration of the communication medium). In the observer's view, the spatiality of the medium (e.g. the train station) begins to interact with the spatiality of the mediality (e.g. the camera angle) (cf. Günzel 2010). In the digital age of the internet, social media, iPhone, YouTube, etc., the basic patterns of narrative structures have barely changed in contrast to the repertoire of media concepts and strategies which has expanded considerably: the intersection of audio-visual storytelling and public space has brought forth aesthetic innovations, innovative (technical) media and performative media practices.

A Window into Another World

A classical approach to creating awareness and activation involves playing with direct design references between the story that is being told and the spatial context in which it is being perceived. The surprise element – in the sense of disruption – is not only meant to arouse attention but also stimulate memory and anchoring.

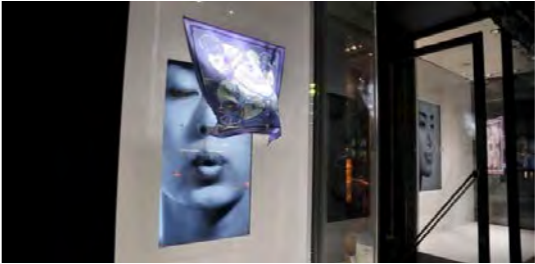
So for instance in Google Germany's campaign *Any film you can imagine* which was designed to publicise the launch of the Google Video Service, a physical (picture) frame in the style of a browser window wanders around the city.



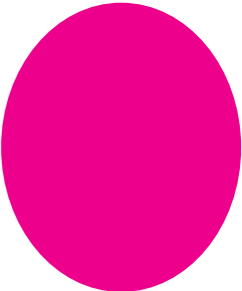
Any film you can imagine, launch Google Video Service, Google Inc, Berlin, Germany, 2006 (c)



Not here, but not, Amnesty International Switzerland, Switzerland, 2006 © Amnesty International/ Walker Werbeagentur AG



Maison Hermes, window installation by Tokujin Yoshioka, Ginza/Tokyo, Japan, 2009 (c) Tokyobling



The images or the contents of the window are cut out so that the real scene is framed in the eyes of passers-by and this simultaneously mutates into a video entitled *Life* in all its glorious randomness (2006, Berlin⁵). [Figure 1]

Amnesty International (Switzerland) also played with this overlapping of real and narrative space: in its campaign *Not here, but now*, photos of specific sites are superimposed with images of situations in which serious human rights violations are happening, creating collages that cause the observer’s perspective of the physical space in which he finds himself and the narrative space of the message to fall into line (2006, various cities in Switzerland⁶). [Figure 2]

Such overlapping effects are not limited to the content (visual) level of narration.

The Japanese artist Tokujin Yoshioka staged the iconic Hermès scarf in the shop window of every Maison Hermès in Ginza, Tokyo so that with every breath of the actress in the photo behind it, the scarf moved. The illusion is achieved by venting air from a small hole in the wall near the mouth in the printed image (2009, Tokyo⁷). [Figure 3] Or the video clip *The Train* created for Coke Zero’s campaign for the Israeli market, in which graffiti stretching over the length of a train mutates into an oversized flipbook through the movements of the train (2011, Israel⁸). These are but two examples of such shifts at the level of temporal patterning.

In Two Places at Once

A different approach involves using digital campaigns that intelligently use available media technologies for designing the interaction relationship between the brand (product) and the target group. Alongside the basic contact, the focus is mostly on the (cognitive, affective) involvement: the aim is to surprise the target group and encourage its members to address the message.

At the intersection between real and virtual space, interfaces serve to enable the exchange between the external world (the environment, the user) and the internal world (the medium, the code). These can either take the form of sensors that measure physical properties such as light intensity, temperature, pressure, radiance and sound from the environment and convert them, or they can be user interfaces that give users access to intervene in the system. In the first case, the system responds to the measured data, in the second the user and the media system interact with each other.

The question of designing the interfaces also gives

rise to the question of the type of implementation – guided or offered – of technical media; the question of performative arrangements (Büscher 2002: 7). This not only applies to media arrangements in which the body movements of passers-by control light, movement or computer-generated images through sensors, but also extends to interactive installations and environments. The emphasis here is on the significance of performative aspects, the strategies and concepts regarding the physical interaction of the viewer. The storytelling gains a performative dimension: the narrative continuity dissolves, media components are reduced and isolated, and their presentation, controlled live, is thus created and merged in the moment. The representation thus becomes the performance and the demonstration.

