

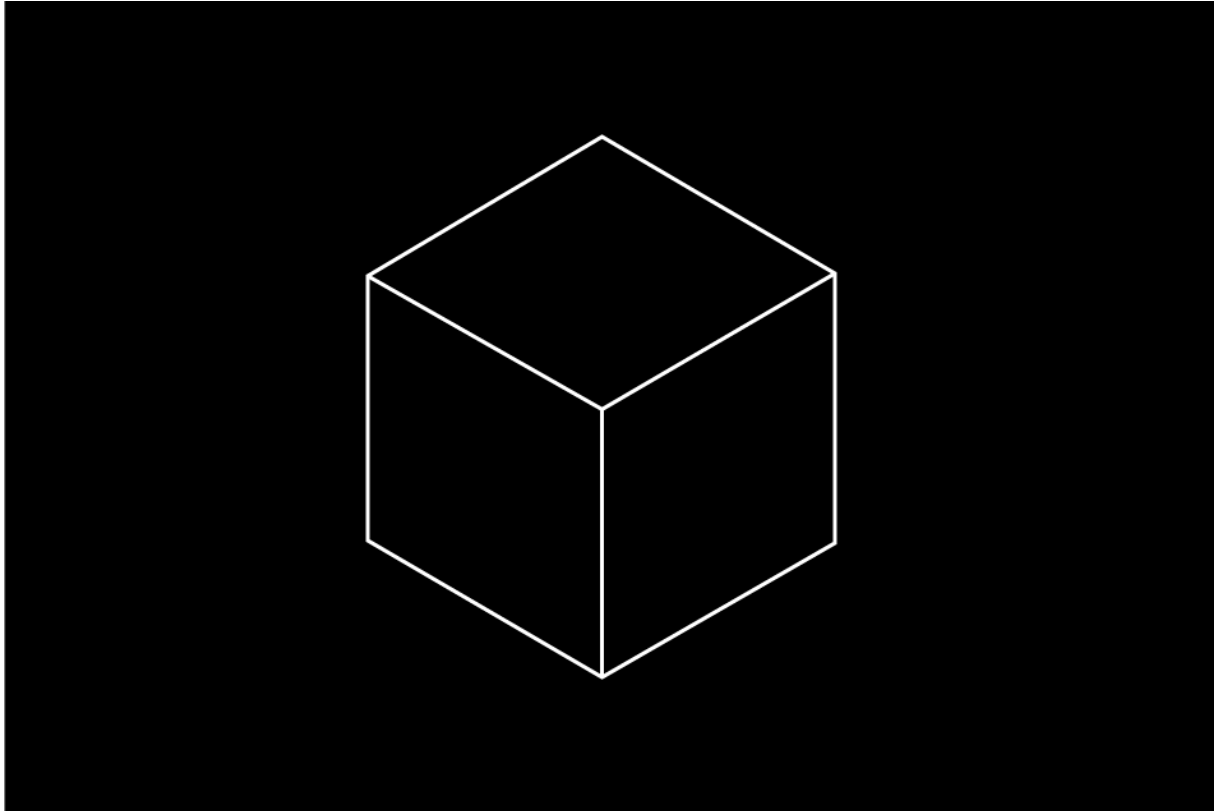
Organising Discourse Open Lecture

**Otto von Busch (SE)**

Time: Thursday 7 May 2015, 5 - 6 PM

Venue: Konstfack, Mandelgren (next to Svarta havet)

LM Ericssons väg 14, Stockholm. T-bana: Telefonplan



How can we contribute to crafting a more symmetric "cube" of justice?

The fifth Organising Discourse Open Lecture 2015 looks at how craft and design can function as platforms for action. Designer Otto von Busch speaks about how to possibly mobilise for justice.

**Realdesign and Civic Crafts**

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Martin Luther King Jr, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", 16 April 1963

In her book *On Beauty and Being Just*, art theorist Elaine Scarry accounts for a discussion she had with economist Amartya Sen, where Sen evokes Aristotle's idea of justice as a perfect cube; equal and proportionate in all directions. According to Scarry, we are drawn to symmetry intuitively, and we come to perceive injustices as an imbalance: we can feel when something is wrong, not only through reason, but through our senses.

In the world of realist politics, or what German chancellor Otto von Bismarck called *Realpolitik*, politics is based primarily on the execution of power, aiming at domination, rather than explicit ideological notions or moral or ethical premises. *Realpolitik* is a perspective and a mode of action in a world where man is regarded by nature to be hostile and cruel, rather than cooperative and kind, and where there can be no progress, no idealistic or peaceful future. Things will not be any better or more just, instead we are doomed to eternal asymmetry.

In such a world also the practice of design must be very different. If not actively contributing to asymmetry and injustice, a "realdesign" must still restrain some of its naïve idealism, yet without sacrificing any of design's visionary imagination. It must start to see the world as it really is; yet still act towards what ought to be. But most crucially, the new future the designer just proposed must be safeguarded from the political forces that really is - those who seek to undermine justice through force and violence.

But how are we to build pragmatic platforms for action, and how can we use design and craft capabilities to mobilise for justice? How can we contribute to crafting a more symmetric "cube" of justice?

The lecture will not give the answer. But it will at least suggest some small ideas on how to try to form and materialize strategies for civic crafts in an asymmetric world of realdesign.

**Otto von Busch** (PhD) is professor in design at Konstfack, University College of Arts, Crafts and Design (Stockholm), and assistant professor at Parsons the New School for Design (New York). He has a background in arts, craft, design and theory and aims to seamlessly combine these fields into one critical fashion practice. In his research and practice he explores how design and craft can be reverse engineered, hacked and shared among many participants as a form of civic engagement,

building community capabilities through collaborative craft and social activism.

**ORGANISING DISCOURSE** is an independent postgraduate course at Konstfack, exploring and developing platforms for discourse within the crafts, design and architecture. It aims to support and invigorate the development of new conceptual and physical spaces for presentation and display, meetings, discussions and debate, research and modes of production, etc. Within the crafts, design and architecture, it focuses on experimental, investigative and critical practices. Course leader is Magnus Ericson, project coordinator, curator and guest teacher at Konstfack, University College of Art, Crafts and Design.