

rivers of knowledge bulletin #10, Jan. 2010

»When the rivers run dry.«

Fred Pearce's title of his 2006 landmark book

Publicity is one of our main tasks in the C-Change project. Publicity not for its own sake but in the sense of communicating our content to different social groups in order to offer a series of interfaces for interaction.

The presentation of the designs, models and concepts for the future klimaroute stations along the river Main was insofar one of the crucial moments for our project. On Jan 13th, 2011 we hosted a press conference in Frankfurt and presented the concepts for the new public spaces for the first time to a general public.

„The change comes soft-footed“ was one the next-days headline. This article about the opening in the Rüsselsheimer Echo (14.1.2011) underlined the fact that climate change is a slow process and that people should be more aware of tiny alterations in order to understand what is happening.

Die Änderung kommt schleichend

Klimaroute: Neun Stationen sollen das Mainufer aufhübschen und Wissen über den Klimawandel vermitteln

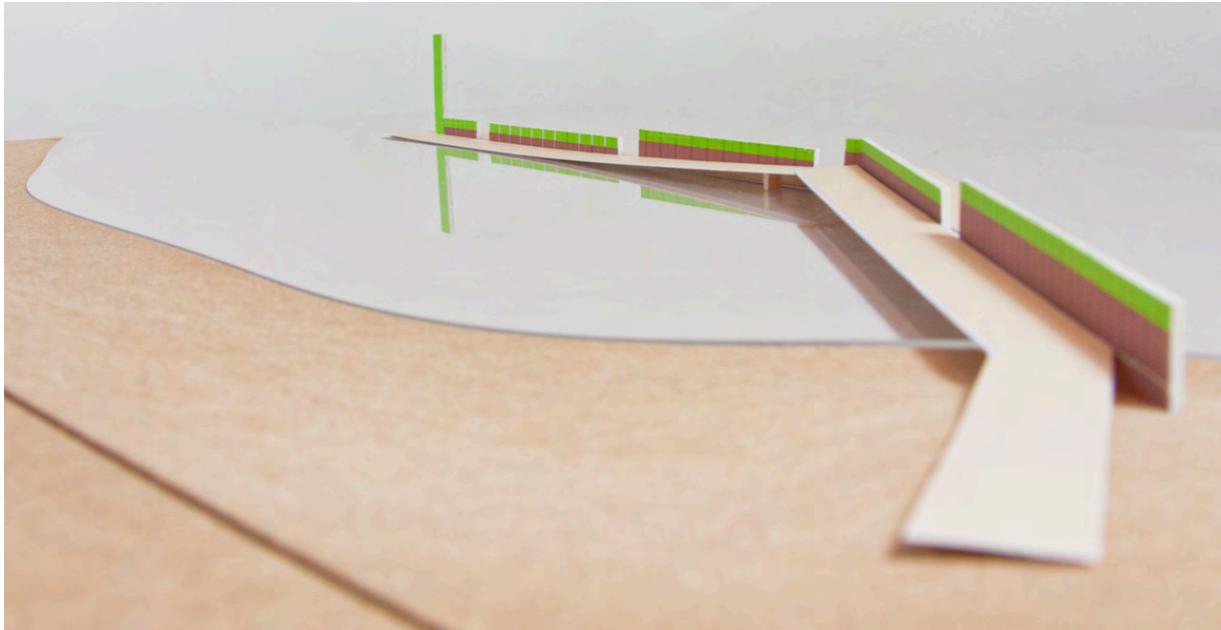
FRANKFURT.

„Wir könnten Ihnen die Stelle im Moment gar nicht zeigen“, sagt Manfred Ockel, der Bürgermeister von Kelsterbach. Seine Amtskollegen nicken, alle haben gerade mit dem Hochwasser zu kämpfen. Der Planungsverband Ballungsraum Rhein-Main und die Städte Kelsterbach, Frankfurt, Offenbach und Mühlheim hätten den Termin für die Vorstellung ihrer Klimaroute nicht besser wählen können. Denn das Projekt hat neben einer Aufhübschung der Uferzonen und der Vermittlung von Wissen über Flüsse vor allem ein Ziel:



Johannes Schmidt-Knatz, 26 Jahre alter Student der Hochschule für Gestaltung, würde das steile Kelsterbacher Mainufer an der Kelstermündung terrassenförmig anlegen. Foto: Oliver Heil

Design student Johannes Schimdt-Knatz in the online edition of the Rüsselsheimer Echo: “The change comes soft-footed”



Model of the Mühlheim station by Uwe Tischer and Till Hergenhahn. This will be a part of the future open air green classroom at Mühlheim.

