

Report on the symposium & workshop »Comic meets Science« The Anthropocene Kitchen: Designing the Future of Food



Maki Shimizu sketches whilst listening to »Artists in conversation« with Reinhold Leinfelder. Photo: Jens Kirstein



Artists of the Anthropocene Kitchen cartoon strip project exchange findings and ideas for the last chapter: »Foods of the Future«. Photo: Jens Kirstein

Work on a scientific cartoon strip under the base project »Anthropocene Kitchen« is on the home stretch. Its topic is »Feeding the world«; its scope takes in myriad aspects, from the domestic hob to the global flow of raw materials. Some chapters are ready and others being composed. The last two chapters are at the design stage. Then there is the epilogue, which, true to the concept of a »Journey around the world«, will be drafted in collaboration with all the international artists taking part. The base project was very happy to welcome the ten artists to Berlin on Sunday 4 October 2015, at the start of a week devoted to this exciting task. Before the design and craft work got under way, a two-day symposium was staged to gather input on questions ranging from the ratio of text to image, through current scientific communication, to the future of nutrition. This part of the workshop was public, to encourage for a lively discussion.

Symposium

The first day was dedicated to the theory of the cartoon strip. Reinhold Leinfelder gave a short greeting and

handed over to Jaqueline Berndt, whose overview of manga-esque communication for science purposes paid special attention to food and food safety after 3/11, the date of the nuclear incident in Fukushima. Nick Sousanis, who published his doctorate in the form of a comic, spoke of the important interlacing of image and text in education. Science journalist Lukas Plank wondered whether scientific cartoon strips should be subject to rules to make sources and facts more transparent. After lunch, Stephan Packard sharpened the discussion by asking »How factual are factual comics?«. This was followed by a presentation by illustrator Veronika Mischitz and science communication expert Henning Krause of excerpts of the monthly web cartoon strip »Klar soweit!« (Ready so far!) published by the Helmholtz community. Rounding up the afternoon, Reinhold Leinfelder explained the background for the nascent »Anthropocene Kitchen« cartoon strip as a format for intercultural, cross-discipline and participative communication. After a panel discussion, delegates moved to project room C10, the accompanying exhibition space, for »Artists in conversation«.



How will the world feed itself in the future? Photo: Jens Kirstein

Tuesday of the symposium was given over entirely to the subject of nutrition. Arnold van Huis, a leading researcher in the area of insects as human food, started off the day. He talked about the potential of insects as an alternative to traditional animal protein. Australian Katerina Teaiwa, joining the conference by skype, told the story of her forebears whose tiny island fell victim to phosphate depletion. The imperial power of Great Britain occupied the island in order to exploit its rich reserves of phosphate. This it did ruthlessly, selling the material to Australia and New Zealand at vast profit. Anne-Kathrin Kuhlemann of Topfarmers spoke of opportunities within a sustainable and modern circular flow economy for food production, citing the example of Aquaponic in Berlin. Alongside this rich intellectual fare, there were innovative culinary delights to accompany Toni Meier's *LunchTalk*. Stephan Barthel, Karl W. Grosse, Theresa Habermann and Sophie Lokatis saw to guests' physical well-being with a chickpea stew prepared according to Toni's recipe. The subject of the *LunchTalk* was the ecological balance of various foods, and this particular meal scored rather well. Dessert was Bee Sting Cake with drone larvae.

The *LunchTalk* ended the public part of the symposium and artists, scientific participants and organisers of the workshop then retired to their provisional atelier on the ground floor. Further contributions from the working group and a refreshing tour of the historic centre of Berlin meant that the artists now had more than enough material to help them devise various scenarios for feeding the world of the future.

Workshop

The remaining three days gave rise to multifarious discussions as to how this large a gathering of artists would cooperate on and manage to realise the chapter. Ideas were developed, sketched out, rejected, reprised and driven forward. Finally everyone came to an agreement on a shared concept. It became clear fairly quickly that in the short time available, the cartoonists would not be able to construct and implement a story together; nor did it seem a good idea to produce illustrations en masse, since a mixture of styles would seem ungainly. It therefore seemed appropriate that each artist design their own page, whereby protagonists and themes would be interwoven. After one and half day's talking and thinking came one and half day's drawing and writing. All the time, base project team members were on hand in case the artists needed to consult them on questions of design or content.

On Friday evening, the results of the workshop were presented to a public gathering at the Cluster. The idea of a journey around a future world received very positive ratings from everyone present. It takes up the theme of the various levels at which the world is globalised and comes to represent a core truth: the effects of our actions are no longer felt simply within regions, but also across complex global contexts.

The base project is very satisfied with the way in which the workshop experiment went: it was marked by very

amicable, communicative and productive exchanges between participants. The artists too were positive in assessing the course of the event and its results. They had expected as a matter of course that ten artists, previously unacquainted with each other and working as individuals, would be able to produce such interesting results in the time given. The workshop was thus a great example of successful interdisciplinary and inter-cultural work.

Thanks are due to everyone who made the symposium possible: to the organising team at the international offices under Valia Carvalho and Daniela Harsan, to Claudia Lamas Cornejo and Daniela Sachse for their publicity work and to Katrin Bauer and Sandra Bauer of the finance department for their great efficiency.



Alexandra Hamann
Freelance



Marc Schleunitz
Base project »The Anthropocene Kitchen«

Anthropocene Kitchen team members are:

- Reinhold Leinfelder
- Jens Kirstein (who became a father during the week of the symposium!)
- Marc Schleunitz
- Alexandra Hamann
- Theresa Habermann
- Anne Schmidt
- Julia von Mende
- Karl W. Grosse
- Stephan Barthel

Cartoon strip artists working at the Anthropocene Kitchen were:

- Sylvain Mazas (France, Prologue)
www.marmouzet.net
- Joëlle Ebongue a.k.a. Elyon's (Cameroon, chapter on Uganda)
www.facebook.com/EbeneDuta?fref=ts
- Zineb Benjelloun (chapter on Morocco)
www.zineb-benjelloun.com
- Ruohan Wang (chapter on China)
www.ruohanwang.com
- Maki Shimizu (chapter on Japan)
www.makishimizu.com
- Sarnath Banerjee (chapter on India)
www.literaturfestival.com/archiv/teilnehmer/autoren/2014/sarnath-banerjee
- Samuel Jaramillo (Columbia/chapter on Australia, Banaba)
www.mofobo.com
- José Aguiar (chapter on Brazil)
www.aifanciadoBrasil.com.br
- Sophie Goldstein (chapter on the US)
www.Redinkradio.com
- Martin Ernstsén (chapter on Norway)
www.martinernstsen.com
- Ulrich Scheel (chapter on Germany)
www.ulrichscheel.de

Exhibition »Communicating science through comics«
www.c10.berlin