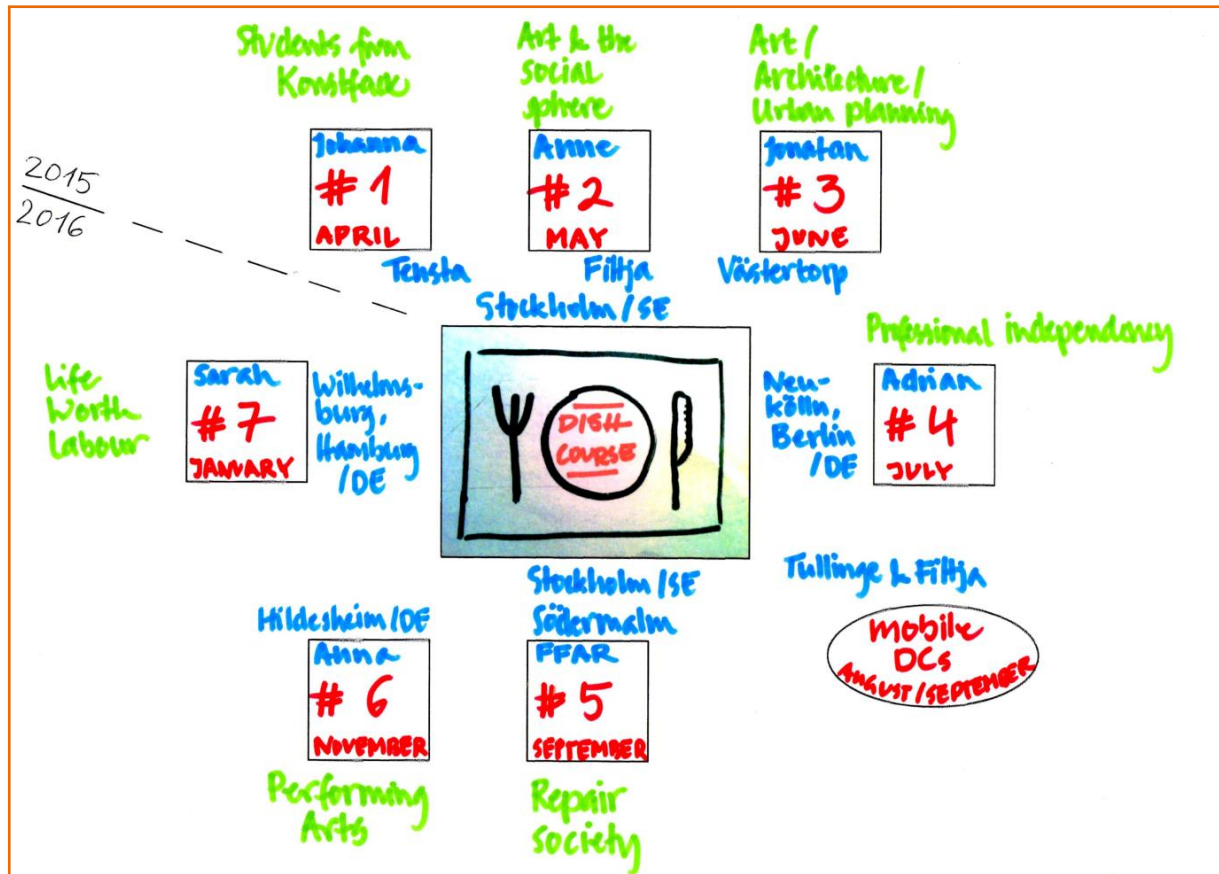


ORGANISING DISCOURSE.

A REPORT OF THE SERIAL 'INTERDISCIPLINARY DINNER TALKS'

DISHCOURSE #1 – #7 / MARCH 2015 – JANUARY 2016



ANNE PFENNIG / JANUARY 2016
KONSTFACK UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF ARTS, CRAFT & DESIGN
ORGANISING DISCOURSE / PROJECT-SEMESTER

March 2015

The origin of the DISHCOURSE format is based on a collaborative action between Jonatan, Johanna and me, starting in March 2015. Parallel to the course, we met and got to know each other, we developed the idea to gather practitioners from different disciplines (within the fields of art, architecture, crafts, design and beyond) in an informal dinner setting in our private homes. As we all met at Konstfack, talking a lot about exchange between (creative) disciplines, we decided to invite students from the different departments of the college for the first round. With the aim to share a common meal and questioning interdisciplinary structures at Konstfack.

