



Jakob Dittmar

Reading comics on Screen Media

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this is about
visual formats

in narrative sequence

this is about
browser windows:

unroll, unroll

the page,

and this is about media.

Flexible Pages?

Reading Comics on Screen Media

Not only digital comics but also analogue formats constantly experiment and expand on formal and narrative options. Not all do, but many. While most mainstream comics and graphic novels carefully stay on established ground regarding their visual and textual construction and narration, other comics constantly experiment on formal and narrative options. By telling their stories in sequences of interrelating images and text, almost all comics establish what is crucial for comics and hint at the things that can be done in comics-storytelling: They repeat established patterns and divert from these into variations on their form. They introduce alternative options, mostly on a smaller scale, but sometimes with profound consequences for the understanding of the visual language of comics as a whole. This is most obvious where elements of other narrative media get included and forms of multi-medial storytelling are developed. But other forms of sequential visual storytelling on paper also break new ground: A lot of comics constantly experiment with formal and narrative options like the particular composition of individual images or the sequence of narrated events over one or many pages

Earlier versions of parts of this paper are published in various contexts. This paper combines and continues the argument.

to set a distinct tone or point of view. This is most obvious where elements of other narrative media get included, like e.g. an animated frame containing a changing image, like e.g. as if zooming in on or retreating from the image's subject, showing some development over time while using only one frame in the comic's spatial sequence (ref. Dittmar 2012). While experimentation on digital options is more obvious, much continues to happen in printed comics, as well. And whether experiments fail or succeed, they allow us to understand better the consequences of particular uses of specific comics' elements for constructing a story in a way that differs from established or even mainstream storytelling.

Of course, each reader applies individual knowledge and cultural frames when reading and thus constructs a narrative relation between the individual images. Meaning is put into the sequence of images that is depending on the cultural background and knowledge of the reader – references to all kinds of discourses can be found in many images, but whether they were intended or not and whether they are meaningful for the development of the narrative is crucial. This is to be confirmed by the reflective reader who negotiates the possible meanings of the comic, its images and even the elements of these images. The story itself needs to make sense and has to matter to the reader. But understanding of a comic can vary substantially between readers. The intentions of the author and the illustrator (no

matter if these are one or several persons) do influence the story, the drawing-style and visual language – the graphiation in that particular comic or by that particular illustrator (comics artist), the choice of each element, the composition of each image and its placement in the story's progression depend on the author/illustrator – their artistic voice is telling the story and might be closer to or further away from known discourses. The construction of pages, their layout or architecture, is depending on the given format and medium of publication and might not be determined by the author/illustrator. While the voice of the comic's creator(s) remains alive within a comic even when subjected to reformatting and re-arrangement of frames, the potential for flexible designs in digital formats promises to open for new details in sequential visual storytelling.

Remember that reading is an individual process: Each reader starts from their own background but understands new things from their context: Precisely like reading written text, the reading of a comic refers to other reading experiences and discourses on all kinds of cultural matter. As every reader knows, the images, their elements and their interrelations tend to go much further in their possible meanings than discovered on first reading – and while the author might be dead, the meaning of words and images get re-framed by changing cultural contexts. Some experiments in comics-storytelling are recognised

immediately as they are obvious to the experienced reader, while others are hidden in the visual material and only become apparent on close reading of the individual images in sequence. These experiments help to develop further the options for telling stories in comics, of course. They also allow us to understand better how individual elements and layers work within comics and allow for artistic expression of a narrative. Whatever format given, each new page is a new experience of the images in combination and individually at the same time: As already mentioned, the whole page works as a meta-panel (or meta-image) that consists of all its individual images and of the combination of their designs. Decisions about the number of images and their placing and style are crucial for the storytelling style of each page of each comic (i.e. 'mise-en-page'). But some digital forms allow for floating images that are adjusted accordingly to the settings and format of the screen used, they allow for variability in image-sizes and even differences in selection of content per image. As a result, content no longer prescribes the visual structure of a comic but its frames' settings do. The same page of the same comic can look different on various screens because of individual browser settings, hardware configurations, or simply because of the width of rolled-out paper in scoll-printed comics, e.g., Paul Rietzl's "Shipwreck", or in leprellos (or accordion folding) like "Voyage retour" by Anne Brouillard, Joe Sacco's "The Great War", or my own "What if..." that

all turn from one long image into a sequence of images by folding to collapse into a book with evenly sized pages when fully folded down.

