

Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies (State of Transition)

A project by Oliver Ressler

[10/03 – in progress]

After the loss of a countermodel for capitalism – which socialism, in its real, existing form had presented until its collapse – alternative concepts for economic and social development are facing difficulties at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In the industrial nations, "alternatives" are only broadly discussed when they do not question the existing power relations of the capitalist system and representative democracies. Other socio-economic approaches are, on the other hand, labeled utopian, devalued, and excluded from serious discussion if even considered at all.

In the framework of the theme-specific installation, "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies," the focus is on diverse concepts and models for alternative economies and societies which all share a rejection by the capitalist system of rule. For each concept, an interview was carried out from which an English video was produced. In the exhibition, these single-channel 20 to 37 minute videos are each shown on a separate monitor thus forming the central element of the artistic installation.

The project presents alternative social and economic models such as "Inclusive Democracy" from Takis Fotopoulos (GB/GR), "Participatory Economy" from Michael Albert (U.S.A.), and "Free Cooperation" from Christoph Spehr (G). Nancy Folbre (U.S.A.) speaks about her concept of "Caring Labor," Marge Piercy (U.S.A.) discusses the feminist-anarchist utopias of her social fantasies, p.m. (CH) discusses "bolo'bolo," and John Holloway (MEX/GB) talks about his ideas of how to "Change the World Without Taking Power." As interesting historical models, the workers' self-management in Yugoslavia in the sixties and seventies are thematized in the exhibition by Todor Kuljic (SCG), the workers' collectives during the Spanish Civil War (1936-38) by Salomé Moltó (E), and the Paris Commune of 1871 by Alain Dalotel (F).

Chosen for each video is one quotation significant for the alternative model that it presents. The quote is placed directly on the floor of the exhibition room as a several meter long text piece. This floor lettering, made from adhesive film, leads exhibition visitors directly to the corresponding videos, yet the quotes also overlap one another and subdivide the room into different sections.

The exhibition project will be continually expanded in the coming years through further economic and social concepts. These form a non-hierarchically arranged pool, which offers stimulus and suggestions for contemplation of social alternatives and possibilities for action.

The installation "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies" has been/will be realized within the following exhibitions:

Galerija Skuc, Ljubljana (SI), 30.10. – 23.11.03 ("Alternative Economics,...")

Espace Forde, Genève (CH), 06. – 19.12.03 ("There is no Alternative")

Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg (G), 08. – 16.01.04 ("Alternative Economics,...")

Transmediale.04, Berlin (G), 31.01. – 15.02.04 ("fly utopia!")

O.K – Center for Contemporary Art, Linz (A), 11.03. – 02.05.04 ("Open House")

Kunsthalle Exnergasse, Vienna (A), 16.06. – 24.07.04 ("permanent produktiv")

Itaucultural Institute, Sao Paulo (BR), 01.07. – 26.09.04 ("Emoção Art.ficial II – Divergências Tecnológicas")

Sorlandets Kunstmuseum, Kristiansand (N), 06.07. – 15.08.04 ("Detox 04. Crossover Jam Culture")

Wyspa Progress Foundation, Gdansk (PL), 03.09. – 03.10.04 ("Health and Safety")

Centro Cultural Conde Duque, MediaLabMadrid, Madrid (E), 30.09.04 – 31.10.04 ("Economía alternativa, sociedades alternativas")

Forum Stadtpark, Graz (A), Steirischer Herbst, 08.10. – 28.11.04 ("There must be an alternative")

Main Trend Gallery, Taipei (RC), 21.01. – 26.02.05 ("Wayward Economy")

Mali Salon / Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Rijeka (HR), 04. – 12.03.05 ("Alternative Economics,...")

Galerija SKC, Belgrade (SCG), May 05 ("Alternative Economics,...")

Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (G), June to November 05 ("Kritische Gesellschaften")

Galería ICPNA – Instituto Cultural Peruano Norteamericano, Lima (PE), 11. – 28.08.05 ("9th international Festival of Video/Arte/Electrónica")

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