If there is such thing as a common denominator of the press' reaction it is a very positive appreciation of what we have achieved in terms of turning a highly complex and controversial topics into something approachable and easy to understand. We had expected more critical voices about the cost or whatever. On the background of an extensive and successful popular series of the so called radio college "climate" of our regional radio station Hessischer Rundfunk, we received the acclaim for having transformed this topic into something which can be dealt with in a constructive way, such as: What can I do on a everyday level to help reduce the effects of climate change? How is this all interconnected on a global level? And so on.

The entire press activity took place on the background of one of the most severe river floods at the river Main, with water levels around 3,5 meter above normal and the dikes under pressure. „New information boards alone won't make it" another newspaper wrote, hailing our approach to create public spaces where you can stay just for the sake of spending some time near the river, experiencing the beauty and marvels of nature while slowly getting involved into the content and background of climate change through simple and easy to understand objects, examples and proposals. "Climate at the river" was the headline of Frankfurter Rundschau, along with Frankfurter Allgemeine one of the two national newspapers of our region and the one that has covered our works since the very start.



Getting politics involved in our project. The project became so attractive that people like to get attributed to it f.l.t.r.: G.-C..Bertsch, Horst Schneider (mayor of Offenbach), Heiko Kasseckert (director of the Planungsverband), Bernd- Müller (Mayor of Mühlheim) and Manfred Ockel (Mayor of Kelsterbach) during the press conference, on the flood sculpture by Uwe Tischer and Till Hergenhahn.

It said "Climate change happens at your doorstep" and "Four municipalities together create a pathway to the understanding of nature". Offenbach Post, the local Offenbach newspaper, put the funding to the top: "Educational route explains climate change - EU funding makes project possible." They highlight the slow change process over decades and the necessity to react on the levels of planning, education, politics and behaviour. The Frankfurter Allgemeine puts its focus on the global aspect of climate change: "Passers-by will get involved in the understanding of the consequences of climate change to river regions all over the world."



During the press conference the water was still rising. (A wall and a gas tank beneath the Alte Brücke in Frankfurt on Jan 13th)



A regional TV broadcast the presentation of the models and two short interviews, first with the director of the Planungsverband, Heiko Kasseckert, second with me as director of the creative programme along with Hanne Münster-Voswinkel, Petra Kellner and the designers.



We would not have expected the press conference to be so successful

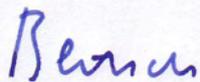
What is so amazing about all these reactions and the general press attention that we are getting is that it makes clear that it is simply not true that people are fed up with the topic. They just want to learn about it in a way that takes them serious. As we had learned from the 1104 interviews of Petra Günther at our C-Change umbrella booths last year everybody is concerned about the prospects of actual and future changes, but the gap between everyday knowledge and scientific evidence is still so broad that climate change scepticists can easily puzzle everyone.

The reaction we got from these press publications is insofar reassuring as it confirms our belief in the power of multilayered communication. The stations along the Main in correspondence with the in-depth-information on our new website <http://www.klimaroute.de> seem to offer the adequate mix for a general public. These events, publications and conversations offer a bright prospect of what 2011 might bring.



Petra Kellner of HfG Offenbach in conversation with Bernd Müller, mayor of Mühlheim.

On the academic level I shall start the Global Water Working Group at the Cumulus Association's Paris conference in May. Cumulus is an organization of 170 Universities of Design, Art and Media. At the Shanghai Conference in September 2010 I was asked to start this group in order to help develop a more sustainability oriented approach in worldwide product design curricula concerning water.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Bernd'.

Prof. Georg-Christof Bertsch, Frankfurt/Main, January 24th 2011