Initial motivation / purpose

- Common interest in doing something together, motivated and influenced by the content of our course
 - Meeting (unknown) people with different professions to gain insights into new contexts of Stockholm, for exchange / learning from each other and find possible new collaboration partners; discussing aspects of interdisciplinarity
 - Creating an intimate atmosphere for sharing professional (and private) conversations
 - My personal interest in the social setting / the communicative part of these forms of encounters in a private setting; using the possibility to dive more into the cultural/creative scene of Stockholm
 - Taking the opportunity to bring in some of the questions I posed in my essay for the first semester in the context of interviewing practitioners from different fields (see box on the right)
- What are topics that currently keep us busy and what can we learn from practitioners that are working in related, interdisciplinary fields or projects?
 - Do people show interest in our format and follow the invitation?
 - What forms of conversations are taking place during the evening?



June 2015 Excerpt / Essay 1st semester

The catalogue of questions that I developed for my interviews:

What is your educational background/professional path?

In which frames / contexts are you working?

What relevance has interdisciplinarity in your work, what are the chances and challenges you face in this context?

How do you reflect on your own professional role(s) and qualities?

What is your personal driving force for doing what you do?

Where do you feel a need for improvements/changes in your professional context? What are you wishing for?

April 2015

DISHCOURSE #1 in Tensta, Stockholm

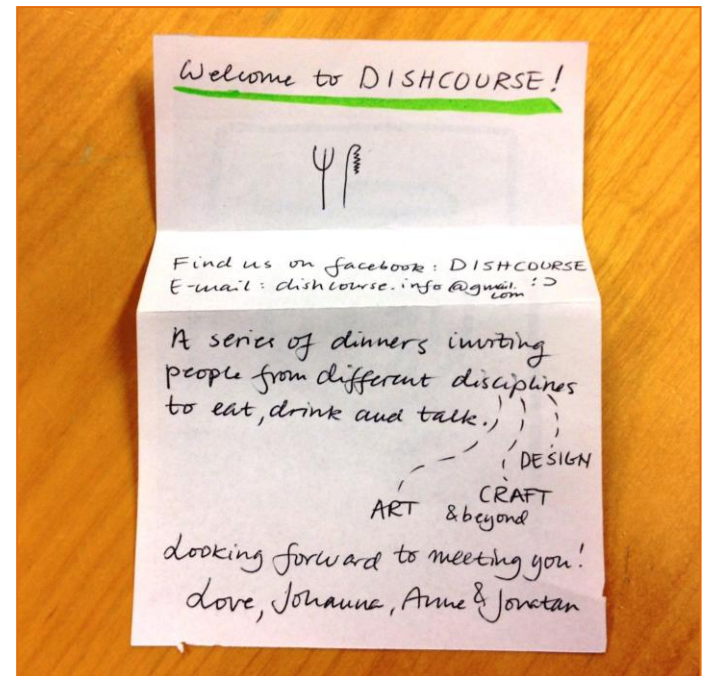
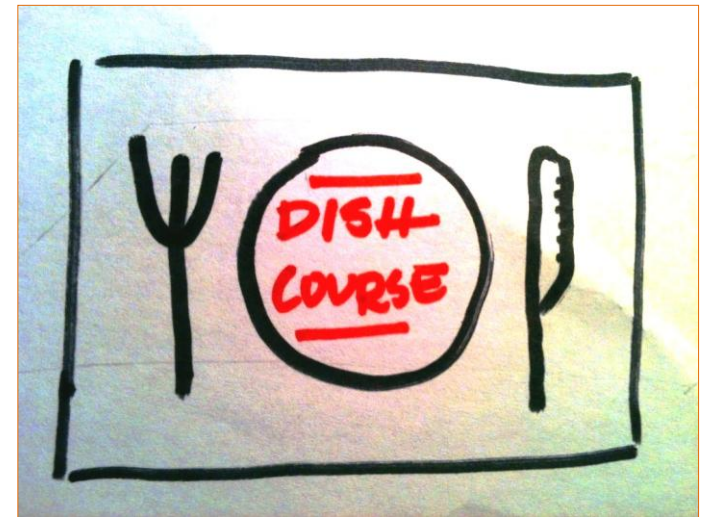
Hosts: Jonatan, Johanna and Anne