Also, the growing spectrum of genres and blended genres offers more and more areas to use comics for: Not only fictional but also non-fictional. Journalistic and documentary comics are included in established newspapers, groundbreaking work has been published by the NY Times and the Guardian over the years, e.g., the Guardian featured PositiveNegative's journalistic comic "A Perilous Journey: Khalid's Story" in 2015 after introducing documentary comics by Joe Sacco and others to its readers. Maintenance manuals and assembly instructions for all kinds of artefacts are provided in sequential images more and more often (ref. Schwender & Bühring 2007; also Jüngst 2010). This seems to happen because comics appear to be more accessible, easier to read than descriptive texts, as no translation of text into visual information is done, but the artefact in question and its parts are depicted and can thus be recognised and information applied easily (ref. Schwender 2003): e.g. in assembly instructions for furniture, mobile phones, etc; safety instructions by the fire brigade, and so on. And while this is true, the cultural codes underlying each element of every picture in a comic are as complicated and multi-referential as artefacts and images have always been: Safety instructions or technical manuals do tell a lot about the culture they have been produced in. A comic can offer choices in story-

development and still be a comic. It may also include hidden text that is appearing when the mouse-pointer is dragged over it ('alt-function'). But including sound as acoustic information causes a problem, as it adds non-visual information to the comic. And including moving images into comics finally opens the debate on the boundary of comics towards multi-media and animation film. It also blends push and pull media into one narration, allowing for quite different modes of reception: readers need to actively read, if they stop, the story will not develop further, while an audience may watch film in a more passive mode, the narration continues even when the viewer gets distracted. In analogy, comics that include filmed bits are thus switching between playing content to the viewer like a film on TV does (it pushes content onto the audience) and demanding the reader to construct the development of the story actively from reading the narrative more or less word for word and image for image (the reading pulls content from the medium, it remains depending on active construction of the unfolding of events on the reader's mind) (cf. Dittmar 2012, 39 f; 2025, 35-39). So far, we do not know but can safely assume that blended media narrations would result in different ways of consumption and engagement with content. Also, each of the forms used, the comic as well as the film, has consequences for the ways in which the story can be told. Blending segments of two distinct traditions of visual storytelling in a clever way allows for use of the potential of each of them to engage the audience/readers best.



Illustration 1 a:
Screen taken from Tom Wallgren 'Urgent Delivery'.
(Illustration: Wallgren, 2012)

To show the importance of layers in comics, a few distinct examples from the field of digital comics are discussed in the following before the concept of layers in comics is introduced in detail. The examples illustrate consequences of decisions about page design for the narrative style, i.e. the voice of the comic in question. Digital comics tend to be planned and formatted for specific visual media, e.g. in screen formats and resolutions, in colour settings etc. While the first two examples follow that logic, the third tries to deliver a comic that is flexible in its layout and adjusts to different settings of the browser or screen.

The first example illustrates the consequences of production for mobile phone-screens. These small but high resolving screens of current smart-phones demand specific formats and image resolutions to keep content easily readable and make the reader engage with the story told.

Tom Wallgren wrote and produced 'Urgent Delivery' specifically to be read on smart-phones held upright, benefiting from the colour-intensity that only these screens can guarantee. The format of his comic makes the most of the format and accordingly, the dramaturgical development is built around this peculiarity: Almost all images are placed one per screen and only a few double images are used (s. illustration 1).



Illustration 1 b:
Split-screen taken from Tom Wallgren 'Urgent Delivery'.
(Illustration: Wallgren, 2012)

The following example by Oscar Lagerström Carlsson and Felix Strandberg allows the reader to choose between alternative narrative perspectives onto the story (s. illustration 2) – the reader decides whether to read the story only including the narrator's comments or whether direct speech of the depicted figures is given instead. Also, a combination of the two narrative styles is possible, adding a more text-centred version to the aforementioned two image-centred alternatives. Each of the versions results in quite a different reading experience, without using different images at all, but by adding different text-layers to the given images.

