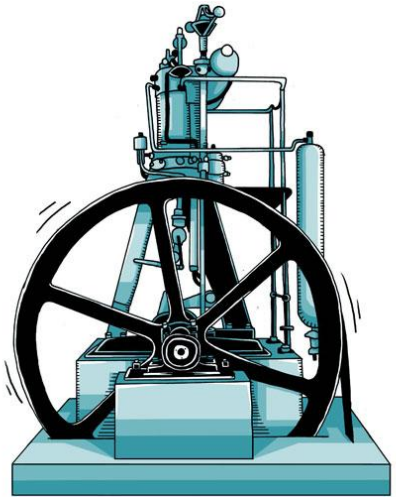
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Diesel Engine

Wienecke, Bastian

In the early twentieth century, most ships were powered by coal and steam. This changed abruptly in 1911, when Winston Churchill decided to power his new fleet of warships with oil. This decision shifted the attention of world superpowers toward the Near East and its oil reserves, which had a significant impact on world history.

The real rise of the diesel engine began after the Second World War. It was built into almost all types of ships and became a driving force of globalization. Today, 90 percent of world trade is transported on ships across the oceans. About 90,000 container ships transport commodities daily and burn up to one billion liters of fuel, mostly crude oil. Although various other vehicles and machines are powered by diesel engines, its consequences for the Anthropocene are most evident in the shipping industry.



Diesel Engine by Rudolf Diesel, Inv.-Nr.: 1905/3096
Bastian Wienecke

Drawn by *Bastian Wienecke*, 2014.

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Diesel's last letter: The Diesel engine

Text and images by Bastian Wienecke
University of the Arts (UdK), Berlin



Diesel's last letter
1913: "Beloved Martha, in this letter I want to explain to you the thoughts that have been running through my head recently."

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1890: “The steam engine was the motor of industrialization, yet it was much too large and expensive.”

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“Smaller labor companies couldn’t compete. So I developed a cheaper alternative for them that would give them a good future.”

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1893: "The engine didn't rely on crude oil or natural gas. Instead, it used vegetable oil. It was considerably more efficient."

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"The engine was a global success. Selling licenses to the engine made it possible for us to live in prosperity."

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"But, the fact that my invention was of the greatest interest to the military makes me mad. Nothing is further from my mind than war."

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Solidarism - the natural economic liberation of man
1903: "The societal vision that I had for the engine never manifested. That's why I tried to spread my ideas in my book."

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1913: "No one was interested in my ideas. This really takes a toll on me, and I still have to learn how to live with this reality. "

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Artist's comment:

I was surprised to learn that when Rudolf Diesel invented the diesel engine, his primary mission was to improve the life of the common worker and not to fill his own pockets with money. He was frustrated about not being able to realize his vision. It was important to me that my comic strips portray how his invention and its consequences affected its creator.

How to cite

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The comic also appears in Alexandra Hamann, Reinhold Leinfelder, Helmuth Trischler, and Henning Wagenbreth, eds., *Anthropozän – 30 Meilensteine auf dem Weg in ein neues Erdzeitalter. Eine Comic-Anthologie* (Munich: Deutsches Museum, 2014).

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Further readings:

- Sources and Literature for the Anthropocene Milestone Comics

Related links:

- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Special exhibition at the Deutsches Museum http://www.deutsches-museum.de/en/exhibitions/special-exhibitions/archive/2015/anthropocene/
- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Virtual exhibition on the Environment & Society Portal https://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6354
- Comic-Anthology, Deutsches Museum Website http://www.deutsches-museum.de/sammlungen/entdecken/comics/