Focus / Topics: (Non) Existence of interdisciplinary structures at Konstfack Stockholm; the university's (non) accessibility for a heterogeneous range of international and national students

For the first round, **DISHCOURSE #1**, we invited people personally by going through the different departments at Konstfack and asking students to take part. As it was the very first trial of the format, this was a good way of doing it as we had to explain the idea in person, trying to find the right words to make people interested and join. For this occasion we created a DISHCOURSE logo and flyer as a creative, haptic give away. Additionally, to make it more official and give the guests a chance to contact us, we created an e-mail account and a facebook group. Through the flyer and the media, the project became more concrete and visible, with the aim to arouse the people's interest, have something they can take with them, transporting a personal, welcoming atmosphere.

During the evening, lively discussions about the diverse backgrounds of the guests, personal experiences in learning environments (school / academy / work), the study-situation and relationship between the different departments at Konstfack and the exclusiveness of the art world took place. As a representative of the local cultural-creative scene, we invited Adam Tensta. He introduced an interesting position, as being no member of Konstfack and having deep knowledge about interdisciplinary structures, accessibility and participation in the music scene (in Tensta).

As a conclusion of this first round we took with us that the mix of talking and eating in a private setting works well and creates a very personal atmosphere. We decided that the number of eight people on the table (including the organisers) is the maximum to have, as we are especially interested in staging conversations with all guests together.



Mail

dishcourse.info@gmail.com

Facebook group

www.facebook.com/groups/1552090488374600

May 2015

DISHCOURSE #2 in Fittja, Stockholm

Focus / Topics:

Interdisciplinary approaches to work with art in a heterogeneous social sphere

June 2015

DISHCOURSE #3 in Västertorp, Stockholm

Focus / Topics:

Interdisciplinary practice within art, architecture and urban planning

For the second and third round we thought about topics that were interesting related to art, design, architecture, the social sphere and Stockholm (as these topics represent our own working fields). Therefore we decided the focus and brought together people from related fields and out of different parts of the city. We carefully tried to create a mix of gender, age and professional experience. Furthermore, we still followed the concept to always invite a very local person, to have a discussion partner on the table that can reflect about the direct neighbourhood.

April 2015

Excerpt / Working paper for DC #2

Topics to discuss and to precise

(with experienced people that hold a (higher) position in an interesting institution/context)

- is there a need for (more) cultural “introspection”?
- challenges / ambitions of current institutional, interdisciplinary work
- practicality of interdisciplinarity
- the value of art in society

June 2015

Excerpt / E-Mail: Invitation to DC #3

Hej Johan,

in the plannings for our project DISHCOURSE we found out about your artistic practice. Your work - especially the projects related to city / urban planning - made us curious of your thoughts and experiences related to collaboration and/or interdisciplinarity.

This is the third in our series of dinners. We would like to bring together professionals out of the architectural / urban / spatial and art / design related fields to discuss opportunities and challenges of interdisciplinary work.

*We would be very happy to have you as a guest and discussion partner at our table! The dinner will take place on **Monday June 8, 19.00** in an apartment in **Västertorp**.*

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Best regards,

Anne, Johanna and Jonatan

DC # 1 - 3 Outcome / Conclusions

The intense time of researching, contacting people and organising the evening led to the question of how much time we and I in particular can invest into the project (that I am not earning money with). I enjoyed the collaborative act of planning and preparing the evenings, what gave us the chance to get to know each other more. We always shared the different roles during the evening: welcoming the guests, serving the food, moderating the talks. This worked out well and felt very balanced. In the seemingly quite comfortable atmosphere for our guests, lively and very open conversations provided a good insight into project-examples, working structures and professional backgrounds and pathways. I gained an interesting impression of the ways of thinking as an architect / designer / artist / musician etc and how these people are trying to work, what they 'fighting' within their professional (and private) contexts. The small amount of guests (maximum of 8 people including hosts) on the table functioned very well. Sometimes it was challenging to balance the amount of 'talking time' between the conversation partners.

