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***Alternative has no alternative***

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In the past few decades, we have become more and more dissatisfied with the art world and have witnessed numerous attempts to change it. People who think according to artistic principles – about meaningful paintings and art history – have come to the conclusion that the art world is too small, too limited, too marginal, too weak, and too bohemian to have any significant effect on the world. So, how can we go from a limited art world to the real world in which the messages are made in such a way as to reach serious discussion on the existing power relations of the capitalist system and representative democracies? The struggle over the definition of social services, scientific research, cultural production and the natural and built environments either as private commodities or as common goods under some form of collective stewardship has become the central conflict of our time, disputed on a territory that extends from intimate subjectivities to the networked spaces of politics. Given the manipulability of public opinion in the contemporary media democracies, the destinies of this struggle will depend crucially on people's ability to recognise and resist the new techniques of social management. In this regard, some interesting and optimistic news has arrived from the installation "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies", a project by Oliver Ressler realised within several exhibitions in Ljubljana, Geneva, Berlin, Gdansk and Vienna.

According to Boris Buden, the world of art today is the only possible basis for public actions and experimentation, which is not imaginative within politics or theory any more. It cannot be denied that modern societies have tried to adopt some alternative principles, but just from the theoretical point of view; unfortunately, the political field always comes into contradiction with those concepts, regularly marked them as devalued. Therefore, contemporary art should be used as a field of an open network of people, studying and working on alternative social and communication network. Contemporary artistic practice could be understood as an experiment in creating a social network of artists, a gift economy, which can act as an alternative to traditional forms of exhibition in commercial and institutional contexts. Such a point of view within world of art could become massive enough to correct specific lines of institutional development, redefine its identity and ethical orientation and open up new spaces for social experimentation. Development in this way needs network of more or less independent exhibition spaces, which would make far more social and economical experiments possible.

Within that field, Oliver Ressler has his own pragmatic and research oriented goals. His artistic projects are constructed as a combination of different scientific, technological, spatial and logical systems. In his work, the artist makes use of scientific and technological tools, knowledge, and systems, but he projects these into the social arena of art. Author uses art as a system, as a means of both shaping and presenting integrated, empirical, and creative observations.

In Ljubljana, Ressler used legendary spaces of the Skuc Gallery to present his ongoing experimental project on alternative economics and societies and to introduce some specific socio-economic approaches to a wider public. During the eighties, under the parole "alternative has no alternative", the SKUC (Student Cultural Centre) Gallery was deeply involved in what, at that time, was called the "alternative cultural scene" - a heterogeneous and prolific confusion of social movements, cultural practices, punk-rock activities, contestations, manifestations, theoretisations and vulgarisations which, towards the second half of the decade, created an *esprit de l'epoque* which promised much better than what later came to be true.

Ressler's multidisciplinary project is a work in progress designed by people with different professional (economy, sociology, history, feminism, anarchism, self-management) and geopolitical backgrounds (USA, Great Britain, Spain, Serbia and Montenegro). The project deals with the concepts, models, and utopias for alternative economies and societies which all share a rejection by the capitalist system of rule. For each concept, the video was produced on the basis of interviews with advocates of interesting and

real utopian social fantasies and historical models. In the exhibition, each of these single-channel videos are shown on a separate monitor thus forming the central element of the artistic installation. Ressler has not related to the monitor as merely an object, but rather has treated it more as a complex system, one that demands a reexamination of the relationship between the sphere of art and that of life. Today we know that video has become the primary technology of image production, distribution, and consumption and over time changes in television have significantly altered the ways in which people perceive and use it as a medium; phosphorescent electronic power has become a metaphor for social power.

We could say that for Ressler there are no differences between social activities, regardless of whether they occur in the field of art or in that of political economy, and in his strategic actions he uses methods and materials which directly interact with social and capitalist systems while simultaneously confronting these same systems. As an artist, Ressler wonders about the subject matter of his work, about the values, beliefs, social philosophies, and economic scenarios he is promoting. Rather than producing advertisements for his own benefit, as one would generally expect from an ordinary artist, Ressler again in Ljubljana had the primary aim of promoting a non-hierarchically arranged pool, which offers stimulus and suggestions for contemplation of social alternatives and possibilities for action. Beyond projects like this, one can see the tactics of the emerging social movements as attempts to deconstruct the neo-liberal program of total social mobilization for the needs of flexible economy.