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The tacit dimensions of design

Most of the countless interactions with physical objects that happen every day flawlessly dissolve in our usual behaviour, so we are hardly aware of these interactions. Brushing teeth, making a phone call, eating, washing our hands, driving a car, riding a bicycle, using public transport, working on a computer, writing texts – the only occasions when one of these interactions surfaces in our conscious awareness is when the interaction is either unexpectedly joyful or when there is an interruption in our intended flow of actions: a bottle seems impossible to open, an automatic door does not slide open as expected, I cannot operate the elevator because I am carrying groceries in both of my hands, buying a ticket at the ticket machine is so complicated or takes so long that I miss my bus.

Most of the time the user knows what she is expected to do with certain objects, she can read the Affordances (Norman 1988, Gibson 1973) in her surroundings. But how is this kind of communication possible? How come I seem to understand what things are trying to tell me?

My dissertation wants to show on the one hand how these Affordances are designed into objects, be it accidentally or intentionally. On the other hand this concept needs the responding human being to be able to read or perceive what things are able to tell us. And last, but not least, I will discuss the possibilities for and responsibilities of designers, who are able to design that process of „Translation“ (Latour).