To be able to understand the different points of view to choose from, one has to read at least some images of the story in each perspective, as reading only individual images in one narrative perspective does not transport the qualities of the different points of view. So, this approach asks for a determined reader who understands what is offered. Also, it demands the willingness to read carefully all provided texts as it is not the visual plane that is changed, but the textual content only.

The third example is experimenting on the compositional needs regarding comics



Illustration 2 a & b:

Oscar L. Carlsson & Felix Strandberg allow for different narrative settings while using the same visual material – the chosen page of narration on the left is dialogue only. On the following page we can read the internal monologue of the first-person narrator combined with dialogue. (Illustration: Carlsson and Strandberg, 2014)

Illustration 2 a & b:
Oscar L. Carlsson & Felix Strandberg allow for different narrative settings while using the same visual material – on the right we see the internal monologue of the first-person narrator combined with the dialogue. (Illustration: Carlsson and Strandberg, 2014)



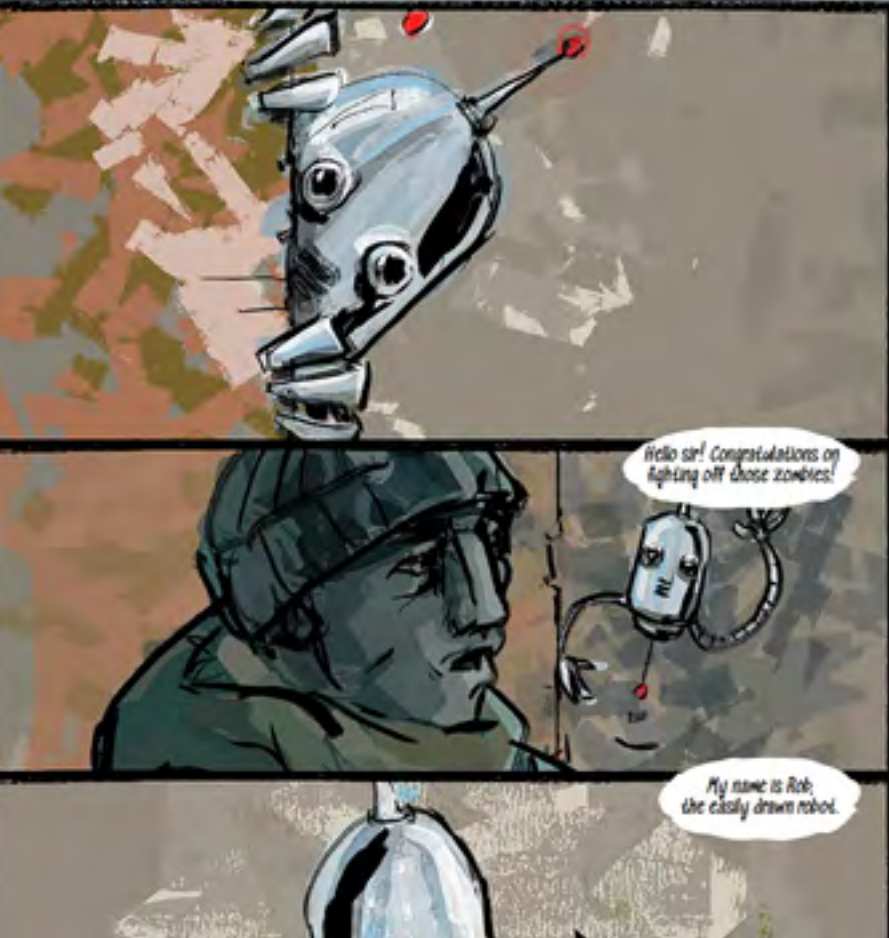


Illustration 3 a & b:

Johannes Hansen shows the consequences of display in differently sized formats. His comic adapts to all kinds of screen-sizes and settings with the help of a CSS grid, object queries, media fit, etc. that arrange the visual content accordingly. While floatation of elements on their layers is helping this approach to succeed, it also defines its limits as readers expect certain rules of composition to be met. (Illustration: Hansen 2018)



Illustration 3 b:

Johannes Hansen shows the consequences of display in differently sized formats. His comic adapts to all kinds of screen-sizes and settings with the help of a CSS grid, object queries, media fit, etc. that arrange the visual content accordingly. While floatation of elements on their layers is helping this approach to succeed, it also defines its limits as readers expect certain rules of composition to be met.