- Is it enough to 'just' to eat and talk?
- How strong should we moderate the talks?
- Should we use further (creative) elements and arrange an even more interdisciplinary round (guests from outside of the creative disciplines)?
- Does the evening need a concrete 'outcome' or do we want to focus on the conversations itself?
- How do we document the evenings? How important is this process for us?
- How do we as a group and how do I want to go on with the format?

Entries from the guestbook

"Thanks so much for a sweet evening! Learned tons and got a lot of new stuff to think about. I'm super excited about your project and would be happy to follow it."

Björn, DC #1

"Thanks for great discussions. Hope for an even more interdisciplinary future"

Anna, DC #1

"Thanks for the delicious food and an interesting evening with a lot of good discussions, perspectives and ideas. And a good company!!"

Ailin, DC #2

"A great gathering, many questions, which are not answered. But that's the most interesting part! Such a rare opportunity to organise dis(h)course – thank you!"

Iris, DC #3

DISHCOURSE MANUAL (as developed through the first 3 dinners)

- Collaborative act of defining place, date, a topic and the guests, shopping, preparation, cooking
- The mix of guests is chosen based on a (local) focus of a certain interdisciplinary interest; related practitioners are found in our private environment, professional network and through research into our staged topics
- Aim: the evening should provide space and value to the diverse perspectives and knowledge of the guests as a moment of learning something new from each other and about the local context; discussing the need for interdisciplinarity and a certain (local) issue of interest from different perspectives
- Agreement: the organisers bring in as much time as each of them can offer (different amount of workload is ok), Anne is responsible for the communication (and documentation)
- Structuring and realization of the evening as a shared process within the team: welcoming the guests, introduction-round, serving food and drinks, moderation (balanced responsibilities)
- Inviting a maximum of 5 guests to enable a shared conversation during the dinner, carefully moderated by the hosts
- Invitations are sent out 2 weeks (latest 1 week) before the event; therein the guests are informed about the collaboration, the concept and the topics; to arouse some tension the names of the other guests are not revealed
- Finances: food and drinks are served for free, all costs are covered by the organisers (people may bring drinks)
- A guestbook collects thoughts and impressions
- Agreement with the guests: recording and photographing the sessions
- Feedback round amongst the organisers afterwards to collect thoughts, impressions
- Post information in the fb-group to update the group-members about the dinners and share impressions of the evenings with (former) guests and interested people
- Mutual decision of the organisers: detailed contents of the conversations from the evenings are not published

Media and documentation

During the summerbreak I independently started a blog about the project. It resulted out of the general wish to learn how to create and use a blog and to have a public platform that provides information about the project and impressions of the evenings.

I see this blog as a tool to help me organise the material and to find a public form that represents the serial character of the DISHCOURSE concept and documents the setting. Being able to refer to a website, when talking to people about the project makes it more tangible and gives me the confidence to present this project in a serious way.

While working on the blog I was asking friends and guests for feedback and discussed with Johanna and Jonatan what the blog should stand for, what it should transport and how much we want to publish about the particular evenings. We consciously decided to minimise the contents of the conversations by indicating the short section 'FOCUS/TOPICS' in the blog entries.

The work with the blog and the decisions about what to show, how to fill it with content and experimenting with the layout helps me to follow and reflect the dinners from an outer perspective, as I create this to make the format understandable for people that did not take part in a dinner. It should visualise the serial by mirroring the format that grows in time, similar to the structure of the blog.



