RhyCycling – Fluid Borderland

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1. THEMATIC BACKGROUND

The river Rhein as a flowing border area forms the boundaries of communities, cantons and countries from its origin in Grison/Eastern Switzerland until its entrance into the sea in Rotterdam. It is water and power provider, living and working space – an ecologically, socio-economically and culturally diverse microcosm.

The research project RhyCycling – Esthetics of Sustainability in the Basel Border Area examines in a geographical perimeter of the border region of Switzerland-Germany-France how the human and non-human environment is linked together and what interdependences, problems, un/balancies and scenarios result. Besides the audiovisual research on recent (water ecological) circumstances over, under and along the water – e.g. fish fauna, aspects of energy, utilisation of the riverbank – also future changes, planned or imagined for that space, are examined. The special foci allow us to show interdependencies inside of the ecosystem with local and global relevance, like for example the character of fish ladders for fish species migrating upstream or downstream. One of the results of the research is that only a transboundary view offers the basis for sustainability in a globalised context.

The research relies on the so-called aesthetics of sustainability which is found in (media) art and is effected by a perception of current theories of aesthetics including nature. It differs for example from scientific and technical positions by the choice of the focal points in content, methods and the forms of presentation.

2. GOAL

The goal of the project is to give an inside view into the network and interdependencies of this

ecological microcosm to the interested public, through an innovative form of presentation which addresses diverse senses (see below). Local and global aspects are focused on – like water ecology generally and fish fauna in particular, current as well as prospective.

3. PRESENTATION

The material of the audiovisual research – videos, sound essays, texts, graphics – representing the current situation is organised on an interactive computer platform (see Figure 1 and 2). At the exhibition *RhyCycling – Fluid Borderland* which took place last autumn in the harbour area in Basel just beside the river the platform was integrated into a scenographical setting of installations and video projections. One was representing visions of a possible or imagined future of the area. The audience had the possibility to experience the Basel border area and specially the rather difficult accessible world of the fish fauna in a multi-sensual way.

4. TEAM

Since 2010 the interdisciplinary team has been researching in cooperation with partners from the local government, NGOs, Universities or evaluation offices all involved in topics of sustainable development and ecology. A continuation project has recently been submitted:

Flavia Caviezel (project manager/visual anthropology), Mirjam Buergin (scenography), Marion Mertens (environmental studies), Yvonne Volkart (art theory), Anselm Caminada (sound essays), Theres Joerger (adaptation interface design), Oliver Koch (adaptation programming), Tweaklab (film post/production), and many others.

www.rhycycling.idk.ch

Figure 1: Interactive computer platform: with projection of the chosen videos, sound essays, texts into the space (in front) and with monitor view (computer stations on the right side with head phones)

Figure 2: Interface of the interactive computer platform: the connections between icons, places and keywords (magenta) are visible and help the users to orient themselves while surfing through the material creating own „dramaturgies“