(Illustration: Hansen 2018)

images and pages shown on extremely differently sized screens (s. illustration 3). While each image usually is composed and executed according to its intended format and use within the sequence of the story and its specific placement on a screen or printed page, for this comic, the images are designed in a way that allows for cropping without endangering their function within the built-up of the story. Johannes Hansen shows the consequences of display in differently sized formats for the atmosphere and distinct voice of the narrative. He developed a way to place images in digital comics according to specific settings of the browser window or screen. The layout is adjusted with the help of its underlying CSS grid, using software like object queries, media fit, etc. and moves visual content according to software settings. While flotation of elements on their layers is helping this approach to succeed, the limits of this approach get visible in extreme cases most easily: mobile phone-screens need completely different compositions of pages and sequences than e.g. landscape-formats on usual PC-screens do. But readers expect certain rules of composition to be adhered to in every case. After some testing, it is clear that these need to be set manually, as the programming is not capable of nudging images just the needed extra-bit to meet compositional balance in accordance with cultural conventions etc. (Johannes Hansen in zoom-group-conversation, Dec 20, 2018).

Layers in Comics

The first example focused solely on the placement and size of images to suit its intended medium, the sequence of images is developed accordingly. The visual material is produced to suit one specific image resolution and format. The second example is equally set to be displayed with only limited variation of its formats possible. The page layouts are fixed including the placement of each of its images and texts that are displayed as balloons and in boxes. The third example differs from these considerably, as described above. It allows for the display of content in different arrangements, even stretched out to a simple vertical strip of images for mobile screens, the flow of reading determining which section of the story is on screen, resisting the application of the mise-en-page as these pages are usually not planned to form one composed page (see strip on the cover of this issue). While partly re-arranging the images quite a lot, it keeps the narrative units grouped together to retain the story's pacing while making them fit the page designs at the same time. To understand the given examples better in their relevance for this paper, a short explanation of the logic behind comics' layers is given in the following before conclusions are drawn. This concept of layers situated in each image of a comic and connecting these into strands of the comic's narrative is explained in more detail in Dittmar 2026 (and Dittmar 2025).

One can imagine a comic to consist of layers for the different types of elements that can be used in comics narrations (s. illustration 4). Each layer can be used for different kinds of representations and references. The different layers are separated according to their internal visibility: the images themselves, signs and images inserted into images, texts written into images (e.g. sound-words), texts in frames (comments by the narrator) and as a different group visually related quite closely: texts in balloons. As we all know from reading comics, these can be separated into representations of speech and of thoughts. Each of the layers is representing specific aspects of the situation depicted and all of them do have their own properties – as can be seen in comics which leave out one of the layers to tell their story with a distinct reduction in information. The individual pictorial elements of each image all can be used to give information on distinct qualities that are part of the narrative told in texts and images in juxtaposition composed on whole pages and sequences of these that become the full story.

It seems so simple: comics make everything visible – everything is translated into graphically designed content. And digital comics can offer additional options by adding sound and animated visuals or even film clips. But the way this works in detail is not simple at all. On a quite abstract level, we can describe images as a blend of para-social and socio-culturally coded information, while written text consists only of socio-culturally coded visual information: Some signs are understood without having to learn their meaning, for example basic emotions like happiness and anger are understood by all humans in all the world but are framed differently in various cultures (cf. Berghaus 1986), while reading other signs is depending absolutely on cultural learning, think for example of the social codes contained in portrait painting or still life (for details see Boehm 1994, esp. 325 ff.). Cultural learning is especially central to reading and writing, as text is depending on alphabets and writing-traditions, typeset and handwritten texts alike depend on the reader to be able to read and decode their meaning in reference to language and the cultural constructs that are included into it (ref. Hall 1980).