Pioneering examples of such reactive campaigns have been produced by Adobe and Amnesty International.

Adobe’s Creative License campaign installed a reactive wall painting, the screen layout of which was controlled by sensors that hooked on to the movements of passers-by (2007, New York / London⁹). [Figure 4]

The campaign *It happens when nobody is watching* by Amnesty International (Germany) uses a face-tracking system to control what the display shows: when someone looks in the direction of the display, the viewer sees a peaceful smiling couple. The moment they look away, the man becomes violent towards the woman (2008, Berlin¹⁰) (cf. Article Fischer).

An example of interactive campaigns in which the user establishes the connection is the Calvin Klein *Uncensored* campaign that simply placed a QR code on the poster, in effect showings a simple reference: passers-by who have a compatible code-reader installed on their smartphone and who photograph the mega poster are directed to a website where the content – in effect the actual campaign images – in turn counteracts the original context. This content ,speaks‘ in such erotically charged images that would most definitely be censored in the far more sensitive and strongly regulated public space (2010, New York City¹¹). [Figure 5]

Also in Armani’s *Shoot and Win* campaign, the difference between telling and showing, between representation and execution by the active passers-by, disappears: on photographing the poster, users get a voucher sent directly to their smartphones, leading to a substantial discount on the purchase of the advertised authorised product [Figure 6]. However, this requires a specific reader named U-Snap launched by the operator of the poster carrier, which significantly limits its reach (2011, Swiss

cities¹²).[Figure 5]

Incorporating mobile, internet-enabled devices such as smartphones or tablets enables spatial movement in two respects: ,First, as a physical change of place or a change of place in the space of the medium, and second, in the virtual realm or the space of mediality.‘ (Günzel, 2010). In the context of advertising communication, these are exciting because they dissolve the limits of media practice through new contexts and conceptual shifts, thereby blurring the boundaries between genres. The actual out-of-home media mutate into a trigger that sets off an information and action chain, leading via the mobile phone to an ,added value‘ of the brand for consumers – from the free download, the ringtone or the wallpaper, and the participation in sweepstakes or the download of promotional codes, to the seamless transition into the ordering process. Tesco recently implemented a successful example: virtual shops were set up in subway stations with posters displaying food items. Passers-by can photograph the food items they want, and Tesco then delivers them straight to the customer’s house. This campaign turned Tesco *Homeplus* to Korea’s number one online market shop. [Figure 7]

The Fascination of ‘Live!’

Another conceptual strategy applied at this intersection of innovative (technological) media and performative media practices involves campaigns that use live events to generate, produce or simply make reference to media content. Live events, like live content, attract viewers and draw them in with a community-building fascination with the *Now* (cf. also Schlaffer 2011:22). The focus of such experience-oriented approaches is



The Train, Coke Zero campaign, Israel, 2011 (c) Eric Ishii Eckhardt



Uncensored, Calvin Klein, New York, US, 2010 (c) Calvin Klein, Inc.



Shoot and Win, Giorgio Armani Perfumes, Switzerland, 2011 (c) APG/SGA



Virtual Subway Store, Tesco Homeplus, Seoul, South Korea, 2010 (c) Cheil Worldwide, Inc.

involvement and participation: shared moments, social results and the feeling of belonging to a group create relevance and buzz (word-of-mouth), generate attention and reach for the campaign channels, and sharpen the profile of a brand with respect to a product. In both cases, public space, with respect to the participation in an extraordinary live event and the community experience it brings, serves to establish and anchor the brand more firmly in the conscious minds of people.

T-Mobile, for example, staged a live karaoke sing-along in Trafalgar Square: a flash mob was organised via Twitter, Facebook, and guerrilla activities on the street to sing together – with the surprise appearance of the pop star Pink. Within 48 hours the event recordings were edited and the video produced, which then aired during the commercial break of a TV talent show on ITV1 (2009,London⁸).