July 2015

DISHCOURSE #4 in Neukölln, Berlin

Collaborator: Adrian Schefer (Architect)

Location: Adrian's Café Lux

Focus / Topics: Interdisciplinary project work & professional independence

August / September 2015

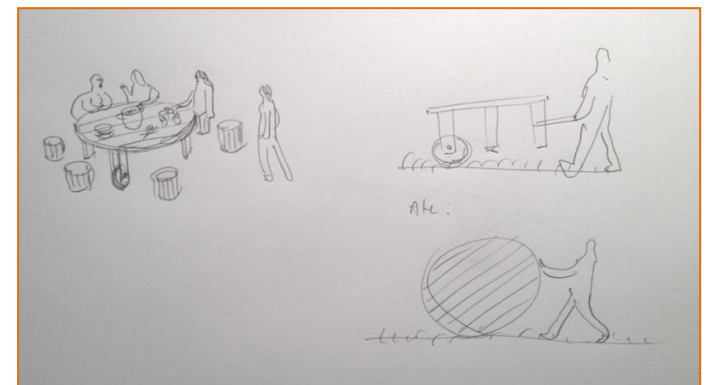
Mobile DISHCOURSE in Tullinge / Fittja

Hosts: Anne and Jonatan

Settings / Focuses: "The table is round! We welcome you to sit down, to eat, drink and discuss with us! Topics related to life, experience and the future of Tullinge!"

"Välkomna på Fikabordet! Once again, as a public variation of the DISHCOURSE-concept, we invited to our mobile table for conversations, cake and coffee. This time as part of Fittja open's picnic next to the Fittja Kitchen. Talking about the place, art, food and living in Fittja, a suburb of greater Stockholm."

Both settings were a variation of the DISHCOURSE-concept. A public, mobile intervention as part of festival programs in Tullinge and Fittja. It functioned as a platform for exchange and discussions about local topics with visitors and organisers of the festivals. Taking part in the programs provided the chance to experiment with the concept and transform it into a public intervention. Johanna was not able to join because of time constraints, therefore Jonatan and I collaborated for this undertaking and built a set of wooden modules (boxes, chairs and a table). As I am not working with this version of the format further on I don't want to open up a bigger reflection about the mobile version in this report and the presentation.



September 2015

DISHCOURSE #5 in Södermalm, Stockholm

Hosts: Jonatan, Johanna and Anne

Setting / Focus: A gathering of organisers, locals from the area and practitioners related to aspects of the research platform and open workshop Repair Society: Ringvägen; Discussing the issue of 'Repair' in a personal, local and broader social sense

Developing the DISHCOURSE concept independently

In agreement with my former collaborators I started to use and develop the DISHCOURSE format independently on the basis of the manual that resulted from the collaboration with Johanna and Jonatan and the previous events.

Since I was not staying in Stockholm permanently during autumn and winter I wanted to use my time and local flexibility back in Germany, to visit different cities and collaborate with different partners, with the aim of diving into new places and cultural, creative contexts.

As an alteration of the concept I planned to collaborate with partners of different professional and local contexts for the upcoming DISHCOURSES. Together with the 'co-host' a (local) focus of interest related to his/her professional practice is to be worked out. Based on this, a set of guests, living (and working) in the direct district or city, is invited to the co-host's home or work space for sharing a mutual meal and conversations. I was curious to collaborate with and arrange a DISHCOURSE together with a second person by using his/her particular professional, creative background to reflect on the format and possibly vary the procedure of the evenings and thus bring in new elements. In this process I wanted to experiment with my own role as the organiser, host or moderator and negotiate how to share these parts with my particular collaborator.



ANNE PFENNIG / PROJECT DESCRIPTION / revised - status 15. 11. 2015

DISHCOURSE
Interdisciplinary dinner talks



April 2015 – currently
www.aboutDISHCOURSE.wordpress.com

CURRENT STATUS

During the winter of 2015 and spring of 2016 I will work on and develop the DISHCOURSE-concept independently alongside the existing format with Johanna and Jonatan. I plan to collaborate with people out of my personal and professional environment to win them as 'co-hosts'. With their local interest, knowledge and network a certain focus will be worked out and a set of people invited.

