



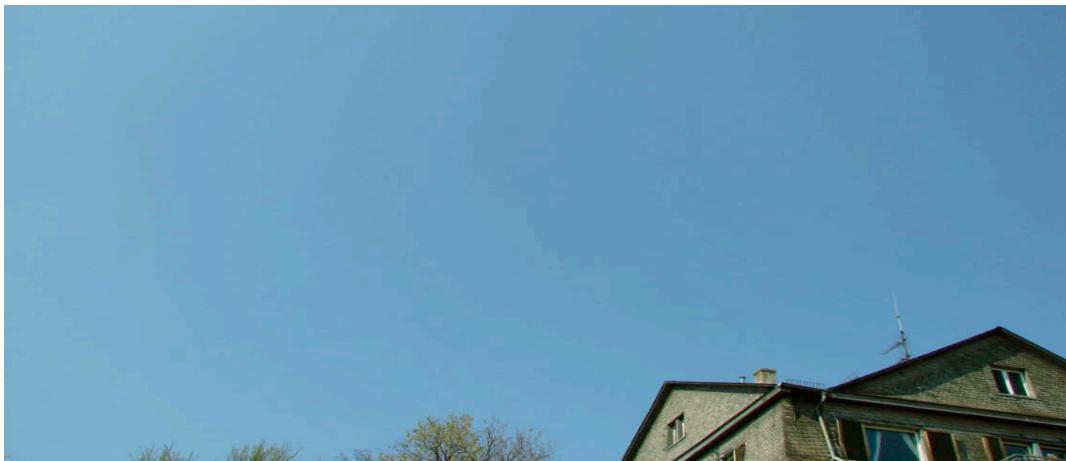
rivers of knowledge bulletin #4, May 2010

» *and the Pacific Ocean issues into Rudova River,
the same that flew over Paris as a cloud* «

Wiśława Szymborka, »Water«, from her book Salt (1962)

The Polish Nobel Prize author Szymborska (*1923) has been concerned with natural sciences throughout her lifetime. She touched water as a topic over and over again. The cyclic nature - the sheer fact that our ancestors have drunk, pissed and cooked the same water-molecules as we do - that's what thrills her. In our understanding of future "cradle-to-cradle-economies" this is an essential concept: To understand and deal with the fact, that our resources are finite and that we have to change from the belligerent mind of a world-Conquistador to the mentality of a gardener, a gardener like the one of Voltaire's "Candide", who claims in the very last sentence of the book, that we do not have to quarrel anymore, "first we have to take care of our garden." (Candide ou l'optimisme, 1758).

Talking about rivers is one thing, getting in a close touch is the other. With Frankfurt Rhine Main Planning Authority's help we chartered a boat and took an entire day off to go by ship to the 10 spots we shall be dealing with over the next year(s). What a different perception if you look at these places from the water! A very special moment occurred, when volcano Eyafjallajökull (yes, the one under the glacier of our project river Markarfljót in Iceland!) blew its ashes into European skies and Frankfurt experienced for the first time in a lifetime a compact uninterrupted blue without vapour trails.



Frankfurt sky on April 19th 2010: Blue, no vapour trails. Never seen since decades. Photo: Georg-Christof Bertsch



The group of designers has been established and all those who enrolled took part in the river trip: Franziska Bock, Till Hergenbahn, Katja Kirchhoff, Hans Krauße, Moritz König, Kai Linke, Sophia Muckle, Johannes Schmidt-Knatz, Dane Smith-Horne, Uwe Tischer, Martin Wenzel form our design-crew. Till, Katja, Sophia, Kai, Uwe, Martin are alumni of HfG Offenbach who have joined the student team of Franziska, Hans, Moritz, Johannes and Dane. Thus we have formed a enormously creative and, to my opinion, highly competitive design team.



Moritz König during the trip. Photo by Dane Smith-Horn Carolina Guimares and Kai Linke. Photo: Georg C Bertsch



Johannes Schmidt-Knatz, Petra Kellner, Georg-Christof Bertsch, Katja Kirchhoff, Sophia Muckle. Photo: Uwe Tischer



Ana Eugenia Ureña Chaves and Carolina Guimaraes joined us for the river trip documenting and interviewing the participants for their film-docu of C-Change .

Petra and I are very fond of this group. As you can imagine, after getting the impressions some started sketching during the trip, others engaged in discussions, while others did concise photographic documentations.



Floating by: urban artistic situations seen with a designer's eye. Photo: Till Hergenbahn

When I touched »natural« and »artificial« situations in bulletin #3 I referred to the artificial recreation of nature after and in contrast to constructive engineering such as barrages or canals. I also implied the tragedies of an ongoing destructive period, a thought evolving from the research oriented pre-design phase of the project.

Now, starting with the creative process, things appear in a different light. Afloat with designers, the world looks different and we develop an different view at the world. Till's photo is a proof to that. The rivers included in our project, Amazon, Indus, Okavango, Markarfljót, Kızılırmak, Tajo, Yukon, Daugava and Main River, represent entirely different realities also in this sense. From this point of view urban landscapes develop their own charm, the aesthetics of nature and the city as a contrast is about to become an interesting source of possible design solutions and concepts. As you remember, I wrote »Indus, Tajo and Main River belong to a highly industrialized and exploited species of rivers, while Okavango, Markarfljót and Yukon run through very scarcely populated areas, mostly left to themselves.« There is this positive aspect of how we can interact with rivers in a designerly way. Now the question is raised from a designerly perspective: How do we design riverscapes? And it sounds pretty promising when compared to the engineering and planning perspective.



Seen from the river the layers of the city are piling up like theatre scenery in many levels. Photo Dane Smith-Horn

One week later, back at the desk, back in the University, we met the experts to discuss possibilities and restrictions of the stations. This was the first time, that the entire design team met the planning and institutional experts Hanne Münster-Voswinkel (City planning Offenbach), Anne Schleißner and Dieter Gick, (Municipality of Mühlheim), Ute Habelt (City Environment Offenbach), Beate M Schwarz (Planungsverband), Reinhard Henke (Planungsverband), Renate Friedrich (Urban Green Frankfurt), Jochen Schaab (Municipality of Kelsterbach).



Start of thematic definitions and distribution of stations.

Beate M. Schwarz, Anne Schleißner. Photos Georg C Bertsch



Now as we have entered the next phase and as we are looking forward to see first sketches, concepts and designs, the press is picking up our activities, Frankfurter Rundschau, one of the most important national newspapers published a lengthy report in its regional edition. I gave a speech at a major conference on urban green and gardening about our activities. So let's speed up and dive into the design-eddy.



Katja Kirchhoff, Sophia Muckle, Johannes Schmidt-Knatz, Moritz König, Dane Smith-Horne, Petra Kellner, Georg-Christof Bertsch, Kai Linke, Hans Krauß, Uwe Tischer, Martin Wenzel, Franziska Bock during the start of the creative part of the project. Photo: Sascha Lobe (Till missing for business reasons).

Great start, great people, a hella lot of work to do.

Prof. Georg-Christof Bertsch
Frankfurt/Main, May 5th 2010