The visual rhetoric of comics can use elements of all kinds of codes and other visuals,

even empty spaces. While the smallest unit in comics-storytelling is the individual image that is enclosed by its frame, the largest unit is the complete narration, e.g. some graphic novel. As said before: A very important unit in the structure of comics-storytelling is the page as a whole: Each page is an image that contains several images, it can be intended as a visual unit: a *mise-en-page* (Groensteen 2025, 140-173). The format of the page is a central element of a comic's appearance as it defines possible pacing of the narrative per page (cf. Lefèvre 2000). The narrative is constructed from the different pages and can be called 'multiframe' ('multicadre', 'multicadre feulleté', ref. van Lier 1988). This is in principle the comic's skeleton, no matter whether it is repeating the same frame structure on all pages or whether every page is designed differently. Based on this structure, the comics' dramatic development and all other qualities of its narration are developed (ref. Magnusson 2005). In fact, and as can be understood from looking at the differences between page-variations of the third example, the rhetoric of each comic is built using and combining frames. And while these allow for punctuation within the story, for development of narrative rhythm and structure, changes to their placement in relation to each other result in different intensities of expression. There are different names for full pages, but all relate to very similar

* Peeters' differentiation into these four types of pagestyles is clear about their principal effects and directly applicable. Other, classifications of page architectures exist, but are less pragmatic.

concepts of comics-structure: the page as 'hyperframe' (or 'hypercadre' in Peeters 2003), 'meta panel' or 'super panel' (Eisner 2004), etc. To understand the narrative strategy of a comic, it is mandatory to understand the rhetoric and stylistic qualities of its page styles. Theoretically, four styles are given*: Pages are either regulated / constant, decorative, rhetoric, or productive (cf. Peeters 2003). In reality, many blended forms exist, but these consist mostly of page-sections that follow the given four basic styles. Again, page style is of importance for the built-up of atmosphere and emotions in the arrangement of images and texts, executed in more or less distinct styles. So, the display of elements effectively forms the individual style of each comic and needs to be carefully planned and analysed to understand its function for each specific sequence of images, i.e. the comic's narration.

The structural basis for comics-storytelling is rather simple, while the difficulties are given in the interweaving ('tressage', ref. Groensteen 2025): The way in which images link and relate to other images on the same and on other pages sets the tone and quality of each comic. The visual and thematic linking between places in the story drives the story and is absolutely dependant on style and pacing. This juxtaposing images into contexts gives meaning to them and their details, it constructs relations between individual places in the narration ('la spatio-topie') and between narrative elements and

themes ('l'arthrologie') (Groensteen 2025): 'The first is about spatial relations, the second about semantic relation' (Magnusson 2005: 42). Of course, alternative placements for images within the story's development are possible, as Johannes Hansen's example has shown (s. illustration 3, again). There is always more than one way to structure and tell a story. But alternative sequencing of the same images does mean that we have a slightly different narration in front of us. All change within the spatial placing or the narrative sequence do have consequences for the build-up of tension, of atmosphere, even for adherence or deviation from genre-specific conventions. The page as narrative unit can get devalued in the process: depending on the settings, decisive moments in the story are no longer emphasised by their placement.

This is the matter we deal with when we analyse and plan for the dramaturgical development of each individual comic. I.e. the development of the story with all its drama or humour has to be carefully developed and paced to give the narration a voice of its own, an appeal that keeps the reader engaged. The way in which images and texts are placed, grouped on pages, and put into sequence, makes the comic speak with a distinct voice of its own. But with some digital formats, comics are re-arranged according

to the size of the browser-window, as we have seen in the third example, so these are subject to change and would have different visual properties depending on the screen-format used for reading. A similar thing happens with comics that are printed and delivered as a scroll that can be opened by the reader individually wide. Or with concertina-like leporello-folding that allows for switches between formats from showing all on one page to a story developed over several pages, like my "What if...?" (Dittmar 2014) that uses a roadmap as basis for the placement of the narrative elements, suggesting geographical relations that can connect into a causal or temporal sequence. Strikingly, Joe Sacco calls his "The Great War" in its folded-out state not a comic but "an illustrated panorama". But that panorama only emerges from the sequence of separate images and pages of the folded-down format it is delivered in, the panorama only comes into existence in unfolding its visual elements.

