

05: Zugänglichkeit und Design

Theresa:

What does accessibility actually mean in a design context? That's what we'd like to talk about today. We are a team from the master's program in design at the HWK Hildesheim. Then we would like to introduce ourselves very briefly.

Lale:

Hi, I'm Lulu and I come from a product design background.

Lena:

I'm Lena and my main focus is graphic design.

Marisa:

I'm Marisa and I also come from a graphic design background.

Theresa:

And I'm Theresa and I come from a product design background.

Theresa:

What does accessibility mean in a design context? Lale, have you had any experience with this?

Lale:

We learned accessibility primarily in relation to methodological approaches. For example: In design thinking, the first step is the empathy point. That we pay particular attention to who we are designing for, and that we are able to empathically cover the needs of the users in the target group. And that is very important in order to be able to fulfill this accessibility in the design area.

Theresa:

So that means you like to take a lot of users and their needs into consideration in your design process.

Lale:

It is not only about quantity, but also about quality. Above all, this means paying attention to users who may sometimes not get the full attention. That means designing products or services that are inclusive, where minorities do not receive as much attention.

Theresa:

Marissa, what has been your experience?

Lale:

How's that for graphics?

Marisa:

In the graphics area, we follow the universal design principle, which is aimed somewhat at creating products and services for people in order to make them easily accessible to a broad mass of people. We have certain design guidelines that you can adhere to, certain legal texts, simple language, and of course you have to pay attention to the contrasts, the colors, and the images, and make clear statements. These are exactly the basics in the graphics area.

Theresa:

When I think about accessibility now, and also the issue of equality, I have to think of a scenario. A few weeks ago, I had a jigsaw in my hand and wanted to use it. And then I realised that my hands are much, much too small for this product. And the interesting thing was that the safety switch, where the tool turns on and off, was much too far away from my fingers. And that was the first time I actively thought about the fact that not every product is accessible to everyone. And that also raises the question of who it was designed for.

Marisa:

What it might do to you. That is, if this tool is not made for me.

Theresa:

Yes, and it also has safety aspects in that case. So I don't really dare to use the tool.

Lena:

I think there's always the problem that you usually design for a certain target group and it's very difficult to make this object, this saw, accessible to everyone. And I think we have to weigh up a little bit who it's meant for. A saw like this should actually be designed for everyone. But yes, that is also a bit of a challenge in terms of accessibility and design, that you try to cover a large area with it.

Marisa:

Above all, we are simply expanding the target groups here, getting more feedback so that we can simply include every user and specifically adapt our product. That's something that's still a bit lacking in most design areas.

Theresa:

Marisa, you told me earlier that on the one hand there is the issue of accessibility and on the other hand there is also the sub-issue of accessibility. How do you think, is this connected?

Marisa:

I believe that accessibility and barrier-free access go hand in hand. But accessibility is more or less a result of the larger issue of accessibility. As a sub-category, however, accessibility is even broader and accessibility only delimits a small sub-area - in itself.

Theresa:

Yes, interesting, exciting. Can anyone think of an example? I'm thinking of lifts that are accessible, that are supposed to be accessible, but where the buttons are far too far away from people with disabilities. Lena, do you have any experience?

Lena:

I would actually take another example maybe, but it was also good what you said. But just a website for example, that the accessibility is designed for everyone, that it is clear, it should be like that. But many things lack accessibility, maybe voice control or something behind it, so that people can find their way around if they are blind. And I also hope that more designers will consider the issue of accessibility so that we can create something better together.

Lale:

Changing the world.

Lena:

We are saving the world.

Theresa:

At least we make them accessible.

Lale:

We try.