HBO Home Box Office, a U.S. TV station known for its impressive storytelling, has also been using public space for years specifically for the launch of new series or image campaigns: the *HBO Voyeur* campaign began with a five-minute trailer film that was projected life-size onto the fire-wall of a building in Lower Manhattan (2007, New York⁹). This showed the lives of people in eight apartments spread over four floors. For the viewers on the street, it looked as if the building’s walls had been peeled away exposing every living room for everyone to see. [Figure 8]

The *HBO Imagine* campaign two years later took it one step further; the viewers themselves explore the story, which only reveals itself in all its complexity through the change in perspective. For this event the *HBO Cube* was installed, a four-panel video installation. The same story played out on all the screens but from four different angles. Each panel of the cube displayed one of the angles, both as a stand-alone film and as a piece of a larger puzzle. Viewers moving around the cube saw the story unfold from the different angles, each arriving at very different perceptions of the characters and the plot (2009, three cities in the USA¹⁰). [Figure 9]

Interspaces

When pervasive technologies are used to merge outside space – live and in real-time – into the simulation, we are met with a striking inversion of space. This is the case with Geocaching, where location data on a GPS device reveal the hiding places of objects in a real treasure hunt, such as in the Timberland *Trail of Hero* campaign (2011, six major European cities¹¹), or in aug-

mented reality (AR) campaigns, where site-specific information overlaps the outside space depicted on a cell-phone’s display, and both spaces of the medium line up (Günzel, 2010). This overlapping takes place here not through the (pre-produced) montage in the visual space or in the viewer’s mind, but through the simultaneous display of simulated and represented reality: the pre-produced, stored image (the simulation) is superimposed with the live recording of the outside space (the representation).

For the opening of a new flagship store on Times Square in New York City, Forever21 staged the installation *Forever Fresh* on its own e-Board, on which pre-produced images merged seamlessly with real-time recordings. The 61-metre-large digital display showed supermodels interacting with people on the street. The model leans over towards the crowd on the street, takes a Polaroid shot of the onlookers or a single person, selects one person from the crowd and turns them into a frog by kissing them or drops them into her purse, etc. (2010, New York City¹²). [Figure 10] Other examples of such merging of virtual and real images include the *Billboard against Aggression* campaign by the Ministry of Justice in the Netherlands (2010, Amsterdam, Rotterdam¹³), or the Ambush event *Also Angel will Fall* for Unilever (2011, London and Birmingham¹⁴). What these media strategies share is that passers-by see themselves in the image next to the virtual characters of the story (avatars) and thereby become part of the story. Something is happening to them, they can either alter their position or that of the avatar or they can interact with each other and thus (seemingly) influence the course of the story.

The campaign *How do you experience death*, by the WWF (Russia) for the rescue of the endangered Siberian tiger, goes one step further: in selected fashion stores in Moscow, t-shirts equipped with markers are placed on the shelves. When a client tries on one of the t-shirts and then looks in the mirror, the marker on the t-shirt triggers a virtual gunshot, spraying blood all over the customer’s reflection in the mirror (2010, Moscow¹⁵). In the published case film, one visibly sees the virtually shot users’ immediate physical reaction: they jerk back as if physically feeling the pressure of the bullet’s impact on their bodies. [Figure 11]

Media Dispositifs

As different as the creative approaches and applied technologies may be, they all have one thing in common: they draw in the receivers, make them part of the (brand) story and partly prompt them to take action. The increasing adoption of pervasive tech-

nologies and (technical) media do not bring about an immediate *extinction of space*, a fear expressed in many cultural and critical debates (Paul Virillio, Peter Weibel), but rather lead to a further diversification of space or spatial constellations (cf. Günzel 2010).

Three-dimensional display technologies such as 3D posters, displays or projections, but also live events using three-dimensional architectural projections (Architectural Mapping) or holograms, further dissolve the boundaries between real and virtual spaces through new contexts and conceptual shifts. Their potential for information, communication and interaction lies in this interspace in which the concrete, direct space overlaps with the virtual, media-fictional realm of cyberspace.