Comics-definitions so far do allow for, but do not discuss the consequences of floating or flexible page layouts for the dramaturgy of stories. And while digital formats allow for changing layouts with each opening of the story, printed matter of course is not flexible in this way. But as just described, scrolls and leporellos allow for changes of the width of page – the page-format can thus be established differently again and again in printed comics, too. The build-up of tension in storytelling is

aimed at making the reader want to turn pages to read on or come back for the next instalment ('cliff-hanger'). Digital comics and comics that can be opened to various extents can follow these conventions or break them by introducing different story-arches that result from the width of the browser-window or how much one unrolls or opens a comic. But the development of the story-arch needs to be placed so that it is working with a variety of page-widths. A truly endlessly scrollable comic, a 'infinite canvas' (McCloud 2009), does not exist yet, as even the most unusual formats do end somewhere. While Daniel Goodbrey is working on formats that stretch out substantially and invite for exploration (Goodbrey 2014), formats have not been programmed so far that generate endless narrative on the same canvas or page, nor are we able to see all content at the same time.

Comics make the reader construct sense into whatever sequences of images that are presented within the same narration. Interrelations are expected and therefore constructed into the material, especially in short strips, but also in longer visual narratives: the fact that images are placed in juxtaposition makes the reader expect and

construct relations between images, intended or not. The example in illustration four might be sufficient to show this: The "Odd Panels" comics generator by Mikael Fisk. It combines pre-produced single images and adds comments and speech balloons at random. Each resulting strip is presented on a webpage in slot-machine style. The reader (or user) only has to determine whether the strip is to consist of two, three or four images and whether it is to contain comments and/or speech balloons or not. The rest is done by random selection – and the reader always makes sense of the resulting strip in some way. There seems to be no way around related expectations and their completion in the reader's imagination.

Accordingly, it can be concluded that comics-narrations are constructed from elements placed on various structural layers that are overlaying each other. The different layers are separated according to their internal visibility or audibility, respectively, i.e. the visibility or audibility their content is imagined to have for all figures within the story: the images themselves are absolutely visible, signs and images inserted into images, texts written into images (e.g.

sound-words) as well. Texts in frames are the exemption, as they are not audible within the story, but usually represent comments by the narrator that allow readers to construct the story from the elements provided on the different layers. On subsequent layers, the acoustic information is represented that is imagined to be more restricted. The most accessible layer in this group are texts in balloons that represent speech acts, spoken words. As we all know from reading comics, these are stylistically closely related to representations of thoughts. Each of these layers is representing specific aspects of the situation depicted and all of them do have their specific properties – as can be seen in comics that leave out one of the layers to tell their story with a distinct reduction in information. Unsurprisingly, most experiments on comics storytelling start from focusing on and working with the properties of one of these layers.

Most comics do apply established patterns and routines to construct their narrations on the pages. Some are divided into uniform sized images put in simple rows, partly as they have been produced to be syndicalised and need to be put into pre-defined spaces on diverse newspapers' pages etc. Some apply the same visual style. Others provide mainstream stories but do design the pages with the intention to create visual units that support the developing narrative by establishing some emotional tone or atmosphere - after all that is why (not only) fictional literature is read. Experimentation in these comics formats does happen indeed but it might not jump readers' eyes right away - comics have to engage their readers, and it has to be accepted that some established comics franchises and genres are petrified in their visual style and narrative routines. Michael Fisk's comics generator makes an important point on the logic of comic-strip narratives: It does place images of a standard size in random sequence and adds random narrator's comments and speech-balloons on top of these, all taken from a stock of images, comments and speech balloons, and all pre-produced so that they can be put into all the different places within the generated strips. From that stock of material, actual strips are assembled and create stories on the readers' minds, the challenge being for readers to make sense of randomly combined material. Whether Fisk happened

to make a comment on AI-generated comics already then, remains to be seen. As the technological options change, so do readers' engagements with the material provided - computer generated comics were a fun experiments in 2014 but have become something quite different twelve years later.

