

Digital Public Sphere— Physical Appearance

The ambivalence between social significance and architectural composition of data storage buildings

Abstract

The shift of daily actions and publicly available information into the digital space are of major social significance. Irrespective of the underlying infrastructure which are the physically necessary structures, the enormous changes brought about by digitalisation seem natural. Data storage buildings, as built structures, often lack an actual physical public awareness, as highly technical structures they opt for a purely functional appearance, confined only to their needs. The emergence of digital data has shaped a new definition of the public sphere, despite the fact that the use of such data relies upon the exact opposite, namely extreme concealment and secrecy.

This article shall be based upon a typological perspective on data storage buildings. The focus is on the correlation of the social importance and the expectations to the architectural shape. Concerning data storage buildings, there are some considerations to be made on the relationship between public sphere and secrecy, according to Georg Simmel. This article seeks to analyse the extreme contrast and yet the relationship between digital transparency on the one hand and physical concealment on the other. This is due to the assumption that data storage buildings, as spaces of complete secrecy, might be a necessity in making digital information public.

Keywords

Data Storage Building, Typology, Digitalisation, Public Sphere, Secrecy