November 2015

DISHCOURSE #6 in Hildesheim

Collaborator: Anna Döge (Theatre Pedagogy / Master student “Staging the Arts and Media“, University Hildesheim)

Focus / Topics: Interdisciplinary encounters in Performing Arts; Discursive projects and spaces in Hildesheim; Interdependencies between the ‘Kulturcampus Domäne’ (Insitute for Cultural Studies, University Hildesheim) and the city / its inhabitants



January 2016

DISHCOURSE #7 in Wilhelmsburg, Hamburg

Collaborator: Sarah Kästner (Exhibition Designer)

Focus / Topics: LIFE WORTH LABOUR What pushes you forward? What are you rubbing on?

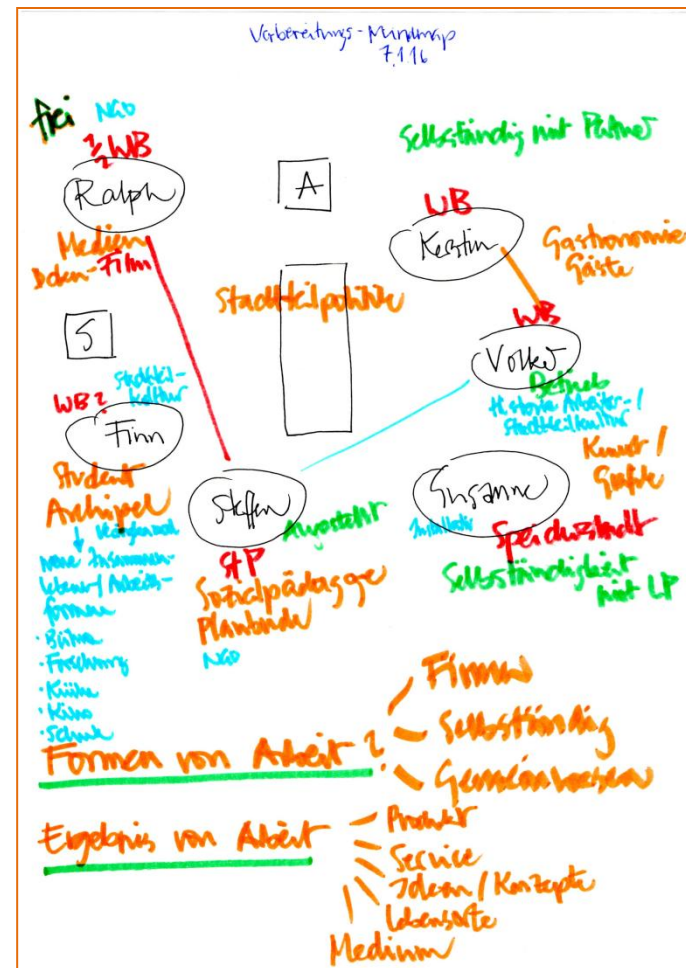
DISHCOURSE #4, the first one that I planned independently, resulted out of a spontaneous idea while visiting Berlin and meeting an old friend, architect and café-owner Adrian. He was interested to host a dinner in his café and take part in the conversation. The offer to use his kitchen and ‘work-space’ (during closing time) was an interesting possibility to test the format in a more semi-public setting. Due to the lack of time it was not a close collaboration with Adrian through the whole planning process as I was staging the topic, researching into possible guests and inviting the people. The mix of guests was very homogeneous agewise and most of them were in the situation of transitioning out of an educational environment into a professional working context. The evening provided space to discuss this change, current projects and future ideas and reflecting about self-employment.



The planning and evening itself was an interesting experience, as I was representing the whole project just by myself, being responsible for everything and making it possible in a very limited amount of time.

DISHCOURSE #5 in FFAR, dedicated to the workshop Repair Society and enabling a gathering with all course members and contributors of the project, was a collaboration with Johanna and Jonatan again. The upcoming DISHCOURSES in autumn and winter were aiming to function as close collaborations with new 'co-hosts' as worked out in my concept paper.