Some experiments in comics-storytelling are recognised immediately as they are obvious to the experienced reader, while others are hidden in the visual material and only become apparent on close reading of the individual images in sequence. Like in the case of the second example by Carlsson and Strandberg that uses the different text-layers to create the voices of different narrators on top of detailed black and white illustrations. While the internal monologue of the first-person narrator mostly uses thoughts to introduce and comment on the developing story, the third-person narrator is communicated in a blend of informative comments that contextualise the shown dialogue of the acting figures. But the comic does not look different from most adventure comics that are drawn in realistic style and located in some fictional Middle Eastern exoticism that is hinted at in details of the images: As stated at the beginning of this paper, each reader applies individual knowledge and cultural frames when reading, and thus builds a relation between the individual images to create the narration of the story as a whole: Meaning is put into

the sequence of images that is depending on the cultural background and knowledge of the reader, and references to all kinds of discourses are read into the images and texts.

The distinct properties of the individual layers allow for strategic use of their elements, e.g., to intensify the effect of content on other layers, or on the contrary to weaken, break, or ironize elements on other layers. Therefore, it is important to understand what each individual layer can be used for best. Most of the times, visual information is accessed much quicker than information coded in text.

Sequential images distribute the development of emotion and narrative over several images. Narration invents causes and effects, constructs developments. Every image shows things simultaneously while elements within one image can suggest a sequence of cause and effect or before and after. Some images stimulate the readers phantasy into creating a narration. Other images refuse this and show content as representative symbolical: space and time are paused. The cultural knowledge of the readers will put these into contexts, too, but the images themselves are not driving the narration forward, instead they emphasize a statement, an emotion there and then (Hoffmann 1998, 10).

Text-layers allow for reference to abstract concepts and ideas and can of course be used to contextualise

specific pictorial information. But the differences between explicit or implicit references in text are very different in their effects from pictorial references. And while textual references connect an image explicitly to specific issues quite well, pictorial references allow references to be put into the composition of an image, be it a figure or a place or details thereof. To return to the example introduced further up: facial expressions of basic emotions are easily understood worldwide, but the cultural framing of emotional expression is very diversified. Accordingly, the pictorial plane can be used for the depiction of facial expressions, but cultural frames are much harder to explain in images; in these, references and indices to specific cultures can be placed, but not explained. E.g., Tom Wallgren's comic, the first example, bases its drive on the visual qualities of each image only: It uses the size and reduced detail of brightly coloured small-screen images in quick succession to create a distinct tone and atmosphere for a breezy and funny narrative. The example by Johannes Hansen, is not experimenting with the text-level, either, but with the quadrillage, the page architecture is set up in accordance to the size and format of the screen or its framing browser window. It keeps all texts in the same style but moves them according to the formatting of the pictorial plane. Depending on the size and settings of the browser window and screen, the images are cropped and moved into different close

proximities to each other, while keeping them clustered in their narrative units: sequences of images that form the individual scenes or stages of the story.

Experiments help to develop further the known options for telling stories in comics, they help us to understand how comics work. They allow us to understand better how individual elements and layers work within comics and are perfectly suited for artistic expression of narrative voice. As I hope to have shown in this text (!), the individual layers can be used strategically for the construction of distinct tones and voices of a comic, they also are instrumental for moderating or intensifying the creation of distinct atmospheres and overall narrative styles. When planning comics productions, the strategic use of the individual layers can help to create distinct styles for individual narrations or to create and communicate specific undertones and references to all kinds of discourses. In analysing comics, attention on the use of individual layers allows for better understanding of how these stories are told and contextualised in detail.

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SUMMARY:

This text looks at a few selected examples of comics storytelling that are distinct in the way they construct their narration, e.g., variations in formats and the construction of distinctly different points of view are considered. The examples test options for telling stories in comics and allow us to understand better how individual elements and layers work within comics. The aim of this text is to show that understanding comics as being composed from content on diverse layers allows for a better understanding of the narrative strategies used to tell a story in a distinct way, it also allows for planning a comic's narrative voice in using specific qualities with individual layers strategically. The argument concludes that the artistic voices of the author/illustrator, their particular way of expression, remain of considerable importance for the reading of comics: form and content of the images and texts as well as their positioning in relation to each other contribute crucial quality to a comic's storytelling.

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