The link between stationary infrastructures (screens, displays, display systems, etc.) and mobile internet-enabled devices (smartphones, tablets, etc.) as well as the incorporation of objects – be they advertising tools or products using RFID and NFC tags – play an essential role here. The channels perfectly complement each other and provide a seamless connection between the real world of consumers and the virtual world of the internet.

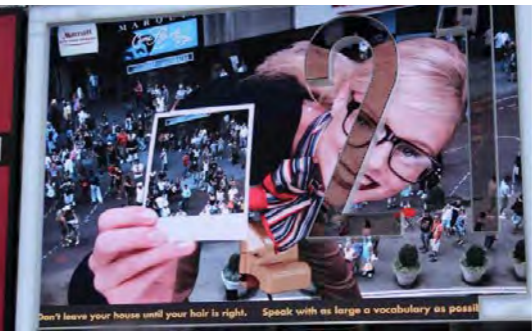
That the common distinctions between one-way mass media, on the one hand, and two-way dialogue media, on the other, are no longer tenable, is a fervently discussed debate that also encompasses the ‚new‘ digital media in public space: in a classical sense, they represent either hybrid or hyper media. In this process of hybridisation, space also alters: at the intersection of these real, virtual and symbolic spaces a hyperlocality is created (Bruce Sterling). McLuhan had already spoken of this hybridisation



HBO Voyeur, HBO Home Box Office, outdoor event / launch campaign, New York, 2007 (c) Home Box Office, Inc.



White Cube, HBO image campaign, New York, US, 2009 (c) Home Box Office, Inc.



Forever Fresh, Forever 21, New York, US, 2010@ Forever 21



How do you experience death, WWF Russland, 2010

and described the powerful forces and energies that these ‚bastards‘ release (McLuhan 1994: 85ff.). According to McLuhan, this hybridisation process opens a prime opportunity for recognising the structural components and properties. For the past two decades, the hybrid – the mixed, the permeating and the overlapping – has been considered a cultural phenomenon and the signature of postmodernism (cf. Tholen 2000). Communication campaigns – be they temporary installations on urban screens, or the long-term operation of media infrastructure – in this sense vividly illustrate the wonderfully multifaceted phenomenon of this postmodernism.

References

- Büscher, Barbara (2002): Live Electronic Arts und Inter-media. Die 1960er Jahre. Über den Zusammenhang von Performance und zeitgenössischen Technologien, kybernetischen Modellen und minimalistischen Kunststrategien. Habilitationsschrift an der Fakultät für Geschichte, Kunst- und Orientwissenschaften der Universität Leipzig. Online: http://www.qucosa.de/recherche/frontdoor/?tx_slubopus4frontend%5bid%5d=urn:nbn:de:bsz:14-qucosa-39497 (25.10.2011)
- Günzel, Stefan (2010): Die zwei Räume des Mediums. (The Medium’s Two Spaces) In: beam me up, contribution #60. Online: <http://www.beam-me.net/beitragdetail.php?lang=d&artid=60> (1.9.2011).
- McLuhan, Marshall (1964): Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man: London: McGraw Hill; dt. (1994): Die magischen Kanäle. Understanding Media; Dresden/ Basel: Verlag der Kunst.
- Tholen, Georg Christoph (2000): Der Ort des Raums – Erkundigungen zum ‚offenen‘ und ‚geschlossenen‘ Raum. Vortragsversion zu HyperKult IX – Augmented Space. Reale, virtuelle und Symbolische Räume. (20. – 22.7. 2000, Lüneburg, FB Kulturinformatik). Online: <http://www.xcult.org/texte/tholen/raum.html> (13.9.2011).
- Schlaffer, Hannelore (2011): Lieber „live“ als wahres Leben. In: Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 26. Oktober 2011 (Nr. 250), Rubrik „Seitenblick“, pg. 22.

Ursula Stalder

Ursula Stalder is a senior researcher/ lecturer at Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. In her research she focuses on the emerging digital infrastructure in public spaces and its potential for brand and marketing management. She investigates novel creative techniques for crossmedia storytelling and explores mechanisms to support engaging experiences as well as new service designs. Ursula holds a master degree in science of mass communications and linguistics from University of Zurich. During and after her studies she worked in different new media agencies and was founding partner and CEO of Wirz Interactive, a full-service agency for digital branding and interaction.