In the DISHCOURSES #6 and #7 I collaborated with close friends. With Anna I had never worked in a project before, with Sarah I was working together in an exhibition context before. To prepare the **DISHCOURSE #6** in Hildesheim I spent several days in the city (2 weeks before the events), using the time to research into the cultural scenery, planning the organisation with Anna and getting a feeling for the place. In co-work with Anna the focus was developed and a list of possible guests was arranged. As a novelty, we brought in a friend of Anna working with a cooking-project in theatre-settings. Together we worked out a menu that was reflecting on the topics of the evening and served it to the round. The mix of guests was chosen mostly out of the university context (students and a professor) plus a cultural very active person working in Hildesheim for a long time. It turned out that the dominance of the 'academic world' (and the fact that these people knew each other before) led to very general, theoretical discussions around interdisciplinarity. In the reflection with Anna, as well as a comment from the guests, it would have been interesting to give more space to the peoples' background and their current work instead talking about interdisciplinary structures in general. Form the organizers site quite some preparation time went into a much elaborated dinner, instead of focusing on moderation and possible topics to discuss. Moreover it turned out that I was doing the whole communicative part as Anna realised that she could not invest as much time into the project as she thought she could. These factors led to the situation that some parts of the whole process were not clearly defined and that the collaboration with Anna did not prove to be as fruitful as it could have been. An oral mutual reflection provided the chance to discuss the process and our roles. We stated that it is important to have a very clear structure, fixed responsibilities and a good former commitment about which elements during the evening are determined and which ones are up for experimentation.



By sending out an e-mail to the guests afterwards, asking if still something keeps them busy after the evening, I got two responses expressing that it would have been nice to give more time to the individual projects and backgrounds from the guests.

The preparation and communication of **DISHCOURSE #7** was very structured right from the beginning on. As I was not able to visit Hamburg for the process of organising the evening, Sarah and I worked out the planning via phone-sessions and e-mail. As a basis, we worked with a very detailed document to collect ideas, set up a specific timeplan, clarify responsibilities and sharing the different jobs. With the feedback from the last round it was essential for me to give a lot of time and space for the individual introduction of our guests, not generally discussing interdisciplinarity but talking about project-examples and exploring the local scenery of Wilhelmsburg very concrete. It was important for Sarah and me that not only the 'creative scene' is represented on the table and that we have a good mix of gender and age to create a wide horizon to discuss forms of work and what people are driven by and rubbing on in the act of balancing life with work in their diverse contexts. For this we created a small flyer ('Tischvorlage', see on the right) that was sent out with a short invitation text. In it, we listed the topic, the process of the evening and asked the guests to bring some kind of project example, work piece etc to introduce themselves.

To prepare the structure of the evening, work out a short introduction talk and plan the part of moderating the talks we created visualisations and mind-maps of the local environment and the setting on the table. This was a good way to be prepared for possible things to talk about, to draw lines between our guests, the local area and judging the different backgrounds.

The procedure of the dinner, the conversations and the division of tasks between Sarah and me worked out very well. We were able to follow our concept and afterwards received the feedback that the evening was very fruitful for everybody, very structured and knowingly prepared. The mix of gender (50:50) and the wide range of age (26-60 years) made it very interesting to reflect on the topics and as Sarah was excellent in moderating the conversations (we decided this to be her responsibility), I learned how important and fruitful this can be for the exchange. Bringing objects (film / book / concept) for the introduction round was a good decision as they represented the guests much more lively than just an oral presentation.

Tischvorlage / DISHCOURSE #7

Donnerstag, 7. Januar 2016 / 19 Uhr
Georg-Wilhelm-Straße 17 / HH-Wilhelmsburg

LEBENS WERT ARBEITEN
Was treibt dich voran? Was reibt dich auf?



