



The Function of Design in Passports and other ID Documents

Morpho

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Hi, I am designer at Morpho in Haarlem, in The Netherlands. As security designer I am responsible for the graphic design and the graphic security of the passports and other ID documents Morpho produces. I am very pleased to be here. My presentation of today consists of two parts. In the first part you will hear me complain about international institutions and committees (a certain committee in particular which has, of course, absolutely nothing to do with ICAO). In the second part I'll try to convince you that passports and other ID documents don't have to be as ugly and boring as they normally are.

Who is afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?

This first part is about a very odd case

In connection with the introduction of the digital tachograph in commercial vehicles in the EU, a series of four ID-documents was needed. High end electronic documents with a state of the art graphic security design. Just how I like it.

I thought.

Somewhere in the, *depressing* text of the EU-directives, among other odd and impossible descriptions, I bumped into a very peculiar one. The committee in their eternal wisdom, had decided on the colours of the four documents that they should be respectively: mainly red, mainly yellow, mainly blue and mainly white.

In *mainly red* I could, with some creative interpretation on red, make a design.

With *mainly yellow* however we are getting in serious trouble when we want to add security.

Mainly blue could, with some interpretation, even result in a secure design.

But *mainly white* beats me completely.

I read it again and again, hoping I missed something. I didn't. It became even worse. At the start I presumed that the white and the yellow document were the less fraude sensitive, however the white one appeared to be the most fraude sensitive in the range.

Anyhow, this picture shows what they wanted:

Which would, by the way, due to the 40% ink coverage we can handle in laminated polycarbonate, result in about this:

Which is more like the baby room version of red, yellow and blue. Well, **who is afraid of that?**

But that is of course a problem of all polycarbonate documents.

This is what they got in the end:

But before that, the representatives of the committee in Brussels had to be convinced that they made some very odd requirements and that it wouldn't be wise to persist. It took a lot of time and energy.

Sometimes committees like this want to organize and prescribe to much in their directives, without proper knowledge and apparently without objective professional advise. And believe me, the quality of this particular directive is not an exception.

The design as it is, was the best we could make of it. We even succeeded in giving each document quite an amount of the prescribed colour by involving the reverse sides. But I always kept the feeling that it could have been better, when we could have spent our time and energy fully on the design itself. Design is about a lot of things, but it should not be about politics.

Part 2

Each project has its own story – its own peculiarities. I could tell you some sad stories – but happy stories as well and even some funny ones. But in the end it's always the quality of the document that counts. Can we produce it? Is it effective? Does it look good? It's an exciting job, really.

In the second part of this presentation I'll show you the results of some intense and stimulating design and development processes I have enjoyed during the last years. Design is about image. So I thought the second part of this presentation should be merely that. I believe that the results speak for themselves.

Who needs guilloches?

Thank you for your attention