Menü

- 1 Kurzvortrag zur thematischen Einstimmung ... über Menschen, ihre Arbeit & Wilhelmsburg
- 2 Vorstellungsrunde der Gastgeber & Gäste ... anhand eines mitgebrachten Objektes / Werkes / Buches / Projektes etc.
- 3 Wilhelmsburger Spezialitäten
- 4 Austausch

Gastgeberinnen Anne Pfennig (Kunst- & Kulturvermittlerin)
Sarah Kästner (Ausstellungsdesignerin)

aboutdishcourse.wordpress.com



I was happy that my goal of providing room for the different personalities and specific examples of their work by also giving much time to the guests to ask questions to each other was fulfilling. A lot of exchange and productive connections were pointed out between the conversation partners. I received the feedback that the guests learned a lot of new things. Especially the ones living in the district of Wilhelmsburg responded to be very happy about getting to know each other and possibly getting in touch again after this lively and interesting evening. At the end of the dinner there was even some time for reflection on the DISHCOURSE concept itself. We received the feedback what a great opportunity for intense dialogue and exchange this form of eating and talking offers (unlike to a lecture or a workshop) and that such a fruitful meeting between unknown persons would very likely not have happened. Additionally we discussed the exclusiveness of the setting and what it causes – the question of who is invited and who not.

As a way to get a feedback from my collaborator after the dinner I created a list of questions (Motivation to take part? Expectations? (Learning) Outcome? How was the collaboration? etc.) that Sarah sent back to me some days later. In this she stated that it was a very interesting, productive experience, that her expectations have been fulfilled and that she felt it was a very discursive evening, with much more lively exchange than she would have thought.

Final conclusions and future prospects

So far the format in its serial character established space for experimenting with social, interdisciplinary encounters in different local, cultural and creative contexts, experience of varying settings, exchange with different professionals and reflection on a wide range of topics. The project was and still is a good training for me to develop new methods and attitudes that lead towards a form enabling the most productive collaboration between the hosts and a fruitful exchange or even learning atmosphere between the conversation partners on the table. So far, I was driven by my own curiosity, the interest in the people I approached as possible collaborators and the will to work on an independent project and learn through this process. As I earned some money with the mobile DISHCOURSES I had a budget to invest in this experiment. Because the organisation of the recent dinners used up a lot of time and I received a lot of input from the conversations, I feel a bit exhausted at the moment.

Entries from the guestbook

„ I hope the format / the idea goes on and possibly becomes independent as an open frame.“

Bastian, DC #4

“Wonderful initiative. Great group of people who are genuine hearted with sincere desire and passion to make this world a better place. Thank you for the wonderful evening and great care.“

Shantimaya, DC #5

“The encounters on the kitchen table let my thoughts start to revolve and shake my perspective – in a positive way! The format is enriching. Many, many thanks.“

Sandra, DC #6

“The title of the DISHCOURSE-serial immediately aroused my interest. My curiosity was totally satisfied. Thank you for the delicious, funny, interesting and entertaining evening.“

Jörg, DC #7

I want to take a short break right now, before starting to plan the next DISHCOURSE. I will take some time to reflect and obtain a feeling about what the format can still or in the future give to me.

- How long can I invest time and money in the production?
- How can I or do I want to 'professionalise' the whole concept even more?
- How to create a way to get funding or even earn money with it?
- Do I want to realise the idea to work with the format in an institutional setting (for example a museum, a gallery etc.)? Holding a dinner within their facilities and mixing the staff with external guests in order to set up a constructive discussion regarding the own agenda, program and current (local) issues and reflect this with views from other (local) perspectives outside of the institution?

Reflection regarding media and documentation

Differently to the statement in my concept-paper from November 2015 I don't think that the blog provides the function to represent a platform for active dialogue amongst the recent guests (nor does the facebook-group). At the moment I don't aim for this since I want to focus more on the evenings themselves and think about the need for or possible ways for the guests to stay in contact with each other afterwards and reflect about the dinners. In general, I still carry with me, the question of how much documentation is needed and if the blog should provide more insight into the conversations. So far I see that the motivation amongst the guests, to share a lot feedback is not that high and I am not clearly convinced if this even needs to happen at all.

By taking a break and by following my list of questions above I will reflect on future developments. Collaborators and places for upcoming DISHCOURSES are already in the air (my new flatmate in Berlin, friends in Kopenhagen and Helsinki etc. could be possible co-hosts in the future). Within time I will see what results out of this and how the DISHCOURSE can go on.

